

Enough of Quaker values, what about Quaker process?

A READER'S RESPONSE TO "GREEK LIFE: AN UNTAPPED POSSIBILITY," PUBLISHED ON SEPTEMBER 30.

There's a running joke in my Environmental Planning class — if you ever don't know the answer to a question, just talk about impervious surfaces, smart growth, or global warming, and hope for partial credit.

Guilford's Quaker testimonies are the half-credit equivalent for administrators and students at Guilford looking to advance any number of agendas. Most employ some variation of the following argument:

1. My proposition is rooted in integrity/simplicity/equality/peace.
2. This value is a Quaker testimony.
3. Ergo, my proposition is consistent with Guilford's Quaker values.

For instance, Laura Devinsky, in her recent exploration of the possibility of Greek life on the Guilford campus, went to great pains to demonstrate the possibility that fraternities and sororities could be communities grounded in equality. In discussing what Greek Life at Guilford might look like, Laura essentially reduced it to community-service groups: "groups of people who work hard and have fun," who don't haze, party excessively, or discriminate in their admissions. Despite Laura's and my very different understandings of what constitutes Greek Life, we, like most of the Guilford community, take Guilford's Quaker values seriously. An unfortunate consequence of this seriousness is attempts to map Quaker values onto propositions that have no basis in Quaker testimonies.

This tendency is rampant at Guilford. For another example, look no further than the final line of your tests and essays: "I have been honest and observed no

dishonesty." Or, more recently, look to your Community Senate, who recently drafted and approved a social honor code: "As a member of the Guilford Community I strive to be honorable in my actions through the Core Values and my experiences."

Though these statements seem to promote integrity at face value, implicit in the development of an honor code is the idea of two-tiered behavior, that one behaves one way in normal interaction, and another way when on one's honor. Both these codes fly in the face of early Friends who were imprisoned and died for the belief that people should practice honesty in all speech and interaction, and trust others to do the same. I daresay students who didn't

by such a proposition! The unmitigated access of each individual to the Inward Light makes Quakerism open to continuing revelation. But all values and testimonies emerge contextually, and to appropriate values without mention of context is as disrespectful as it is ineffectual.

Guilford has tarried at the same crossroads for quite some time. Should we run an entirely secular institution with the occasional, respectful nod to our heritage, a la Johns Hopkins or Swarthmore? Or should we fully embrace Quaker processes of discernment as our means of all institutional interaction?

Personally, I think the country already has a wealth of small, liberal-arts colleges committed to diversity, academic-excellence, and community. Most of these schools are far better equipped to enact their values than we are, inasmuch as they have endowments twice, if not ten times the size of ours; a few might even have students, faculty, and staff just as committed as Guilford's. What separates Guilford isn't our values or the decisions we make, it's how we make them. Our Quaker forerunners, from George Fox to Francis King, have bequeathed us tested guidelines for communal interaction, and to employ them responsibly in our own day requires serious study and meditation on the original intentions and situations that

prompted them — something we as students seem to have neglected.

We stand at a crossroads and, before rushing either direction, we should embrace the dynamic decision-making processes of the early Friends and discern for ourselves who, as an institution, we want to be.

Chances are by the time we figure it out, we'll have already arrived.

-Andrew Taylor, senior

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already strive to be honorable in their actions won't do so now because Community Senate got marker-board happy.

The list goes on — next time you have a free afternoon, go to the Friends Historical Collection in the library and see how early Friends would have felt about taking off work for Martin Luther King, Jr., Day or the proposed expansions to Founders. This isn't to say the Guilford community should dogmatically strive to follow every leaning of the early Quakers — indeed, seventeenth century Friends would have themselves been horrified

Letter to the Editor

Greensboro resident speaks out against Cornell article

A READER'S RESPONSE TO "CORNELL JUMPS IN WITH THE SHARKS," PUBLISHED ONLINE SEPTEMBER 22.

I was dismayed by the campaign profile article the Guilfordian recently published on District 5 City Council Candidate Jorge Cornell. The article is filled with unfounded claims and conjecture so absurd it skirts libel.

First, a minor problem: the article is immediately made suspect by the hyperbolic description of the cafe where the interview took place. It smacks more of a creative writing exercise than a piece of news writing; that sort of lush description lends itself to distracting from the facts rather than underscoring them.

But this excusable flourish reflects a serious, systemic problem within the article. I believe the article is a polemic designed to make a bold generalization founded by a racist, classist gut reaction

to the civic efforts of a "gang leader."

For the record, Jorge Cornell is a member of a street organization that does not identify as a 'gang.' He is the Inca, meaning state leader, of The Almighty Latin King and Queen Nation, not the "self-admitted Latin Kings and Queens gang leader," as the article alleges.

The ALKQN was instrumental in brokering the 2008 peace treaty between the street organizations within NC, before its disruption and eventual conclusion in forming the Paradigm Shift. The ALKQN does not abide criminal activity by its members and instead is focusing on improving the conditions of its members through community building.

I think it was remiss of the article to describe the G58 area as "farther from the integral part of District 5 and its inner-community." Viewing a map of the archipelagic District 5, it is should be abundantly clear no part of it that could be described as "inner."

Morgan mentions "the police

accountability issue" and never expounds upon what it entails, but still feels comfortable corroborating his implicit disagreement with it by using a quote from "senior Natalie Smith," whose status as an expert on these matters fails to precede her.

To be clear on this, what Cornell is concerned with is ending the harassment of people of color and the mistreatment of folks in general when they are incarcerated.

In the second half of the article, the article's argument further crumbles and digresses, resorting to vague rhetorical questions ("is your concern for the community and its youngsters foremost in your mind?") and an unsolicited suggestion that holding a town-hall meeting might be a good idea.

The bit about Cornell's sunglasses is a sloppy and unsubtle metonymy for a level of wealth and distance from his potential constituents that simply don't exist. Cornell works a wage labor job to support his two daughters.

As for the "political learner's permit"

comment about the need for experience to govern well, it suggests that in order to be an effective politician, you must have already been an effective politician. This is a logically unsound argument.

District 5 Resident Tyrone Joyner's comment that the Cornell campaign is generic says nothing; his comment that "in order to be productive you must be consistent" is an irrelevant political truism.

The litany of baseless and uninformed assessments in the article is concluded by mentioning that Trudy Wade was too busy to do an interview, and completely ignoring the details of her campaigns past or the platform she's currently running.

I encourage folks who are interested in the election to do independent research and make informed decisions.

-Daniel Stainkamp