

The FORUM

editorial board

Keir Bickerstaffe
Lindsay Oldenski
Courtney Christian
Ben Thorne

statement of purpose

The Forum exists to facilitate dialogue and expression on matters of importance to Guilford College and its mission. Toward this end, active community participation in these pages is vital.

editorial policy

Every effort will be made to print appropriate submissions of editorials, cartoons and letters to the editor. They must be signed, with the phone number of the author or artist included. Editorials must be no longer than 400 words and letters to the editor must be no more than 250 words. The Guilfordian reserves the right to edit submissions for grammatical correctness and brevity.

Guilford poll at odds with election results

Ignorance can feel like being smothered under layers of quilts in a darkened room: not knowing which direction to go, one simply reaches out to grasp anything, while feeling pressure close all around, conforming to your movements.

For many voters this election provided a similar experience, and the difference between how Guilford students voted compared with the rest of the nation shows a surprising lack of connection, and a disparity between how Guilford students view themselves and how they actually voted.

Typically, people think of Guilford as being a liberal—diverse, but still liberal—college founded by Quakers. Therefore, it shouldn't be surprising that Clinton won the presidency in *The Guilfordian's* mock election poll. Yet more Republican votes were cast than the staff expected: in fact, judging from the ballots cast there are more Republicans attending Guilford than there are Quakers.

Apparently, when it comes to matters of serious political debate, students do not fit so neatly into the preconceived picture we paint for ourselves. Following, it also appears a tendency exists to dismiss an aspect of the community the majority doesn't

feel comfortable with. Labels are made of a slicker substance than perhaps is good for us.

More troubling still is the gap between Guilford voters and voters from the rest of the state and country. Mirroring Guilford's poll, Clinton won the national election, but not nearly by as wide a margin as he would have had *The Guilfordian's* poll been real. North Carolina's senatorial battle between Jesse Helms and Harvey Gantt turned in Helms' favor, albeit by a narrow margin. Yet in the poll, Gant won an overwhelming victory.

There are more Republicans attending Guilford than there are Quakers.

This raises an interesting dilemma. Guilford is supposed to educate the community leaders of tomorrow, yet their political beliefs are essentially at odds with what may be basically called a moderate America that for the most part only wants a sensible president ungiven to extremes. This can be seen by the number of moderates and Republicans who voted for Clinton or a third party rather than support a Republican platform they viewed as being linked to conservative extrem-

ism.

Of course, the media did not make things easy for voters, and neither did the candidates. Unfortunately, recent political trends have made it a liability to stand definitively for anything controversial, and so politicians naturally attempt to appeal to everyone by angering no one.

In short, they try to win by not having a decisive opinion on any of the crucial matters of the day. Negative ads smearing opponents while doing nothing to clarify the situation only add to the confusion.

What should one do to counter the ignorance—the lack of a reliable way of determining where a candidate will really vote—which ensues? According to what staff members heard during the poll, some responded simply by voting along party lines.

"You can't vote for Candidate X. He's a Democrat, and you can never trust them." Or vice versa. The problem, of course, with such dogmatic logic lies in the situation it helps create: partisan politics which only serve to divide, instead of simply serve. Such politics are what allow deceptive labels to stay in use and ultimately add to the distrust, factionalism, and ignorance inherent in our system.

Companies not to blame for cancer

AMY BROACH
business manager

Smoke this.

In the past year, numerous attacks have been placed on tobacco companies because they knew that their products caused cancer, and were very addictive, yet they still sold them to the public. But yet, the public also knew about these facts, thanks to the little warning label on the side of the package, and numerous public address announcements.

Do the American people need a neon flashing sign?

The people of the United States have known for years the harmful effects of cigarettes and tobacco, and still, they pop them like pills.

So what I don't understand is why people with emphysema and lung cancer who knew these effects are pursuing lawsuits for large cash settlements. The tobacco companies didn't put the cigarettes in their hands or mouths; the public has to go out and purchase them.

The best analogy I can think of for this situation is a person who files a lawsuit against a scissors manufacturer after receiving a cut from a pair of scissors. The reason for this lawsuit: the manufacturer knew the scissors were sharp and dangerous when they produced them; therefore, it's the manufacturer's fault that the idiot cut themselves.

The people of the United States have known for years the harmful effects of cigarettes and tobacco, and still, they pop them like pills.

Let's face it. The reason for these lawsuits is greed. Americans these days will do anything to get a little extra cash in their pockets. And not only is it happening in the tobacco industry, but also the fast-food chains.

Remember the McDonald's incident? Some clumsy lady spilled scorching hot coffee on herself, and then claimed it was McDonald's fault that she received burns from the incident. Somehow she strikes me as the person who would speed back to the restaurant when she realized her coffee was lukewarm instead of hot, just because it wasn't exactly right.

What amazes me is that the courts granted her settlement. I believe that it shows the gullibility of today's society. Can't our "honorable" jury see straight through these people? All they want is something for nothing.

Maybe they should take a lesson from the tobacco farmer that has to shed blood and sweat just to put food on their family's table. These hard-working people don't have time to take someone to court to get something for nothing.

Sounds like a study in ethics.