



VIEWPOINTS

ONLINE POLL

Do you think all residence halls should be nonsmoking?
YES, I LIKE FRESH AIR 74%
NO, SECOND-HAND SMOKE IS GOOD 18%
DON'TS HOUSING KNOW BEST? 8%

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IN OUR OPINION

Cancellation unnecessary

On Wednesday, USC made a hasty decision to cancel classes. Anticipating the forecasted icy weather, the university determined that the weather would prove too high a safety risk for USC students. Although the concern for students is admirable, the university rushed its decision during one of the most critical times of the semester.

A few years ago, severe weather conditions threatened student safety and USC resumed classes

too soon, which put students and professors at risk. The university wasn't cautious enough that year, but this year, it has jumped the gun. It would be dangerous for students to drive home if the university waited too

long to cancel classes. But that doesn't mean it should assume the worst and shut things down because it's cold outside; a balance must be found. It's worrisome that the university canceled all classes out of concern for its students and faculty, but had no trouble allowing the women's basketball game yesterday evening to go on as scheduled. Though fans could choose whether to risk the roads to travel to a sporting event, players and coaches could not.

USC did act in students' interests yesterday; there is no doubt about that. But the quickness of its decision is questionable. The decision to cancel classes the week before final exams is serious; many students would have used that class time to better prepare.

Gamecock Quotables

"You can talk about education, economy and business and health, but if the streets aren't safe enough to go to work, go to school, go to the doctor, what have you got?"

ROBERT STEWART
STATE LAW ENFORCEMENT DIVISION CHIEF, ON BUDGET CUTS

"I don't know what these Northern kids think of us when there's a chance of a freeze and they call everything off. It's ridiculous."

BENJAMIN MORRISON
THIRD-YEAR EXPERIMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY STUDENT, ON USC'S CANCELLING SCHOOL

"I am hoping that students will see the great benefits of this change, want to see it pass and vote for it."

BROOKE VICKERY
ELECTIONS COMMISSIONER, ON TRYING TO CHANGE THE ELECTIONS DATE

"I really didn't know until there were about seven minutes left in the second half. My teammates were telling me how many points I had and how many I needed to get into the record books."

JOCELYN PENN
USC FORWARD, ON SCORING A CAREER-HIGH AND RECORD-TYING 50 POINTS AGAINST WOFFORD

COLOR TO BE ADDED TO U.S. CURRENCY



CARTOON COURTESY OF KRT CAMPUS

Bikers are coming to town



PHIL WATSON
GAMECOCKVIEWPOINTS@HOTMAIL.COM

It's time to trade in the books and buy a hog.

When I was 18, I unknowingly went to Myrtle Beach during biker week. I vowed never to speak of the horrible incident again, but something I saw in the news recently stirred up old memories, and I decided to reflect.

A big biker rally might be coming to Columbia next year. When I heard the news, I instinctively hid my money and taped a sign on my front door reading "NO METH HERE."

But maybe Myrtle Beach was an isolated incident. I'll never forget any of it, though. The midgits in burlap sacks, the broken bottles of Pabst Blue Ribbon, the 300-pound women, and my frantic sprint down Ocean Boulevard with two hogs manned by drunken crank dealers rumbling behind me are all memories burned in my mind

like the dragon tattoo on Zeke's forearm.

That weekend, I learned the hard way that going into a biker bar at 2 a.m. and asking for directions to a golf course while wearing khakis and a collared shirt under a nice sweater is never a good idea.

"Excuse me, sir, can you tell us how to get to Arrowhead Country Club?"

"How 'bout I break this beer bottle over your head, college boy?"

"I see by the tattoo on your forehead that your name is Hell Wolf. Well, Mr. Wolf, we don't want trouble, we were just ..."

"Hey, Zeke, this boy just tipped over your bike. Let's get him."

Before I could convince them I did nothing of the sort, the midgits were flying. We managed to dodge the first few, but my friend Richard took one right on the head. He was down, but there was nothing we could do for him. We were lucky to get out of town alive.

But that's behind me, and now it's time to plan ahead for when the biker rally comes here. I've decided I can't beat them, so I'm going to join them. The biggest problem will be the bike. I don't have a Harley Davidson, but I do

have a Mongoose 21-speed from Wal-Mart. Maybe if I pedal up to them wearing a leather jacket and a tattoo on my arm of a naked woman leaning against a bloody dagger, they'll accept me as one of their own.

Telling them a few jokes will be a sure way to break the ice: What's the difference between a Hoover vacuum cleaner and a Harley? The placement of the dirt bag.

I'm not sure what they'll make me do for initiation, but I hope it will involve eating cheesecake and watching reruns of "The Simpsons." I aced my last political-philosophy test, and I'm sure biker-gang initiations pale in comparison to writing essays about Plato and Aristotle.

It would be great if they gave me a really cool biker name like Rides With Broken Tailbone, or Mac And Cheese Phil. I would also be happy with something a little tougher, like Roadkiller, Asphalt Kicker or Kitten Eater. Either way, getting into a biker gang will be a welcomed change of pace. I'll be like the bounty hunter from "Raising Arizona." Watch out, ladies.

Watson is a fourth-year print journalism student.

Illegal aliens need a chance



CLAYTON KALE
GAMECOCKVIEWPOINTS@HOTMAIL.COM

Land of opportunity and non-English speakers.

It's a fact that many school districts in South Carolina have created a position known as an ESL teacher. English-as-a-second-language classes are intended for the children of immigrants who don't speak English in their homes. While English isn't the official language of the United States, it's an essential tool for someone to have to get a job in this country, at least a job in the top percentile of wages.

"This is our country" and "We're becoming the minority" are common refrains of the xenophobe. People shouldn't worry that their children's American-history classes will be taught in Spanish or that Sergio Troncoso will be taught instead of Fitzgerald or Shakespeare.

As the son of a high-school English teacher, I've observed that summer reading lists are becoming more diverse in writers' backgrounds and nationalities, but Hamlet's place in the English curriculum is as safe as $a^2 + b^2 = c^2$ is in geometry. What is more problematic than an increase in the number of students in our public-school system who don't speak English is the attitude of xenophobia itself.

Notions of "our" country and "we" being the minority are tinged with racism and shortsightedness. Racist because "we" carries with it the connotation that America is a white country, which it is not and never was, no matter how American history has been romanticized. (Yes, the reigns of power are generally held by men with white faces. But this is more of an economic factor than a racial one.)

It's shortsighted because, before America was America, it wasn't America. I realize it sounds like I stole a line from Yogi Berra. But consider that, before America became a powerhouse, it consisted of pockets of Spanish settlers, German settlers, Dutch settlers, English settlers, French settlers, slaves brought from Africa — and why did all these settlers come to America (except, perhaps, for the slaves in bondage)? Because they were seeking something better than the conditions of life in their homelands.

A new job, a place where they could worship without the silly rules of the pope or the hypocrisy of the Anglican Church, a place where there was enough room to grow enough potatoes to feed a large family. They were seeking, as the cliché goes, a land of opportunity. And now, some 300 years removed, have we not proven that America is a land of opportunity?

A place where the Ragged Dicks of all cultures can call home? A country where a Methodist is equal to a pagan under the law? A place where all children receive the best education they can based on the amount of tax dollars collected? A place where people can come and work and provide for their families?

Consider this: If every new immigrant were capable of discussing the finer points of "The Sound and the Fury" during tea at Harvard, I promise that Harvard would be even more competitive. Even the more "menial" service-industry jobs afford a life superior to the one back home for some immigrants. I, for one, am proud that America is still seen as the land of opportunity by much of the world. For, when it is not, we know our day in the sun has passed.

Kale is a fifth-year print journalism student.

IN YOUR OPINION

Dance team should dress for weather

As a lifelong South Carolina resident, I was lucky enough to get some tickets to the Carolina-Clemson game at the last minute. Although it was very cold, despite about three layers of clothes, my husband and I enjoyed the game — that is, until I saw what USC's dance team was wearing.

Dressed in skin-tight, backless, sleeveless halter tops, the 20 or so girls "warmed up" near our seats for halftime. Despite the 30-degree weather, these women were wearing next to nothing and freezing. They huddled in groups and shivered, and some coughed and sneezed, no doubt fighting off colds.

These women were sacrificing their health and comfort to look sexy. The sad part is that no one looks sexy when her nose is running, she has chill bumps all over her arms, and her face and ears are red from the cold. I have a hard time thinking their chosen outfits were crucial to the performance.

Instead, trying to fulfill society's and their own expectations about their entertainment value, the members of USC's dance team chose to subjugate themselves to one of the oldest sexist values — women are best when pushed up, sucked in, half naked and stupid. And that's what their outfits were — stupid.

ERIN JAMES PREDMORE
COUNSELING GRADUATE STUDENT, UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

Graduate proud of students' charity

Being a recent graduate of USC, I understand how hard it is to volunteer your time to someone else while you have papers and exams to worry about.

More than 30 USC students, however, dedicated their time to helping our students at Epworth Children's Home. The University 101 classes, specifically those of Mary Hipp and Ed Dickey, have made a profound impact tutoring the kids at our school. They have selflessly given inspiration and compassion to our kids, who thrive off kindness.

Thank you for seeing the need and not the cause. You make me proud to be a USC graduate.

HEIDI VAUGHN
SITE COORDINATOR FOR EPWORTH CHILDREN'S HOME COMMUNITIES AND SCHOOLS OF THE MIDLANDS

BSA shouldn't push sexual conformity

I am disappointed in The Gamecock. I remember my undergraduate years at USC, when The Gamecock's Viewpoints editor did not feel the need, as Chris Foy apparently does, to write blatantly bigoted and homophobic columns to stir up resentment among his readership. He has, at any rate, missed the point that what is legal is not necessarily just.

The Boy Scouts have the legal right to exclude gays and atheists and possibly other groups as well. They might have the legal right to exclude boys who wear their hair long

or otherwise do not fit the model of "clean living" as laid down by the upper-class Englishman Lord Baden-Powell. I suspect, however, that few people in this country agree with BSA that all gay men are dirty child molesters, or who sympathize with BSA's exclusionary policies.

I contend that our society has outgrown Baden-Powell's antique model of puritanical sexual politics. I see BSA's condemnation of homosexuality as an attempt to enforce sexual conformity upon the boys within its ranks. Sexuality (to the extent that it does not harm others) is a matter of individual identity, and BSA should keep its hands off the sexuality issue by simply remaining silent and allowing a boy's family and faith to shape his identity in that regard.

One related issue: Jonathan Frost's whiny letter complaining about Dr. Woliver and other "left-wing feminists" who attack "anything they don't agree with" struck me as plainly anti-democratic. If we are to have a meaningful debate in this country about what kind of social change is worthwhile, opposing groups must voice their opinions. The fact that Mr. Frost does not agree with Dr. Woliver is hardly a reason why her feminist theory class should not voice its opinion of Mr. Foy's column. Let the debate continue.

ROBERT PAUL DAVIS
FIRST-YEAR LAW STUDENT

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Letters to the editor should be less than 300 words and include name, phone number, professional title or year and major, if a student. E-mail letters to gamecockviewpoints@hotmail.com. Letters will be edited. Anonymous letters will not be published. Call the newsroom at 777-7726 for more information.

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CONTACT INFORMATION

Offices on third floor of the Russell House.
 Editor in Chief: gamecockeditor@hotmail.com
 News Desk: gamecockdesk@hotmail.com
 Viewpoints: gamecockviewpoints@hotmail.com
 The Mix: gamecockmixeditor@hotmail.com
 Sports: gamecocksports@hotmail.com
 Online: www.dailygamecock.com
 Public Affairs: gckpublicaffairs@hotmail.com
 Newsroom: 777-7726
 Editor's Office: 777-3914

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TO PLACE AN AD

Advertising: 777-3888
 Classified: 777-1184
 Fax: 777-6482

The Gamecock
 1400 Greene St.
 Columbia, S.C. 29208