

OPINION

This column represents the views of the Old Gold and Black Editorial Board.

SG elections a chance for change

On Tuesday, April 11 students will cast votes for next year's Student Government officers. The two strongest candidates for the office of SG president are juniors Jacob Kline and Amanda Carlson. Carlson would bring comprehensive experience to the SG presidency. She served as the chairwoman of the 1998-99 SG Campus Life Committee as well as sitting on the 1997-98 SG Executive Advisory Committee on Honor, the 1998-2000 SG University Committee on Academic Planning, the 1999-2000 Freshman Orientation Committee and the 1998-2000 Committee on the Year of Ethics and Honor. She also served as the SG secretary this year. Her experience during the last year as an executive in SG would provide a great deal of institutional memory, which would be a significant asset to the organization. Carlson's ability to interact effectively with students, faculty and the administration would serve the student body well. She has a cooperative leadership style that lends itself both to the efficient delegation of tasks and the ability to smoothly run the SG legislature.

Carlson also has several commendable tasks that she hopes to accomplish while in office. She intends to improve the features of the Wake Information Network by providing increased WIN connectivity to departmental web pages and improving WIN's versatility to allow students to do a computerized audit of hypothetical major and minor scenarios. She hopes to hold open forums with the administration every semester.

Kline, too, is an experienced SG representative: he served on the Executive Committee of Honor, the Committee on the Year of Science and Technology and is chairman of the SG Academic Committee. Kline has a passionate and inspirational vision of the university and its place in the 21st century. Of chief importance to Kline is the revision of the university's honor code. He advocates an honor system that is clear and concise. Kline hopes the system will be able to impart a sense of honor and pride while leaving the ultimate enforcement authority in the hands of students. Kline also hopes to meaningfully increase the influence students have over their lives by placing more students on administrative committees. Also, Kline wants to channel community service projects into the inner city of Winston-Salem by organizing volunteer clean up programs and providing assistance to local area high schools.

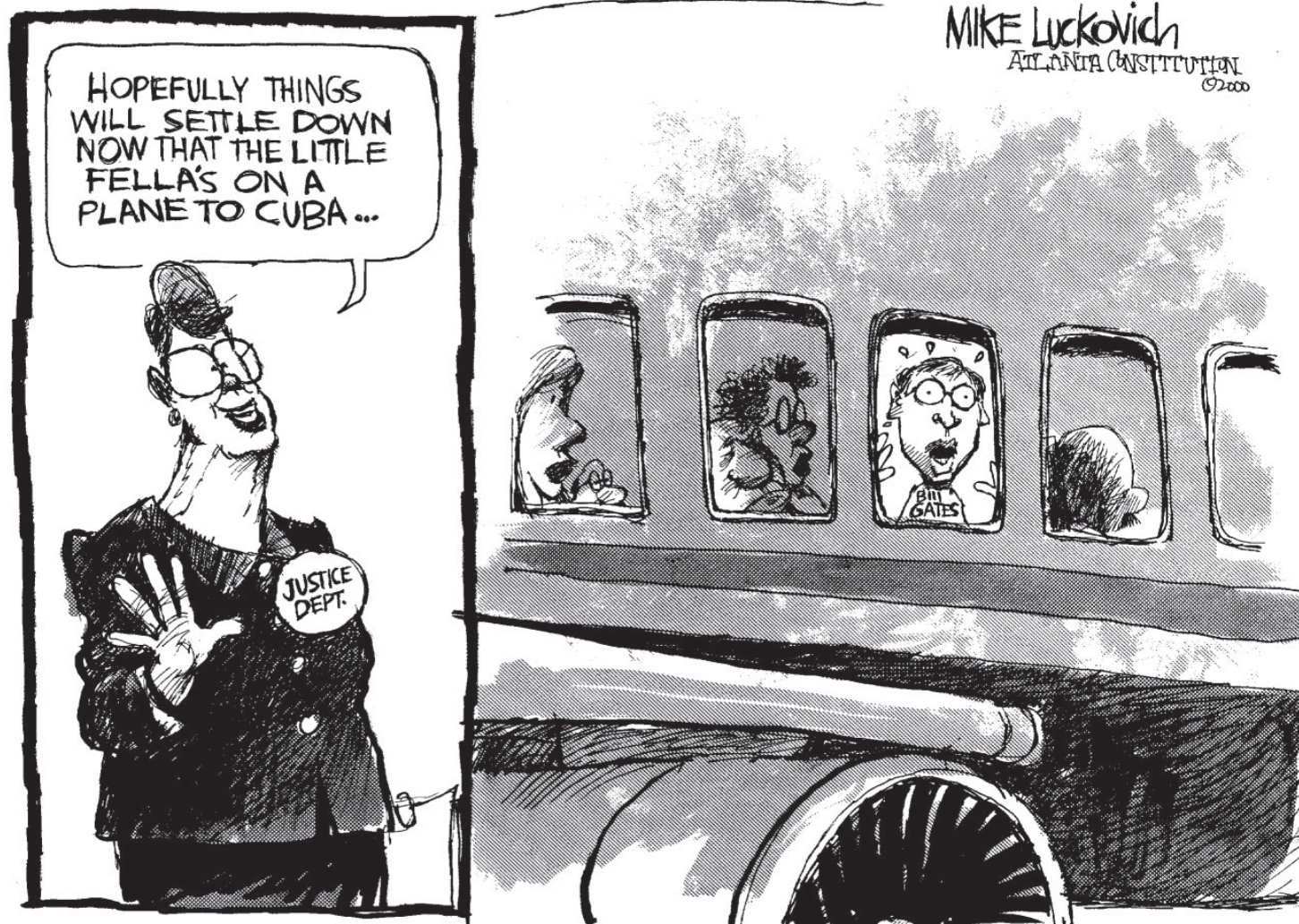
Kline's enthusiasm about the future of SG and the possibilities of the SG president is admirable, as is his enthusiasm for worthwhile reform.

The *Old Gold and Black* would like to offer its endorsement of freshman Tyler Overstreet for the office of SG Treasurer. Although she is a young candidate, Overstreet has already gained important experience by serving on the Student Budget Advisory Council and the SG Public Relations Committee. She has many concrete goals that will go a long way towards promoting a fair allotment of resources to student groups and streamlining bureaucratic road blocks such as eliminating the one-year waiting period between allotment of funds by SBAC and the receipt of those funds. Overstreet also has commendable goals for SG as a whole such as cultivating social relationships with other Winston-Salem colleges and giving more money to programs which nurture cultural awareness.

The *Old Gold and Black* also endorses Ady Giuliani for the office of speaker of the house. Giuliani, who is running unchallenged for the position, has acquired extensive legislative experience by sitting on the SG Physical Planning committee and the SG Campus Life committee. She has also served on the Student Life committee and the Panhellenic Council. Furthermore, she served as the 1999-2000 SG parliamentarian. She also hopes to improve communication between SG and its constituents by updating and advertising the SG Web page and placing suggestion boxes around campus so that students can more easily voice their concerns. Giuliani also intends to foster interaction between different groups on campus by providing incentives for students to attend cultural events on campus.

Tyler Koop will bring reliability and a strong work ethic as a SG executive. He wants to create a unified calendar of cultural events sponsored by minority student groups and revive the SG program on WAKE TV. However, while these qualities will go a long way in making him an adequate SG secretary, Koop needs more clearly defined goals and a more compelling vision to become an adequate SG executive. His work ethic is a step in the right direction, but the student body needs more than a faithful scribe in SG; they need an energized leader who is willing to take active measures in dealing with diversity on campus, honor code reform and communication between SG and the student body. The *Old Gold and Black* encourages Koop to take an active role in conjunction with his fellow officers so that SG can realize as many of its goals as possible.

The *Old Gold and Black* encourages students to vote for their future SG officers. Exercising your voting rights is a way to make lasting changes to the university.



Campus needs to be respectful

Instances of hatred on campus damage the learning environment.

I came to this institution with the idealistic notion that the intellectual community of a prestigious university would be committed to responsible and respectful behavior. However, I was wrong. Throughout my four years at Wake Forest, the

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GUEST COLUMNIST

ignorant and offensive acts of both the student body and the administration of this university have astounded me. However, I felt it was useless to publicly renounce our school and chose my participation in organizations and my personal interactions with fellow students as a more constructive means to channel my frustrations. However, in light of two outrageous events on our campus in the past few weeks – the *Old Gold and Black* revisionism controversy and the public defamiation and removal of GSSA Pride week signs – I realized that before I end my time at Wake Forest University, my voice needs to be heard by the entire community. So I would like to share with you what I have learned in my four years at this institution.

It was here that I truly learned about racism for the first time. I was fortunate enough to have come from a diverse community where racism and ethnocentric behavior were not prevalent. However, once I arrived at Wake Forest, I was amazed to hear minority students discuss the covert discrimination they are subjected to by classmates and professors each day. I was even more alarmed to hear one of my African-American friends defend the self-segregation of many members of minority groups as a response to this discrimination.

I was appalled when "someone" moved the homecoming voting from the Pit to Benson, obviously in the hopes that fewer athletes would vote and thus the homecoming court would not be dominated by the African-American sector of our community. I was even more outraged when I learned that various alumni had called to complain that the trend of African-American winners was not representative of our population. I thought to myself, "Do they honestly believe that we would be fooled into believing these aren't blatantly racist statements and acts?"

It was here that I became increasingly aware that sexism still plagues our society, even in the most educated sectors. I was alarmed when I heard fellow students in my classes accuse a professor of being a "feminist" because she taught three female and five male authors in an introductory English class. I was incited when a student honestly believed that a valid defense of using the exclusive pronoun he (as opposed to he or she) was, "Well, that it the way it has always been." I was amazed when an office on campus posted "try-outs" for a predominantly (if not primarily) female recruiting committee. I was angered when people disrespectfully tore down rape awareness posters and discredited any

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independent, aggressive female act as offensively "feminist." I am saddened by the number of women on this campus that suffer from eating disorders and frustrated by a social climate that breeds such unrealistic physical expectations for women.

It was at Wake Forest University that I also learned the true meaning of homophobia. I was astounded when the Wake Forest University Board of Trustees felt the need to "ban" a same sex religious ceremony occurring at an autonomous church on our campus. I was disturbed when fellow students didn't understand that a sector of our student population was clearly being discriminated against by this unnecessary decree. I was confounded that people did not understand that their personal religious beliefs, although an intricate part of their own moral code, are not justification for discrediting others' views or denying others' rights. I was embarrassed when fellow residents in my Efir Residence Hall dorm hung a sign that read "Stay Heterosexual." I was angered when students on campus defamed and tore down Pride Week posters on our campus. I am continually saddened when I witness the hate and prejudice directed at my homosexual and bisexual friends.

It was here that I also learned about blatant disrespect for the earth. I was disturbed to find that entire dorms on our campus did not contain a single recycling container. I was dismayed to learn that our student body stole so much silver and flatware from our eating locations that we were denied the right to non-disposable options. I was saddened by the campus-wide resistance to initial attempts at reducing our own waste. I thought to myself, "Are these people really unaware that not recycling is not only dangerous to the well-being of every species on this planet, but also against the law in the state of North Carolina?"

Wake Forest taught me the true meaning of religious intolerance and ethnocentrism. The simple fact that our university has a Baptist heritage and is located in the southeastern part of America does not negate the fact that we need to learn tolerance in a diverse educational setting. I was outraged when I learned that many departmental staff meetings opened with Christian prayers, despite the fact that many professors held other religious affiliations or were not religious at all. I am continually distressed at the blatant prejudice against our community's atheist, agnostic and alternative religion members. And I was appalled when our newspaper was so insensitive to an entire ethnic and religious community that it printed acknowledged propaganda after a written warning from the Anti-Defamation league.

I have learned all these lessons in my four years at Wake Forest. I've battled against the ignorance and intolerance through public art projects,

petitions, and educational programs. I've dedicated my life to education in part as a result of my experiences here. In the meantime, I have watched the masses of students band together to fight for only one cause—*more parking*. I am distressed and so incredibly sad to admit that as I approach graduation, I can not say I am proud to have spent four years as a member of this academic community. Even though these remarks do not pertain to all students and faculty members, I am still embarrassed to be associated with Wake Forest University and all it stands for to so many minority groups.

Although this column imbues my frustration, I hope to convey that my overwhelming sentiment is not that of anger, but rather of unfathomable sorrow. And it is not because I have received an inadequate education – I have flourished in the intellectual climate of the classrooms created by numerous outstanding professors of this university.

In addition, I have learned much from my interactions with members of various minority groups and from innumerable open-minded and intellectually driven students on this campus. But I – and each one of us – have also suffered as a member of a blatantly disrespectful community. And for that suffering, and those members of our university, I am inexpressibly sad.

Upon hearing of my intent to write this piece, a close friend of mine asked, "Have you really felt this way for the past four years?" My answer, sadly, is undeniably yes. And it will remain as such until our entire academic community takes the necessary steps toward dispelling ignorance and breeding tolerance. I was unaware that these ideas were novel for a group of educated, intelligent young adults. I'm not sure I truly believe they are. I just think that certain members of our community suffer from apathy and blatant disrespect for independence of thought and diversity.

Regardless of your personal belief system, each one of us holds a responsibility as a member of *any* community to be respectful to *all* members of that community. Pleading ignorance is simply not an excuse.

As a responsible member of this academic community, it is your duty to be aware of the differences between your perspective and those of members of other genders, religions, cultures, races or sexual preferences. You do not have to agree with them – but as a member of a free society, you are bound to respect them. And my hope is that as a responsible citizen you would make a conscious effort to be sensitive to them as well.

I urge you to consider these sentiments and ask yourself what we as a community can do to alleviate the problems that plague our campus. It is a sad day when members of an intellectual community can plead ignorance as an excuse for blatantly discrediting an entire community's culture or contributing to the destruction of our environment. It is an even sadder day when an individual honestly believes that his or her ethnocentric notions grant him or her the right to discriminate based upon those beliefs. Freedom without respect and sensitivity is counterproductive and irresponsible.

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