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VIEWPOINTS

ONLINE POLL

Is Valentine's Day worth anyone's time?
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THE LEADER

Sex, anyone?

It's Sexual Responsibility Week at USC, and that means there will be a full schedule of events to keep sex on people's minds.

This year, just as they have in the past, participants will be doing a lot to get your attention. They'll be wearing giant birth control pill costumes. Hawking free condoms like carnival barkers. Putting on plays about sexuality.

What shouldn't escape your notice is that there's a balance to be struck. While Sexual Responsibility Week is a way for our university to fool around with a serious topic, it's also a time to take seriously what some people think of as just fooling around.

Reducing the stigma

The best thing about Sexual Responsibility Week is that it reduces the stigma surrounding sex.

If you're too embarrassed to buy condoms or get tested for HIV, should you really be having sex?

Sometimes it takes campus organizations being forward about sexuality to get people over unfounded fears or superficial embarrassment.

There's free HIV testing in the Russell House on Wednesday from 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. If you

have never been tested before, haven't been tested in a while or have been in a risky situation, do it now. You and your sexual partners have the right to know about each other's health.

When you're walking around campus this week and student groups offer you free condoms, take them if you're sexually active. You'll be protecting yourself and the people you have sex with.

Being responsible

In the distant days of high-school experimentation, being sexually responsible might have been limited to making sure your parents didn't catch you.

But to adults — a category that includes all college students — it's a lot weightier. Sexual responsibility involves changing your behavior so that you'll protect people you care about.

So take a birth control pill every day, or be sure your partner does. Use condoms every time. Get tested for sexually transmitted diseases before hooking up with someone new.

If you're embarrassed about doing these things, you should rethink whether you're ready to have sex. And getting tested now is a lot better than hurting someone you love later.

GAMECOCK CORRECTIONS

An article in Friday's paper about USC's football recruiting class should have said Jermaine Harris, a transfer from Georgia Military College, has also signed on with USC. The Gamecock regrets the error.

The list of dates for the presidential candidates' profiles ran incorrectly last week. See page 1 for the correct dates. If you see an error in today's paper, we want to know. E-mail us at gamecockviewpoints@hotmail.com.

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CARTOON COURTESY OF KRT CAMPUS

Breaking up is hard to do



GREG HAMBRICK
[GAMECOCKVIEWPOINTS@HOTMAIL.COM](mailto:gamecockviewpoints@hotmail.com)

Minority within minority should wise up and reunite with the BGLA.

Hearing that the League for Alternative Minorities had broken away from the Bisexual, Gay and Lesbian Association, I felt like I was in Bizarro World.

Have we really come to the point where a group that counts drag queens and transsexuals among themselves has trouble with diversity?

Well, not quite. Judging by the comments of league founder Rod Scott-Padilla, the LAM has been founded for all the wrong reasons.

Scott-Padilla's explanation for creating this group was because he felt neglected in the BGLA. Now, we all have special needs, but the BGLA is there to

support the bisexual, gay, lesbian and transgender students in the Carolina community. Therefore, the main purpose of this group is to try to make people feel like they are a part of something, that they aren't alone.

In his announcement, Scott-Padilla used an increasingly popular sound bite to explain his predicament as a gay black man: "a minority within a minority." But he throws around this statement without understanding it. It would seem that Scott-Padilla and four others felt alone, but I would argue that they are lashing out at the wrong minority as the cause of their troubles.

Scott-Padilla should recognize that it isn't the other minority communities that should pursue change in the gay community. Instead, it is the gay community that should pursue changes in those minority communities.

It isn't the gay community that is making it more difficult for minority members to come out of the closet. It is those other minority groups that preach the need for diversity until you get to the closet door.

An example is the journalistic

collaboration UNITY. A collection of "people of color," UNITY addresses diversity concerns for its member organizations, but refuses to include the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association.

Now, does this mean we need a Society of Alternative Minority Journalists? No, because those who are in a racial minority in the NLGJA are working with the organization and through the organization to show UNITY that gays and lesbians share the same concerns as other minority groups.

Because of religious and social mores, this is a tough sell at USC and won't be made any easier by segregating the gay and lesbian community. The goal of the league shouldn't be to cause a rift in the gay community, but to be the ambassador to other minority groups that fear the implications of openly supporting their gay members.

With that goal, I would wish them the best of luck. As it stands, I hope they come to their senses and return to the BGLA.

Hambrick is a fourth-year print journalism student.

IN YOUR OPINION

Clarifying Elections Commission's role

It would seem there's been a misunderstanding regarding the role of this year's Elections Commission, and perhaps I have failed to communicate my position properly.

The Elections Commission will abide by the rules set forth in the SG codes and in university policy, and it expects that candidates and their staffs will follow suit. Clearly, the commission is charged with fairly ensuring that the rules are upheld, and I will do my part to do so.

However, I will not shy away from occasionally expressing discontent with the same rules that I am to enforce, and I will be making recommendations for improved election codes at the end of my term. Until then, I hope that candidates and concerned students will bring infractions of the codes to the commission's attention. The commission will address infractions in a fair and understanding manner.

The commission won't play the role of an election moderator, but it will strive to uphold the will of the student body.

ADAM BOURNE
FOURTH-YEAR POLITICAL SCIENCE STUDENT AND SG ELECTIONS COMMISSIONER

National coverage lacking in paper

In recent months, we, as the student body, have seen a decline in the amount of coverage that national and international news receive in The Gamecock — subjects such as the collapse of Enron, the "War on Terrorism" and

the possible criminal implications of the White House as a result of the Enron investigation.

The war on terrorism continues to move at a deafening pace, and yet the editorial staff at The Gamecock seems lethargic in its pursuit of the issues. Issues that aren't covered include what to call the detained prisoners at Guantanamo Bay, what should be done to the ailing Social Security program, and the fact that the last time someone played with the economy by increasing the military and cutting taxes, the nation saw its leaders run a deficit that crippled the nation's economy.

In this time of national crisis, the citizens of this country, especially students, need to be informed. Information is the backbone of education. Ignorance is defined as a lack of knowledge or information as to a particular subject or fact. It's time that this newspaper is held accountable for its lapse in judgment about the amount of national and international news coverage.

ADAM JENKINS
THIRD-YEAR POLITICAL SCIENCE STUDENT

Bessinger deserves right to free speech

This letter is in response to Randy Sutton's letter challenging all African-American students to stand up and fight for an issue that is basically flawed. Sutton asks African-American students to stand up and fight for "racial issues" which affect them. The specific cause for which Sutton wants his fellow students to unite is the Maurice Bessinger ads in The Gamecock.

Instead of questioning the political commitment of his fellow students, Sutton should question the legitimacy of the movement for which he is trying to gain a following. Though I, and many other students on this campus, might not agree with Bessinger's viewpoints, he has every right to advertise his business in a newspaper, magazine or any publication. This basic belief in freedom of speech can't be restricted because individuals disagree with another's beliefs. Unless you can change the U.S. Constitution, then there is no way you can ask individuals to join a cause which rejects the basic tenets upon which this country was founded.

FAIYAZ DOSSAJI
FOURTH-YEAR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES STUDENT

BBQ sauce boycott is the simple solution

As a fairly recent graduate of USC, I am dismayed that the attitude within certain people's minds hasn't changed much in the past 10 years. After reading Randy Sutton's letter about African-Americans' "unity," I wonder if Sutton is recommending to his brothers and sisters that they all have a single-minded agenda and insinuating that they not have the ability to think for themselves when it relates to social issues.

Did bringing down the Confederate flag from the State House have the desired effect he was looking for? Poor blacks are still poor, inner-city neighborhoods are still bastions of crime and neglect, the illegitimacy rate among blacks is still around 70 percent, and the anti-achievement mentality

The true meaning of love



KATIE MCCLENDON
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Love is treating women like human beings, not making them victims.

As we all rush to buy last-minute Valentine's Day cards, gifts and flowers, I hope we'll think about what love really is. It's more than the roses that will soon wilt away. It's about trust, affection, support and safety.

Love is neither rape nor assault. Love is respecting all women and girls. Love is not throwing battery acid on a woman because she didn't want to marry you. Love is respecting a woman's right to say no. Love is not catcalling or making a co-worker feel sexually objectified. Love is seeing that a woman has more to offer than just her breasts. Love is not killing your baby girl because she doesn't have a Y chromosome. Love is giving your daughter a safe environment in which to grow. Love is not killing your sister because she shamed the family by being raped. Love is helping your aunt find a safe haven if her husband beats her.

I could go on about what love is, in honor of Valentine's Day, but February is also an important month for V-Day, a global movement that works to end violence against women and girls. V-Day raises money, often by giving proceeds of productions of Eve Ensler's Obie Award-winning play, "The Vagina Monologues," to local and international organizations that aid women and girls. V-Day helps women in Afghanistan who have struggled under the Taliban to be able to go to school, walk alone on a street or have a job. V-Day helps the 130 million African women who have been the victims of female genital mutilation, a custom that often removes the clitoris of a young woman as a coming-of-age ritual. V-Day also helps women in South Carolina.

While South Carolina might never be the No. 1 state in SAT scores, in 1998 it had the No. 1 per capita murder of a woman by a male intimate partner — 62 women's lives ended too early. Some of these women were shot or stabbed to death. Others died by the force of a blunt object or by bodily force.

And for the women lucky enough to be alive, many of them are victims of domestic violence, which can be physical, emotional, psychological, sexual or financial. Relationship violence does not discriminate on race, class or age. If you consider yourself and your three best female friends, statistically, one of you was or will be in a violent dating situation between the ages of 12 and 21.

Look around Patterson Hall. Statistically, at least a fourth of the women have been or will be the victims of violence before they can legally drink alcohol. And across the United States, a woman is battered every 15 seconds and raped every 90 seconds.

V-Day also helps women on college campuses, including USC. Every 21 hours, a woman is raped on a U.S. college campus. In 90 percent of these incidents, the victim knows the rapist. Often he is a friend, classmate, ex-boyfriend or acquaintance. Sadly, most of these men don't believe they have committed rape. Rape is any sexual act — vaginal, oral or anal — in which the woman does not give her consent. If she is drugged or drunk, she can't give consent.

While these statistics might seem outrageous, they are only reported incidents. Often, a