

EDITORIALS:

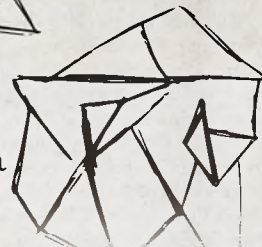
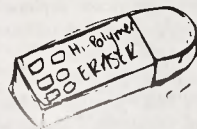
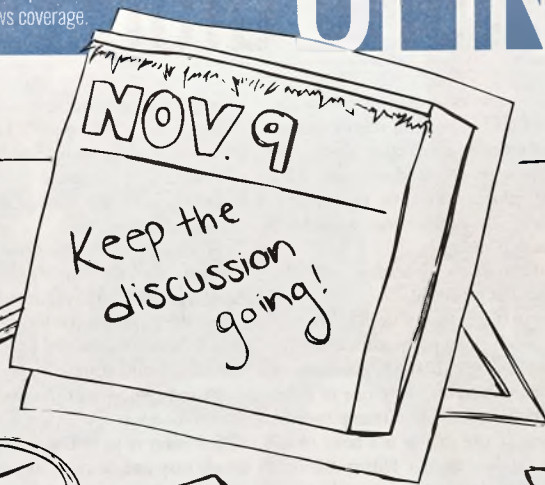
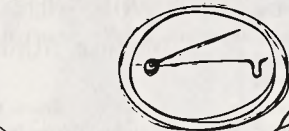
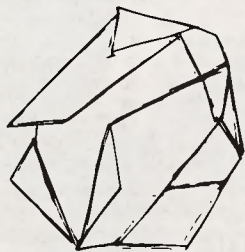
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Columns are written by ENN staff members and represent their informed opinions. Columns and other opinions content are separate from news coverage.

OPINIONS

STAFF EDITORIAL



There's no time to be exhausted after elections

HOW WE SEE IT

After such a divisive election season, it's important for Millennials to discuss what happened this past year.

By the time you read this, the United States will have elected its next president. Hopefully. Because this edition of *The Pendulum* went to print on Tuesday evening and only three pages were allowed to go to print after 9 p.m., as of writing this, the candidate who will take office is unknown.

But in this period of uncertainty, one thing is definite: Despite how "over" the divisive nature of this election season you are, there's no time to

be exhausted.

A recent Pew Research Center analysis found that more than one-third of social media users surveyed are sick of political content on their feeds. The study found that 37 percent of those surveyed said they were "worn out by how many political posts and discussions they see" on social media.

Steering away from productive dialogue — be it in the online world or the offline world — will only further

the unprecedented level of divisiveness we've seen this election season.

We've acknowledged that we can show up for debate watch events in the hundreds, but many of us have had our guards up when it comes to discussing our preferred candidate.

In an interview with *Elon News Network*, *Elon University* President Leo Lambert said, "It feels to me that people are more guarded in this election than in many that I can remember." And we've seen this at *Elon*, too. Aside from the "Elon for Hillary" Facebook group, no other state or national candidate was supported by *Elon* students on a public platform.

But now that these positions are filled, it's time for all of us to stop and

ask, "What happened?"

One opportunity to do this will be at the "After the Vote" event which will feature a panel discussion by Political Science faculty Nov. 10 at 4 p.m.

But that should be just one of many events that students must attend and that the *Elon* Politics Forum, the non-partisan political organization at *Elon*, should help organize. The organizations working to advance civic engagement on campus should make it a priority to follow up the election season with events that will help students dissect and understand these past few months critically. These should be driven by students and not only by faculty panels.

This is not a time to be exhausted — this is a time to discuss.

CAMPUS VOICES

Campus Voices are written by members of the *Elon* community, not ENN staff members, and represent their informed opinions. Campus Voices and other opinions content are separate from news coverage.

What coming out really means

This Campus Voices is in response to a Campus Voices piece by Francesca Collins titled "I'm coming out," published Oct. 30, 2016 on elonnewsnetwork.com.



Justin Brown
Senior

I want to start off this article by fully addressing what this is in response to. Last week, a Campus Voices entitled "I'm coming out" was published on elonnewsnetwork.com. The author of the Campus Voices "came out" as a conservative. At the end of this Campus Voices, she also noted that people are complex and that she was open to conversation.

What follows is my attempt at enlightening that author and encouraging that same conversation that she asked for from others concerning her Campus Voices.

Hearing a person say that she's coming out usually fills me with hope and happiness, mostly because I know exactly what it takes to get to that stage in life.

It takes a lot of strength, courage, thought and bravery to get to the point where you come out as

part of the LGBTQIA community. I instantly want to congratulate them for taking this huge step, one that I personally took my first year at *Elon*. I know exactly what it feels like to have your heart beating faster than you ever thought it could, to tell someone a secret that only you have known for such a long time.

That's why when people "come out" as something like being a conservative, that hope and happiness turns into anger and sadness. As someone who has undergone the coming out experience, to see such a monumental and even terrifying part of life appropriated makes me feel invalidated.

What makes coming out even more harrowing is the fact that it's not a one-shot deal that you only have to experience once. Throughout my entire life, I've come out more times than I can count, both formally and informally, to family, friends, professors and everyone in between. For me, and for many other

LGBTQIA people, coming out can be something that is on our minds almost all the time, especially entering into new contexts. And sometimes, coming out isn't something that is said.

Sometimes coming out is walking down the street holding hands with a boyfriend and wondering if someone will yell a slur at you. Sometimes it's blocking family and family friends from social media for fear of posting pictures of you showing affection to someone you love, only to receive backlash. Sometimes it's waiting until you are no longer dependent on your family to come out, since coming out could lead to your family abandoning you and leaving you on your own financially.

Along with all of those things, one thought that is always on my mind is the threat of physical violence. With so many stories about gay men being assaulted just because of their sexual orientation, I can't help to think about and even police my own behavior for fear of someone taking something I do

in a way that results in that person assaulting me.

Despite all these thoughts that run through my head daily, I still am thankful for a support system consisting of both friends who support and love me and family members who do the same.

Personally, I feel extremely grateful that I had an accepting mother to whom I came out three years ago, who supports me and whoever I choose to date, no matter what.

For some LGBTQIA people, that isn't a possibility for a multitude of reasons. Some have to worry about keeping their job, since you can be fired for being LGBTQIA in about 30 states.

Some have to worry about where they're going to use the bathroom, with the passage of bills like North Carolina's House Bill 2. And, for some, they have to worry about whether they will be one of the victims of a hate crime, especially in the wake of the Orlando Pulse Nightclub shooting this summer, which killed 49

people and injured many more. Some have to worry about where to live, with homeless youth service providers reporting that 40 percent of their clients identify as LGBTQIA. And while homeless, LGBTQIA people are more likely to be sexually assaulted, report mental health issues and consider suicide.

The point of all of this is simple: The phrase "coming out" has a long history, one that is intrinsically linked with the LGBTQIA community.

For me, saying that you're "coming out" as anything other than a member of the LGBTQIA community is looking in the face of so many people who have undergone this experience and using their emotions, their pain, their bravery, their triumph and sometimes their loss, and using it for your own gain.

What I ask is simple: Next time you use the phrase "coming out," think about the context it stems from, and use a different phrase if it doesn't apply to you.