

OPINION

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Dialogue can solve campus controversy

It's no secret that Guilford tends to support Palestine, though there is no official position on the conflict.

"As an institution, I do not think we have a set stance on the conflict," said Faris El-Ali '14, student success mentor and assistant coordinator of the First-Year Experience, community director, and Students for Justice in Palestine member, in an email interview. "We have many different people with different values, political views and communal ties."

While the opinion that Guilford is anti-Semitic is far from true, students with opinions outside the perceived norm still feel unwelcome.

"We don't have a place for free expression of differing opinions," said Frank Massey, Friends Center and IFP gifts discernment coordinator. "There is a sense that mostly one side has been presented on campus."

On Tuesday, Feb. 3, a presentation by Steven Salaita stirred things up on campus once again, not because of Salaita's stance on Israel and Palestine, but rather because several students felt blindsided by Salaita's coming.

Salaita was brought partly as a response to Edwin Black, who came to Guilford this past semester. Salaita was sponsored by SJP, the Friends Center and the women's, gender and sexuality studies, English and peace and conflict studies departments.

"Those who organized it could have met with the Jewish students and asked what we thought could have been done to foster an open dialogue," said senior Josh Weil, Hillel member. "Maybe we would have actually felt like we were a part of the conversation."

Last semester, students made progress toward an open dialogue on campus when Students for Justice in Palestine joined Hillel for Shabbat and both groups met for pizza at

Campbell house.

"Even in the midst of the awful stuff last fall ... we had those conversations," said Max Carter, Friends Center director and adjunct professor of religious studies and SJP advisor. "We had that tea and talk and chatted with Jewish and Palestinian students. We can still do that."

Last semester, members of SJP and Hillel went to the Open Hillel conference together.

"(A group) from SJP, as well as ... Hillel, attended the Open Hillel conference at Harvard University," said junior Walid Mosarsaa, SJP president. "(Many) members of our community ... have all been very supportive of peaceful dialogue between Hillel and Students for Justice in Palestine."

On all sides, there are students who want to communicate.

"We're both hurting," said sophomore Mara Stern, Hillel member. "Let's try to deal with those feelings together rather than

letting them tear us apart."

To do that, Guilford needs to be open to all sides of the conflict.

"We need to keep bringing speakers onto campus that have different points of view and attempt a balance," said Sari Goldberg '14.

Whether it's Salaita, Black or another speaker altogether, those who oppose the views being presented should be open to listening.

"We have been willing to take on these conversations," said Jim Hood, professor of English. "I've been very uncomfortable numbers of times here at Guilford, and I've just come to understand that (we) need to struggle with these issues instead of not letting Salaita speak."

With an openness to different ideas, Guilford's reputation as an anti-Semitic school won't be the dominant narrative, as it shouldn't.

"(Salaita) started off by having to say, 'I'm

not an anti-Semite,'" said Jeremy Rinker, visiting assistant professor and chair of peace & conflict studies. "That kind of set the tone ... and raised the tension."

To move forward, everyone needs to understand that not every Palestinian and Jew has the same opinion as other Palestinians and Jews.

"There's a world of difference between being Jewish and being Zionist," said sophomore Niall Dongan. "People make assumptions that if someone is very Jewish and very involved in the Jewish community they must support Israel for the same reasons that Zionists might."

That understanding is vital to open discourse.

"The students still want to work together, both Palestinian and Jewish students," said Massey. "They want to create an environment here where they can move forward, have programs here to increase the dialogue."



BY NICOLE ZELNIKER
FEATURES EDITOR



After tweeting about attacks on Gaza this summer, Steven Salaita lost his tenured position at the University of Illinois and now tours U.S. campuses.

COURTESY OF THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE

STAFF EDITORIAL

Outside opinions, but not outside decisions

The arrival of Steven Salaita on our campus last Tuesday, Feb. 3, caused quite a stir. Not only were students and faculty on campus divided, the event — and the decision to move it from The Frank Family Science Center's Joseph M. Bryan Jr. Auditorium to the Carnegie room at the request of the Frank family — had Guilford in the news all around the country and the world. From the Chronicle of Higher Education to the Electronic Intifada, the issue of moving the event was debated. Furthermore, members of the local community took offense at the college's invitation of speakers, as did major donors such as the Frank family.

Guilford is not perfect, nor are we as a community united. Some community members were deeply concerned and offended by Salaita's invitation, accusing him of anti-Semitism. Others were upset by the change of locations. On top of this, to be under attack from all sides of a much wider national debate about academic freedom did nothing to ease those tensions. We appreciate the local community and, especially, our donors. We encourage them to join our freely offered campus events. But we also ask that people outside our community respect that we as a campus are attempting to balance the needs of all students and faculty.

As Salaita discussed in his talk on Tuesday, as an institution of higher education we need academic freedom in order to grow and move beyond widely accepted narratives. Although Salaita's talk was not canceled, we must raise the question: if donors have the power to decide what events can and cannot be hosted in buildings they gave to us, what is next? Have we turned our backs on our commitment to our core values of integrity, equality and justice? As a community and institution, it is clear these issues demand our attention.

For those outside our campus, we invite you to join the conversations we are having — on racism, anti-Semitism, academic freedom, and many more conversations. Perhaps instead of jumping to conclusions about one another we can work together to create a safer community for everyone, on and off campus.

REFLECTING GUILFORD COLLEGE'S CORE QUAKER VALUES, THE TOPICS AND CONTENT OF STAFF EDITORIALS ARE CHOSEN THROUGH CONSENSUS OF ALL 14 EDITORS AND ONE FACULTY ADVISER OF THE GUILFORDIAN'S EDITORIAL BOARD.

Going beyond Black History Month

Unity. This is what needs to happen in our society during Black History Month to bring our country into much needed harmony.

Since its evolution from "Negro History Week" to "Black History Month," February is a time for ongoing reflection and action for the preservation of historical data that has molded our country.

The observance of Black History Month is not as effective as it should be. After the history of Black Americans in our country is taught through various methods in our elementary school system, the concept and value of its importance dwindles. The celebration of Black History Month is not only meaningful to

African-Americans, their history and contribution to society, it is to educate and highlight how this group of individuals was crucial to the formation of the core principles of our nation.

"(February's observance is) a time to focus and reflect in kind of a systematic way or a way that's more public," said Adrienne Israel, history professor and vice president for academic affairs and academic dean.

Israel also contends that the depth of Black American history is as important as its scope.

It diminishes the confidence we place on certain cultures when assumptions and stereotypical inferences become prominent barriers to unity. With the explosion of the Internet and social media, it appears prior beliefs foster negativity.

"Have everyone change how they view African-Americans, including themselves, and give them a voice back," said senior LaCrisha Kaufman, when questioned about how we can help encourage African-Americans to take a more proactive role in society.

The civil rights movement is not the only topic that should be supported during the month of February. It is important to promote African-American contributions to the arts, science and technology, as advancements in these areas often go unrecognized.

In a similar vein, Damon Akins, associate professor

of history, comments on contributing to society.

"There's still an incredible amount of entrenched racism and white privilege that prohibits people from participating in the polity (politically organized unit) in the way they want," said Akins.

Another part of society that has a huge influence is media, which often portrays minorities in unflattering roles.

"Things are changing, but I think our media tends to portray African-Americans in a negative light, and I think it's something that really needs to be changed," said junior Fiona Lloyd-Muller. "Often in TV shows or movies or media like that you see very few leading characters who are black or even of color."

Many young people, while learning about black history in school, don't fully appreciate the significance its impact has on our society and their future. Without this understanding, our younger generation prevents themselves from truly accepting an inclusive civilization. Is there more we can do to garner a more proactive approach to enlightening the public?

It's time for positive and powerful leading roles, as well as positions for media executives, to be offered to more minorities.

Unfortunately, racism is part of our country's history. Without acknowledging and addressing this evil in our community, we cannot prosper and strengthen our democracy. Putting aside racial and political motivations and targeting the significant issues we face is mandatory.

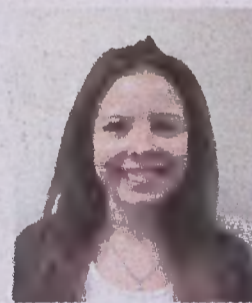
Junior Yashua Clemons states the importance of focusing on black culture this month.

"(It's so) people know about black history, how it affects the United States as a whole and the effect it has on current black people now," said Clemons.

Expanding the discussion of black history throughout the year could encourage a more substantial universal approach to improvement.

Dr. John Henrik Clarke, a notable African-American historian, scholar and teacher in the 20th century commented on this issue.

"History is not everything ... (it is) a compass they (people) use to find themselves on the map of human geography," said Clarke. "It tells them where they are but more importantly what they must be."



BY VANESSA MADONNA
STAFF WRITER