

Opinions

When sobriety becomes a nuisance

Students discuss the impact their choices to remain sober have on their social lives at Elon



David Gwynn
Columnist

The consumption of alcohol on a college campus is as rampant as the brick that holds it together. The stigma of popularity, rush of a mind-altering beverage and debauchery with strangers and friends alike seems to be a widely desired experience among those entering adulthood.

But the psychology of students and alcohol takes an interesting twist when looked at from the perspective of sober

students who find themselves surrounded by those who consume alcohol and acknowledge that they are a minority.

"I don't have a problem with going out. The only thing is I don't have a cup in my hand, so that's the only difference," junior Elise Delmerico said. "I have just as good a time as other people."

But does her sobriety make those who drink uncomfortable? She said, "I don't make a big deal about it, I'm not showy about it, someone might bring it up to me who is drinking and might try to give me a hard time but I just make it a point not to make it an issue."

Delmerico said although she sometimes gets the vibe that others think she is a "good girl" and not as "fun" as other people, she is thankful she has friends who know how fun she is and don't judge her based on that decision.

Being sober isn't limited to gender by any means. Devin Donnelly, a sophomore living in the Crest Apartments said his choice to be sober. The fact that it is against the law is a small part of his decision. But he said he also feels lucky that his parents are able to pay for his education — and the least he can do is not take that sacrifice for granted by making poor decisions. He talked about his experiences being sober, and others' reactions to him.

"You'd think that if you tell them 'no I don't drink' enough they will remember it, but they

don't. I find it extremely awkward when I'm the only one at a party sober, if I'm there with someone else it's funny because then we can have our own conversation, saying, 'wow, look at that guy peeing on a car.'"

Being sober in an alcohol-saturated environment isn't easy with rampant amounts of peer and societal pressure present. One male sophomore student who will be referred to as Jake* has embarked on a kind of social experiment to discover his list of the pros and cons of alcohol.

After not drinking in high school, in October of his first year at Elon University, he began drinking. Nearly one year later he has begun an indefinite period of sobriety to compare and contrast the experiences.

"I have had fun with friends with and without alcohol," he said. "I think you really have to experience things in life and I feel like that was one of them. I also think I've learned a lot of things about myself and about others," Jake said.

He also said he experienced life without drinking in high school and drinking in college. After assessing the two, there were times he was happy, but thought the most fun could be had with things that were actually remembered.

After choosing to be sober, one of Jake's friends asked him if he was depressed because he didn't seem happy anymore. He said he was acting normally, but his friend didn't understand what was wrong or why he would give up alcohol. This is a testament to the fact that many students believe alcohol is their ticket to happiness. Elise Delmerico, Devin Donnelly and Jake all made it clear that alcohol wasn't where the "fun" or happiness of going out originated. It was about the relationships they had with their friends and the memories that could be created — and remembered.

When alcohol is a unifying factor among friends, and people seek fun and happiness solely from a drink, they usually end up not with a good time, but with a headache, poor decisions and often regret.

*Jake's real name has been changed.

Forced acceptance promotes false sense of diversity

Discussion about current status of Greek organizations sparks debate about desire for racial integration



Robert Wohner
Columnist

On Sept. 9, D.E.E.P., or Diversity Emerging Education Program, hosted an open discussion in Moseley Center's commuter lounge to discuss if segregation should be associated with images of Elon University Greek Life.

In 1950, segregation was a loaded word. In 2010, it still is. The word can conjure up images of army barracks in World War II, 'blacks only' water

fountains or Jackie Robinson breaking the color barrier.

The scene of the discussion was predictable. As one student noted, white students arrived together, and black students arrived together. The mood had an awkward, uneasy tone.

The discussion outlined two main themes: why Greek organizations aren't as integrated as they should be and what steps should be taken to make change. Panelists offered to co-sponsor programs with Greek organizations, and other similar suggestions were made.

But we're going about this in the wrong way. Yes, if you strictly define people by race, Greek life is segregated. But that's not necessarily a bad thing. Substitute the word "segregation" for "preference," and no one should have a problem.

The problem with the forum was in the question itself. Had they asked, "Do most white people enjoy hanging out with other white people?" The answer would be yes. And that wouldn't be a problem.

It is unfair to target Elon's lack of racial diversity in Greek Life. By definition, a Greek organization seeks members with consistent values, attitudes and beliefs. With that in mind, chances are, members will be of the same race. This is not a problem.

Is it wrong for white people to prefer joining with other white people? Likewise, is it wrong for blacks to prefer living with blacks? Is it better when a black person prefers to live with a white person? I answer no to all of these questions.

I'm from New York City. Want diversity? You got it. People of all backgrounds, cultures and beliefs converge in a 15-mile stretch. But don't think people are engaging in a multicultural conglomeration of interracial dialogue and diversity education. You could argue it's actually quite segregated — Chinatown, Little Italy, Harlem, El Barrio. People eat their foods, speak the same language and keep many of the traditions of their homelands. And that's not a problem.

But what some in the South see as a racial divide, I see as people associating with those who share the same interests and values.

I'm not arguing people do not hate other races here or that prejudice doesn't exist. It does, and it's wrong.

Is there something to gain by people interacting and learning about other cultures? Yes.

There's an argument: unless people of different races are in the situations where they can learn about each other, they never will, and they will never find out the real connections that could eliminate racial divide. That's fair.

But racially-motivated mingling cannot be institutionally imposed. The idea that you can throw people together like a tossed salad and hope they merge seems to defeat any pure objective.

Let people be with who they enjoy being around. The classroom is where people ought to debate and explore differences of opinion and lifestyles, not at a fraternity party.

Obama's decisions confuse voters

Democratic party suffers as Americans lose faith



Ryan Maass
Columnist

Both President Barack Obama and former President Ronald Reagan have proven themselves to be phenomenal speakers in and out of campaigns and both have exhibited great ability to motivate their voter base. In addition to these qualities, both have also proposed tax cuts in businesses. In an uncharacteristic move, Obama recently announced his support for allowing companies to write off

all new equipment costs to eventually lower tax payments later. Considering the administration's strong anti-business rhetoric and policies, many voters are sure to be confused. Asking "why now?" is a legitimate question, and can be easily answered.

The Democrats are in trouble. This is no secret. As the "blame Bush" strategy begins to lose its luster, the ruling party of both houses of Congress is desperate for ammunition — even if it means spreading rhetoric that directly contradicts their actions. According to a recent Wall Street Journal/NBC News poll, the number of voters who believe the country is moving in the wrong direction has shot up from 48 percent to 61 percent during the past year. If that's not enough to make the Democratic National Committee cringe, add the fact that voters most enthusiastic about showing up at the polls heavily favor Republican candidates.

But the Democrats are not going to simply let their grip on Washington slip away — not without a fight.

If Obama was serious about the supply-sider's approach to stimulate economic growth through encouraging employment, his legislative onslaught on the American economy would not have taken place to begin with. He would push for the extension of the Bush tax cuts. He would ask Congress to cut spending — drastically. According to business lobby groups, business owners report more concern over letting the Bush tax cuts expire than being allowed to write off new equipment. Moreover, it would be a pretty bad time to request an additional \$50 billion from Congress for an overhaul on infrastructure.

Politicians will always behave like politicians. Requesting contradictory legislation is nothing new, but it's important to note that this is election season. After two years of a failed "stimulus" and the less-than-transparent passage of controversial laws, the passion is without a doubt on the side of the conservative base. The anti-incumbent wave that has been hitting the political elite hard favors Republicans 49 percent to 40 percent. In the fiery eyes of an angry electorate, Democrats are not loved.

To be sure, cutting taxes on businesses is an easy way to boost employment. It would be a great way to reach across the aisle and quell the bickering between both parties. Alas, this president has no bipartisan intentions. Cutting taxes must be coupled with cutting spending. Obama and his allies are in combat mode. In his own words, "If I fail, they win."

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