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VIEWPOINTS

ONLINE POLL

Do you think all residence halls should be nonsmoking? www.dailygamecock.com. Results published on Friday.

IN OUR OPINION

Voting dates must change

Today and tomorrow, students have the opportunity to take part in a constitutional change for Student Government. Elections Commissioner Brooke Vickery has proposed moving elections to after spring break — a change that would aid SG and the student body.

Spring break throws a wrench in SG's productivity, and moving the elections dates would streamline the elections process. Officers and senators would have more time to finish their projects before their terms end, and the transition between administrations would be appropriately shortened.

Students would directly benefit by being able to vote at a more convenient time. Before spring break, many students are anxious to leave campus; when they return, students might be more concerned about university issues. Voter turnout has historically been low at USC, but the change could help raise those numbers — and anything that increases turnout is beneficial.

SG's initiative in improving the elections process is admirable: When students are not satisfied with the status quo, they must come up with appropriate adjustments. Here, SG has come up with a way to aid its own productivity, as well as cater to the needs of the student body. Now, students must respond by casting their votes online on VIP. SG has identified a real problem and is making steps to fix it; let this signify a trend for future legislation.



CARTOON COURTESY OF KRT CAMPUS

Obesity lawsuit passes the buck



JASON L. RAPP
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Passing the blame is now a national trend.

I'm not Michael Jordan, but I'm doing my best impression. No, I'm not getting any action on the side. I am, however, overstaying my welcome by coming out of my weeklong retirement to comment on something so asinine that it forced me to beg for one more column: the lawsuit brought against McDonald's by people who should have long been removed from the gene pool, except for the fact that pools aren't equipped with cranes like those you'd find in your local port city.

The class-action suit, filed in Manhattan on Nov. 20, alleges that some New York children are suffering from problems such as obesity, high blood pressure and diabetes as a result of chowing down on McDonald's food.

Among the plaintiffs are a Bronx teenager who says he ate three "McMeals" a day for three years while he was in a homeless shelter and a 5-foot-4-inch 13-year-old from Staten Island who got his grease fix three or four times a week and now weighs 278 pounds. Worry not, son. After you've gone through a couple of growth spurts, spent time in the weight room and switched to Subway and the salad bar, Lou Holtz will let you protect our quarterback in a few years.

What the hell did these people expect would happen to them? There is no difference between this and me getting together with some fellow December graduates after our diplomas arrive in the mail next year to sue USC for giving us an education. You really should know what you're getting into before you walk through the doors ... though I'm pretty sure these people are the ones who use the "drive-thru" instead. But the point remains.

If the greasy residue on the to-go bags doesn't clue you in to the fact that there's a little extra fat in your dinner, or you've been living under the slide at the indoor playground since birth, allow me to enlighten you: The food's bad for you, genius. What kind of Clemson/Georgia/Tennessee graduate really thought the quarter-pounder with cheese extra value meal fulfilled his nutritional requirements?

Stop blaming other people for your inability to say no to a red-headed clown and a furry purple blob whose name is a verb that describes what the rest of us do when we see the calorie count of a Big Mac and medium french fries (590 and 540, respectively, with a total of 60 fat grams).

A parent of one of the children in the suit said McDonald's intends to get people hooked on its fare at an early age with the lure of Happy Meal toys, presumably to fatten us up so that we'll be too busy languishing on the couch with the remote control to give a rat's behind when the company tries to take over the world. At least we'll have Jared and Irmo's Clay Henry of Subway fame to defend us.

This, to me, is indicative of a national trend away from taking personal responsibility. Everything is always somebody else's fault. We take the easy way out. We can't fathom the fact that we're fallible beings who screw up, so we push the blame off onto someone else.

Somebody please get these people two tickets. Not to paradise, but two tickets apiece aboard a Southwest Airlines flight to reality. And no meals on the flight, either.

Rapp is a fifth-year print journalism student.

Discovering one's soulmate



CATHERINE BAAB
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He's no Tiger Woods, but at least he wrote.

My friend Lola's mom insists she'll marry Tiger Woods. Naturally, this has sparked many a funny exchange between Lo and me. We've concluded that, at 21, all people should receive letters from their actual soulmates, like the one you're about to read:

Dear Cat,

While this last Sunday of November passes, you sit by your bedroom window. The curtain is drawn. It muffles the light like a sound, and the day outside seems like a conversation you are overhearing, though you can't quite make out the words being said. You are sitting in the dark room, eavesdropping on the afternoon, aware that you are doing it. Listen: I know you want to take this sensation and use it as a

metaphor for ybur entire life. Don't.

I agree with you that this world is hard, beautiful, real and radiantly sharp. I agree with you that the initial layer of things is often deceptively bright. Yes, sometimes beauty is a sheath and a shroud. It can disguise the hard, dead thing underneath itself. This is not an absolute truth of appearances, though, Cat. You assure others that "the world isn't black and white." But your own way of looking at certain things contradicts that. I'm not putting you down. It's just important never to think in terms of absolutes.

Our thoughts and feelings rarely effect changes in the world. It isn't as flexible, as malleable as it should be. That fact is awful and ugly. I know it's a source of frustration to you. Please realize that our thoughts and feelings are nevertheless important because they order the world for us: We frame reality with our perceptions. And so what we think or feel strongly becomes important (simply, beautifully) in the act of thinking and feeling.

The real, intrinsic value of cognition and emotion is not something you ought to disregard, even if it can't always prevent war, end hunger or stop suffering. In short, enjoy your own humanity, rather

than condemning yourself as ineffectual in some larger sphere. Remember that convictions are not liabilities; they are devotions. Devotion is an element of love. The world needs more of that. Don't lose hope. I'm pretty sure it's bound to improve one of these days if we all work to better it.

I'm going to call you in five or six years. Good luck with the Ph.D. (I'm still not sure the academic life is for you, though). Have fun and date whomever you want to date. I'd never hold it against you. Besides, I'm doing so myself. You wouldn't believe some of the disappointments I've experienced in my relationships so far. Actually, now that I think about it, I bet you would. On a practical note: Could you please quit smoking? It's bad for your health, and I want us to be able to live together a long, long time.

Sincerely,
Your soulmate

P.S. You're going to be so surprised when you figure out who I am. I can't wait to see your face. I'm the emotional equivalent of one of those giant checks that Publisher's Clearinghouse knocks at your door with, Cat. Don't forget to smile for the camera.

Baab is a third-year English and advertising student.

Winners and Sinners



USC QUIZ-BOWL TEAM Academic team ranked in the nation's top 25. It's nice to know something around here can rank that high.
BASKETBALL TEAM Since there's no bowl game this year, there are high hopes for postseason play based on men's basketball team's 4-0 start.
WENDY PERRIAM This woman deserves a break after she earned Britain's coveted "bad sex in fiction" award.



CLEMSON After beating a 5-7 team, Clemson students tore down a goal post and threw it in a lake. Another fine display of Tiger intelligence.
MICHAEL JACKSON On crutches because of a spider bite. New "spidey sense" should help predict how much the latest lawsuit will cost.
OBESITY LAWSUITS First coffee, now fat grams. Obesity lawsuit uncovers a secret McDonald's plot to make as many people fat as possible.

GAMECOCK CORRECTIONS

If you see an error in today's paper, we want to know. E-mail us at gamecockviewpoints@hotmail.com.

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Private clubs can exclude anyone

Ms. Laura Woliver's letter attacking Chris Foy ("Foy column parrots gay stereotypes," Monday) shows that people do not accept opposing views. I am an Eagle Scout and was in the Boy Scouts of America for 11 years and am an advocate of its stance on not allowing homosexuals into the private society. During the time spent in Boy Scouts, boys go through their adolescent years and begin forming their opinions. It is not moral to place boys and young men in an easily uncomfortable situation, and many parents feel the same.

Frankly, I am tired of left-wing feminists attacking anything they don't agree with anymore, the Augusta National Golf Club's decision included. The BSA has ties to Christianity, and because homosexuality is a sin, there is nothing wrong with the BSA's stance against it. In the Bible, homosexuality is a sin of sexual immorality. But I am not passing judgment on anyone because that is not my place. God still loves everyone.

Complaints against groups that people do not agree with need to stop. Private organizations can exclude people legally, so nothing can be done about it. Having a gay, straight, male, female, black, white or any other "categorical" is legal. If Ms. Woliver wants to make a big deal about groups, their members and what they try to accomplish, then the National Organization for Women; USC's Bisexual, Gay and Lesbian Alliance; and the National Association for Colored

IN YOUR OPINION

People, to name a few, need to be examined as well.

The BSA is not against human rights; it just has its preferences. That's all there is to it. If people would just accept differences that groups have, a lot of the world's problems might just not exist. You do your thing, let the BSA do its. Attacking the BSA because it is different is just wrong.

JONATHAN FROST
THIRD-YEAR SPORTS
ADMINISTRATION STUDENT

Pageants provide money for women

I am writing in response to Tyler Jones' column ("Contests show off worst of society," Monday). I, for the most part, disagree with Jones on the values promoted by pageants. I think it would be a shame if Miss America disappeared. It is the best pageant on the face of the planet, though I have not seen them all. It is certainly better than Miss World, Miss Universe, Miss International or any other I have seen.

All Miss America contestants have to either be in or have graduated from college. Miss America 2001, Angela Perez Baraquio, was a teacher with a degree from the University of Hawaii at Manoa, and the current Miss America, Erika Harold, has been accepted to Harvard Law School.

Other than that, the contestants' final scores are 20 percent lifestyle, discipline and fitness in swimwear; 20 percent poise and elegance in evening wear; 30 percent talent; 10 percent interviews; 10 percent knowledge of American history and pop culture; and 10 percent conge-

niality and personality. No other pageant takes actual knowledge and congeniality into account. It is certainly better than Miss Universe's parade in swimwear and evening wear then answering dumb questions such as, "What makes you blush?" and "What about men boggles you the most?" — I mean, really, how intriguing?

Jones also mentioned the meager scholarship money awarded. He failed to mention that the winner is not the only person to receive scholarships. Furthermore, the winners of each section receive sizeable scholarships. Harold herself collected \$6,000 from Miss America before the final night. Miss Maryland and Miss Nevada, who finished fifth and fourth respectively, each received \$9,000 in scholarship money before the final night.

It is not widely known that Harold entered the Miss Illinois pageant four times before actually winning, so Miss America did fund a large part of her college education. She received \$80,000 total in scholarship money. Miss America 2002, Katie Harmon, earned more than \$150,000 in appearance fees, enough to cover her college tuition.

So Miss America, with its eventual benefits, is one of the greatest scholarship sources for women in this country. It encourages education rather than bimboness, and people ought to rally to support it.

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