

Recognition of eating disorders overdue at Guilford

Guilford College, like many other liberal arts schools, has a hyperfocus on political correctness.

Generally speaking, we make swift judgments against anyone who uses the wrong pronoun when addressing their peers. We call others out on their inability to recognize their privilege.

We pride ourselves on using all the right words, avoiding offense at all costs.

Yet, while we are overly cognizant of these issues, we have let others fly under the radar. The level of insensitivity regarding how we address food and body issues on campus is alarming.

As someone who has personally grappled with an eating disorder, I find myself exceptionally aware of the impact that words can have on those affected.

"Wow, you must really be hungry."
 "Are you really going to eat all that?"
 "You must have a hollow leg. I don't know where you put it all."

These are all comments that have been made to me while eating. Although they may seem harmless, they can be triggering to someone with any history of an eating disorder.

Sufferers have a hard enough time convincing themselves to eat "normally" without others' input. Reconnecting with our intuitive cues takes self-trust that can easily falter by someone else's criticisms.

Even if someone does not appear to be struggling, you must still be cautious with your words.

"Eating disorders can be an invisible wound," said sophomore and peer health and wellness educator Molly Anne Marcotte.

The sunken cheeks, protruding bones and refusal to eat can be indicating factors, but they are not fundamental.

"The publicized figure in the media remains emaciated models with ribs and collarbones begging for nourishment, but a friend of a healthy weight could just as easily be throwing up their food after every meal," said Marcotte.

In the United States, 20 million women and half as many men experience an eating disorder at some point in their lifetime, according to the National Eating Disorder Association.

At Guilford, I hear no discourse about these numbers. Eating disorders are rarely mentioned, let alone discussed. Acknowledgement must be made for those who suffer from what is another form of mental illness.

In order to change, education needs to begin now.

This is made difficult because of our culture's diet mentality. Virtually everyone is at war with his or her body. We have taught ourselves that lots of food is bad and lots of exercise is good. Period.

It is therefore easy for us to make assumptions about others and their needs, hence the unsolicited comments.

"When the messages surrounding healthy eating and exercise introduce such natural elements of life only as a means to lose weight, we devalue the need for people of all weights to treat their bodies well as an act of self-love, instead of self-deprivation," said Marcotte.

When restriction is the status quo, I can understand how someone might deem it appropriate to make an observation about the size or quality of someone's meal.

But, the fact is that it is not.

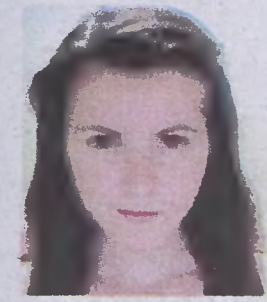
The most direct way to confront this is by conditioning students to abstain from publicly assessing others' food choices.

The next step is to create opportunities on campus for students to learn about those with eating disorders and how to be tactful when relating to them.

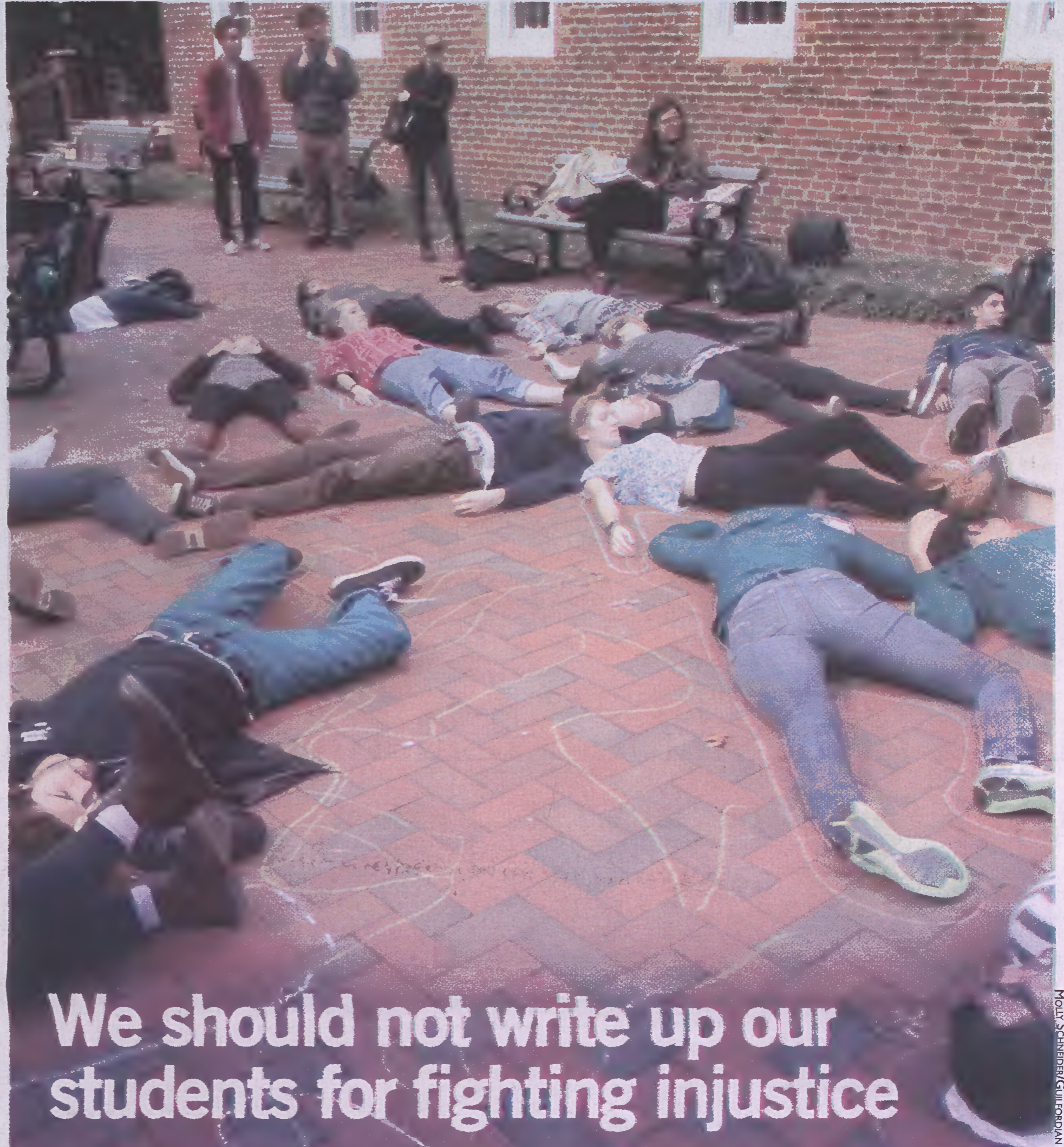
Marcotte suggests inviting speakers, or fellow students, to talk about the issue in order to raise awareness.

Ultimately, consciousness is key. You never know who is battling demons beneath the surface or how your words may affect them.

Guilford needs to step up and make strides towards inclusion for all people, including those with eating disorders.



BY QUINCY MALESOVAS
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We should not write up our students for fighting injustice

On Wednesday, Oct. 22, Guilford students rallied in front of Founders Hall to protest injustice and speak truth to power. It was a true display of some of Guilford's key core values such as justice, equality and excellence.

As students laid their bodies on the ground to be outlined in chalk, they gained visibility, bringing awareness to the countless lives taken at the hands of police brutality.

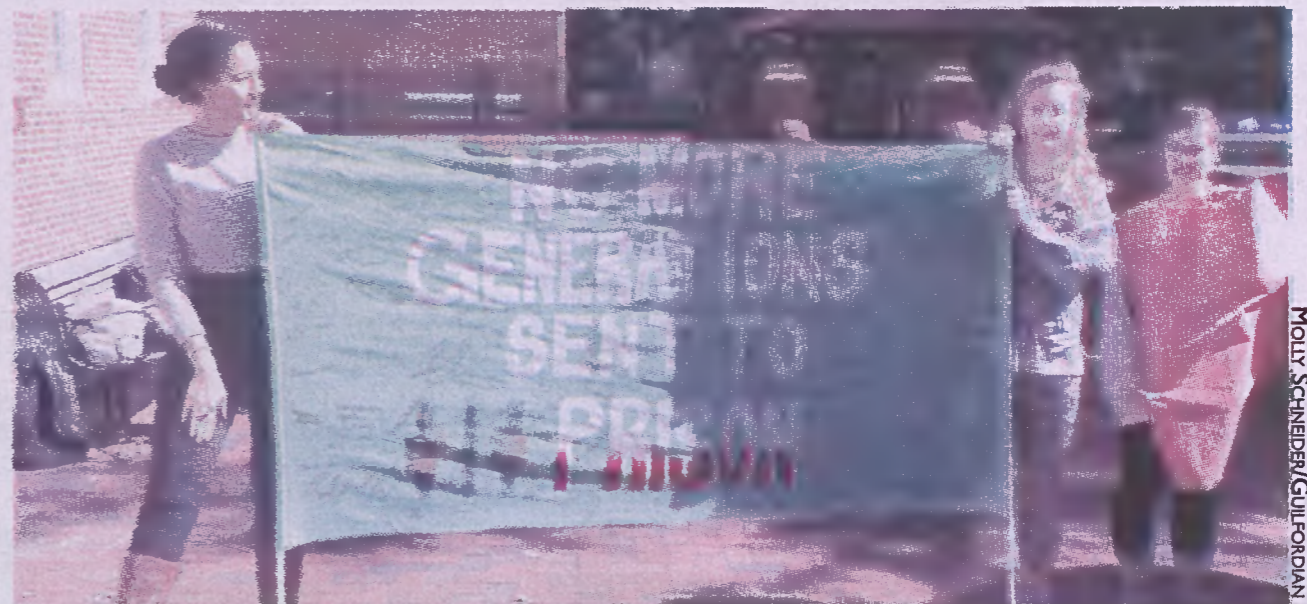
Known as a die-in, this protest was not only seen as a symbol of students' dedication to the resistance against this issue but as a safety hazard that warranted a write-up.

Guilford's website states we want our students to promote positive change in the world. We also want our graduates to be risk takers. These students were doing nothing short of that. If it is a matter of welfare and accountability, then there needs to be better communication between the protesters and Public Safety. We do not want our students to be discouraged. They should be allowed the right to protest.

According to senior Juliet Smith, Director of Public Safety Ron Stowe exited Founders Hall and started to tell people they needed to move because they were acting against fire code. If they did not move, they would be written up. When no one moved, Public Safety officers arrived to document them.

"A female public safety officer approached me and said that she was sorry, but if I did not move she would be forced to write me up," said Smith. "The way I understood it was that it wasn't only a safety hazard but a liability issue. If Public Safety didn't do their job, they would be responsible for the violation, and Guilford College would be held accountable, not us."

"When she asked for my information, I said, 'I will happily give you my name and G number, but I am not going to move. I am



Students took part in a die-in outside of Founders Hall on Oct. 22 as part of the national day of protest against police brutality. Students lying on the ground were written up by Public Safety.

doing the right thing."

The students showed true dedication as they remained on the ground, standing up against institutional racism, which is something all of Guilford should be proud of. They took Guilford's core value of equality in stride.

When students are written up for standing up for the rights of others, it can serve as negative reinforcement. It is confusing for the students involved, for students who want to get involved and for other supporters. Some students may even start to think that if they participate in future protests, they might get punished.

Although Smith was made aware of why she was being written up, a lot of students were not, adding to the confusion and anger. It almost felt like they were being controlled by the officers rather than protected.

"The male officer told me I was blocking the entrance to Founders (Hall) and immediately asked me for my G number," said sophomore Najha Zigbi-Johnson. "I gave it to him, but he was very abrupt and not at all accommodating. Once he got what he needed, he just walked away."

In complex situations like these, we need consistency. Ultimately, to the officer who wrote students up, it came down to safety.

"The policy states that you have the right to protest so long as it does not interfere with the operations of the school or the rights of others," said Stowe. "One of the great things about Guilford is that our students are very socially conscious and open-minded, but when what we want starts infringing upon the rights of others, we have to draw the line."

"They were blocking the path to and from Founders, and after being asked to move, they did not comply with the request."

If that is what it comes down to, then the implementation of more communication between administration, Public Safety and the students could help keep everyone happy.

"It would absolutely be beneficial for students and Public Safety to work together," said Smith. "In this case, even if it meant just blocking off a small pathway through the demonstration, just that sort of solution could help prevent future write-ups while still giving students their right to protest."

Guilford's community is forward-thinking. In order for us to continue to foster minds in accordance with the core values, the whole community has to work with those minds, not against them.



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