

N.C. residents need to fight Amendment One

By Emily Gelblum
GUEST WRITER, '04

On July 3, 2011, my wife Meghan and I got married after almost five years together. We hosted exactly 100 guests at a funky old barn in a small town outside of Portland, Ore. I wore an off-white dress. My father walked me down the aisle. Our food was incredible. My cousins drank too much wine, danced for hours and we were surrounded by all of our favorite people. It was the most incredible night of our lives. It was also the last night I saw my grandmother.

Early in the morning of Oct. 24, my grandmother, Sylvia Gelblum, passed away suddenly from a heart attack. She was the beloved matriarch of our large, Jewish family — one that includes her four children and nine grandchildren.

When I flew back to Chapel Hill for the memorial, I was reminded of why I've always loved my family so much: the Gelblums stick together. We're a tribe. We needed to be around each other, to tell stories about Gran to people who knew her just as well. Those few days with my family were perfect. In the midst of a whole mess of grief, we had each other.

After the memorial, Meghan and I started talking seriously about moving from Portland, Ore. to N.C. We'd considered it a few years ago, but the timing wasn't right. Now, we decided, it was.

We plan to start trying for a baby in the next year and want our kiddos to grow up around the fierce love, hilarity and — as my

grandmother always said — "happy chaos" of the Gelblum family. We both gave notice at our jobs and began the hectic process of cross-country moving.

Being the daughter of a lawyer (and niece of two), I knew that one of the first things to research were the rights Meghan and I would have to each other and our children as residents of N.C. I assumed they'd be similar to those we enjoy in Oregon as legal domestic partners: hospital visitation rights and medical decision-making privileges, automatic assumption of parentage for non-biological parents and several other financial and legal benefits.

In my research, I was horrified to find that — while domestic partnership is currently in place — on May 8, N.C. voters will be asked to vote on a constitutional amendment that would not only prohibit same-sex marriage, but has the potential to invalidate and prohibit any legal recognition for unmarried couples — hetero- or homosexual.

If passed, Amendment One will ensure that the only legal right Meghan and I will have to each other, and the only right she will have to our kids, is power of attorney. This means that I'll likely need to work throughout my entire pregnancy and have no choice but to go back to work afterwards in order to provide health insurance for our child and myself. This means that, should something happen to me, my family would have more rights in court to gain custody of our child than Meghan would.

It also sends a message to LGBT youth that their home state's values see them as "less than." At best, the passage of

this amendment may lead to more youth staying in the closet and, what's worse, could increase the teen suicide rate.

Businesses may be unable to recruit top talent from around the country in order to compete because they'll be unable to offer domestic partnership benefits. On the whole, this amendment is not only embarrassing to North Carolina; it's dangerous as hell.

It's appalling to me that, in order to raise our children closer to family in a state we love, we risk losing any legal recognition that our relationship exists. On July 3, Meghan and I made a commitment in front of the people we love most in this world to build our future together. We, the two of us together, will make incredible mothers. We will host barbecues and family dinners. We'll go to PTA meetings and soccer games and spend hours at the kitchen table running through spelling words and math problems. We'll have dance parties in the living room and attend every school play and dance recital. Our children will know that home is the safest place they can be.

Please work to defeat Amendment One. Don't just vote against it — educate people in your community about the far-reaching effects it will have on our state. This amendment will be defeated if the people of North Carolina understand the true implications it will have. This is not about same-sex marriage. This is about human rights, the stability of families, the growth of business and the very character of our state. North Carolina can be known as the state that took this thing down. Do something.

Staff Editorial

Step away from the social media

Religion. Age. Race. Economic status. Facebook?

On Jan. 22, author and activist Shane Claiborne spoke at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro about "Tearing Down the Walls" that divide us.

During his presentation Claiborne delivered poignant stories from the Palestine/Israel border, the U.S./Mexico border, and from his ongoing fight for the rights of the homeless in Philadelphia. Through these examples he challenged listeners to fight against the countless physical and social barriers that separate humans from one another. This is a lesson most have heard many times before and will likely hear again.

But then Claiborne made an unconventional move that struck a chord with the majority of the college students in the crowd. He explored social media as a new wall that can generate detrimental effects in today's society.

Sure, some evidence proves that social media can act as a catalyst for change. The Egyptian revolution in January 2011 reportedly started with a simple Facebook post and picked up steam with the use of Twitter and YouTube. Recently, thousands of users on blog and social networking sites successfully joined together to stand against and stop PIPA and SOPA from being signed.

Though these extraordinary circumstances are worth mentioning, it's important to also consider the value of our daily uses of social media. Time spent on sites like Facebook and Twitter inhibits the actualizing of genuine relationships and radical change that can only occur away from the computer.

We've grown to believe that the Internet is the ultimate gateway into a world full of possibility, but it's important to realize that it can also yield the reverse effect.

It's a lot easier to "friend" someone on Facebook or "like" an organization's page than it is to actually develop and nurture a relationship or to go out and offer your time and skills to an organization. If we're not careful, our dependence on the Internet and social media platforms can diminish the impact that we all can have, whether it be on one individual, the Guilford community, Greensboro, or the world.

Here at The Guilfordian, we're working to establish a bigger online presence with a brand new website (www.guilfordian.com), increased activity on Facebook (TheGuilfordian) and Twitter (@theguifordian), and a social justice blog (<http://guilcosojo.wordpress.com/>).

While we certainly aim for our readers to engage and interact using these online platforms, we do not intend for this interaction to be confined within the walls of the World Wide Web. Instead, we hope that our articles, videos and photos encourage you comment, "like" or "retweet," but also further compel you to step out from behind the computer and make a difference using more than a mouse and keyboard.

REFLECTING GUILFORD COLLEGE'S CORE QUAKER VALUES, THE TOPICS AND CONTENT OF STAFF EDITORIALS ARE CHOSEN THROUGH CONSENSUS OF ALL 16 EDITORS.

SOPA and PIPA not popular, but needed



By Haejin Song
STAFF WRITER

"It's no longer OK to NOT know how the internet works," reads an anti-Protect IP Act and Stop Online Piracy Act banner, held proudly in a New York City protest on Jan. 18 against the controversial bills presented to the Senate and House in 2011.

The introduction of this legislation in Congress has not only sparked outrage amongst freedom of speech advocates but also from the Internet media gang, namely Wikipedia, Twitter and Google.

Who would have thought that a well-intentioned bill dedicated to combating foreign piracy sites would have led to an exploration of domestic First Amendment rights, Internet censorship and democracy?

The legislation and ideals of SOPA and PIPA are a sensitive topic. As with any typical debate, there are pros and cons.

"The potential (to restrict the First Amendment right) is there," said Robert Whitnell, former chair of computing and information technology and current professor and chair of the chemistry department. "It becomes a matter where, even without the explicit violation of the First Amendment by the government, the chilling effect can lead to people choosing not to exercise their right for fear of what may happen."

A group of anti-SOPA organizers in Manhattan shouted to the crowd, "What does democracy look like?"

"This is what democracy looks like," the crowd zealously responded, reported TechCentral.

While I do agree that the bills may cause unintended consequences in limiting an individual's freedom to knowledge and unlimited access to the cyber world, I strongly believe that the main messages and intentions of SOPA and PIPA are undoubtedly vital in our society, more so now than ever.

It's no secret that we, and many of our peers, download songs, movies, or episodes of "The Big Bang Theory" through illegal means. At a time when the Internet continues to grow and piracy sites are easily accessible, why should we bother to give our hard-earned

penny to the Hollywood moguls when their works are up for grabs on the World Wide Web?

Unfortunately, that's the mindset that many of us have — we live in the modern world where expedience and convenience outweigh the morality of our actions.

"Illegal conduct is not free speech," said Chris Dodd, chairman of the Motion Picture Association of America, to CNN. "Illegal conduct is what it is. It's stealing."

Although the proponents of SOPA and PIPA continually voice their positive views of the legislation, over the months, the popularity of the acts has plummeted with the help of powerful adversaries.

Google featured a special doodle of SOPA and PIPA by drawing a black censorship bar on their "Google" logo.

Wikipedia joined the opposition, blacking out the English-language Wikipedia site for a day.

A group known as "Anonymous" hacked into personal accounts of several advocates of the bills. A tweet from Republican Iowa Sen. Chuck Grassley's twitter account said, "Dear Iowans, vote against ACTA, SOPA, and PIPA, because this man, Chuck Grassley, wants YOUR internet censored and all of that BS," according to ABC News.

Additionally, the twitter account of Dana White, Ultimate Fighting Championship President, was hacked when he continued to defend his company's support of SOPA, according to CNN News.

Sure, it's completely normal for anyone to be apprehensive of the Internet's future if SOPA and PIPA are passed, but it's not normal for protestors to oppose these bills through extremist means of hacking and even self-censorship, as in the case of Wikipedia's blackout.

While the Anonymous group tries to portray their actions in a positive and heroic light in favor of protecting the public, their self-described efforts suggest a rather threatening demeanor towards anyone who dare to oppose them: "We are anonymous. We are legion. We do not forgive. We do not forget. Expect us!"

The opponents of SOPA and PIPA are damaging their own cause through their actions. If you disagree with these bills, voice your opinions loud and clear without forcibly shutting out others.

If I were you, I wouldn't be afraid of these bills. I'd be afraid of SOPA's hypocritical opponents.