

Opinions

Students for Peace and Justice stands behind its protest

A collective message from
Students for Peace and Justice

Students for Peace and Justice has been organizing around the issue of sweatshops for five years now. We have held meetings with students and administrators, distributed petitions, staged conferences and all of the other soft tactics that should have worked, but didn't. We decided as a group that the time had come to be more severe. Our requests were simple and our steps gradual.

What we want now, and what we have wanted for years, is for Elon to join the Workers Rights Consortium (WRC), something that nearly 200 other schools have done. The WRC is a transparent, independent organization that inspects factories where client schools garments are made and then reports the findings to the world. The Fair Labor Association (FLA) is an organization started

by client companies and run by client companies. It inspects few factories, gives warnings before it comes and doesn't report its findings to the public. That's good enough for some but not for us and not for a university that prides itself on civic engagement.

Critics are legitimate in questioning the time and place of our actions and why they weren't officially sanctioned. SFPJ has been around for years. We understand that there are procedures, but we didn't want to run the risk of being told "No." We also didn't want to seem disrespectful when we did it anyway. In times past we have been denied actions because of time and place considerations and we needed to talk to incoming students.

Public protests are held when going through legitimate channels doesn't create the necessary change. Taking to the streets is fun but fun is

not the reason we do it. We are not special. We are not above reproach or regulation because every student group should be empowered to do what they think is necessary to ensure that the university remains a place where ideas can flow.

Our actions may have seemed attention-seeking and perhaps inflammatory, but we are OK with that. We wanted to start a conversation. We wanted to inform incoming students that they are entering an institution that has taken only the smallest steps to distance itself from sweatshops, while exciting incoming and current students about the possibilities for activism on campus.

The FLA is the easiest step imaginable aside from no steps at all, and in the information age, ignorance is no longer an excuse. Joining the WRC is another step in a long trip that will eventually, with Elon's help, invigorate local and foreign

economies. Sweatshops present a complicated question and there are no easy answers.

SFPJ is an activist organization. It is our place to start a fuss and to act out. We respect organizations like Elonthon, SGA, Invisible Children and Model UN; they have their place and we have ours. We are a network of activists and we embrace the difficult complexity of the issues we face. We are sure people were offended and affronted but we only told the truth: Elon does support sweatshops. If that's hard to digest we can help you change your diet.

We dream of and work towards a day when Elon is no longer complicit in oppression, when all Elon students understand their place in the world and when SFPJ can divert its energies into climbing trees, knitting, cooking and singing. Until then, we will do what we must to bring the changes that we can.

Your sex shouldn't affect your vote

Taylor Doe
Contributing Columnist

When studying abroad in Ireland this Winter Term, I encountered a strange phenomenon. Everyone wanted to talk politics with the Americans and inevitably, one of the first questions asked was, "Are you voting for Hillary?" When I would respond with a very adamant "No," a look of shock would be staring me back in the eye. "But you're a woman!" I would almost always hear in response.

This struck me as odd then and as the primary season has progressed, it has become increasingly more frustrating to me. Why, as a woman, am I expected to vote for Hillary Clinton? Am I supposed to ignore her various policy stances that I disagree with and support a candidate based on gender? And why is it that if I don't support Hillary that I am casting a vote against my gender and, as a previous columnist in *The Pendulum* stated, showing that I am "content with staying home and ironing my husband's shirts for the rest of my life?"

To me, this is the ultimate form of sexism. To assume based solely on my gender that I will vote for Hillary unfairly profiles me and the rest of the women across the United States. I feel like we've progressed to the point where we respect that women are strong, independent thinkers and can look beyond surface characteristics when we decide who to support. Are men ever accused of supporting John McCain because he is an old white guy? No, because the very notion of voting based exclusively on gender is absurd.

I recognize that women still face challenges and obstacles our male counterparts don't deal with and Hillary's candidacy is proof of just how far we have come as a society. The fact that a woman is in serious contention to take the White House is amazing. But, I also recognize that in this campaign she is not the best candidate and I give myself and women across America more credit than to look past the weaknesses in her record and vote for her because she's a woman.

I think it's time that we stop harassing the women who don't support Hillary Clinton. We are smart voters who cast our ballots for the candidate we believe can best address our problems and lead the country in the right direction, not based on who looks the most like us. Maybe in 2012 the most qualified candidate will be a woman and I can proudly give my support to her, but this time around I'll be giving my vote to Barack Obama.

Don't be quick to dismiss Mrs. Clinton

The highly-anticipated do-or-die Pennsylvania primary has come and gone. April 22, a date we waited six weeks for, has been replaced by May 6, when Indiana and North Carolina hold their primaries.

But when will it end? Will the "monster" that is Hillary Clinton take this thing all the way to the Democratic National Convention in

Denver as she has threatened?

Don't tell me that people actually want this thing to be over! If they did, why couldn't Obama win Pennsylvania? It could have gone one of two ways: Either the almighty Obama would

pull off an upset effectively ending this thing once and for all or Hillary the "horrible" would have to win by at least 10 points to die another day. And she did.

So I wasn't surprised to see Obama-maniacs start wearing "Stop the drama, vote Obama!" T-shirts after April 22. They're just bitter. And who can blame them? In the immediate aftermath of the Pennsylvania primary, instead of asking why Clinton won't drop out, reporters started asking "Why can't Obama close the deal?"

Now as much as I'd like to believe that North Carolina may play a more important role than Pennsylvania, North Carolinians shouldn't let it go to their heads. It certainly isn't as exciting as the News & Observer makes it. They sell more papers by making it seem like a competitive race.

Unfortunately that's not the case. Everyone expects Obama to win North Carolina. So even though North Carolina has more delegates, Indiana is getting more attention.

But it's not too late, North Carolina! We can still help Hillary Clinton pull

off the upset of a century! And if we help her win N.C., we're guaranteed at least another month of political drama!

All Hillary has to do is beat everyone's expectations by closing the gap just a little, and she'll make front-page news. At this point in the race, it's not just a matter of whether or not a candidate can win a state, it is how they win it. And Obama has to win big in North Carolina because polls have consistently shown him beating Clinton by double digits.

But when Hillary Clinton challenged Barack Obama to a debate in North Carolina, his campaign issued a press release that said the Illinois senator "wouldn't be able to fit it in his schedule."

That's a pretty flimsy excuse. And yet nine out of 10 voters in North Carolina value "trustworthiness" over experience, and Obama is somehow seen as more trustworthy.

It certainly is surprising that North Carolina voters trust Obama as much as the polls suggests. I feel much more comfortable with what I know about Clinton than what we don't know about Obama. No, I'm not suggesting "B. Hussein Obama" is a Muslim. It is just odd to think that a man no one knew two years ago would be viewed as more trustworthy than someone who's faced years of public scrutiny and is still standing after an all-out character assassination by the Republican attack machine.

Is it because he admitted that he snorted coke and smoked pot? Because if that's all it takes to be seen as an honest, upstanding role-model in society, I have a confession to make. Other than that he has no record to prove he can walk the walk. The fact that he refused to debate Hillary shows he's a man of words, not action.

Of course, I wouldn't expect anything less from Obama's campaign. His refusal to face Hillary in another debate is a sound strategic decision. To say he has a track record of less-than-stellar debates is an understatement. He often times looks like a stuttering

fool and his pathetic performance at last week's Pennsylvania debate probably cost him a percentage point or two.

Sure, the man can deliver a pretty speech, but he doesn't do so well candidly, which is why he doesn't want to have a conversation about the issues that matter to North Carolinians: He wants to tell us what matters, safe and sound behind his podium, with a pretty poster that says "Change You Can Believe In."

But how are we supposed to believe Barack Obama is an "agent of change," when he won't even let us see how he handles himself in a debate? Does he think it's going to get easier if he's the nominee? This extended primary is essentially a test. If Obama is complaining about having to debate Hillary, what should we expect when he has to debate John McCain?

I'm surprised he hasn't started complaining about how his hair has gotten grayer since he started campaigning. It's probably because he's too busy talking about how rarely he gets to see his family, as if he somehow deserves the sympathy vote for abandoning his two little girls at home so he can stage a publicity stunt at a bowling alley in Pennsylvania where he bowled a pathetic score of 37.

But does that mean he should deny North Carolinians and other Americans one last chance to see him on a nationally televised debate? It sounds like Obama's the bitter one.

Hillary, on the other hand, has said she'd meet Obama in a debate "anytime, anywhere." She isn't going to give up anytime soon. Whatever its outcome, the May 6 primary will come and go. Hillary will probably go on to win West Virginia, Kentucky, Guam and Puerto Rico. And Obama will have to get over his bitterness towards debates, because she's already challenged him to two in Oregon, which will take place on the soon-to-be highly-anticipated do-or-die primary held on May 20.



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