

# Opinions

## Devaluing gender, treasuring culture

In efforts to understand Afghan gender norms, ethnocentrism prevails, hinders progress



Rachel Southmayd  
Columnist

On Sept. 20, The New York Times published an article about families in Afghanistan who disguise their daughters as boys because it is shameful to not have a son in their culture.

In Afghanistan, a family without a son is considered a family without respect. This is because very few women are able to work outside of the home — they are unable to earn money

and provide for their families, unlike men. Female children cannot wander the streets, or sometimes even leave the house alone, but little boys can go outside, play in the street and help their fathers at

work.

Here in the U.S., I like to think that men and women are given equal amounts of respect, but I know that this idea has not been truly fulfilled. If women and men were regarded completely equally, the number of stay-at-home dads would equal the number of stay-at-home moms, among other things.

The massive advantages a woman has here starkly contrasts with the one she would have if she were a woman in Afghanistan, or a multitude of other countries where extreme discrimination exists based solely on gender or anything else that makes a person "different." This desperation for equality forces some to hide who they are, like gender in Afghanistan, or sexual orientation, "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

I am one of three girls. When I was growing up, my father was up to his eyeballs in Barbies and will write three hefty checks when we each walk down

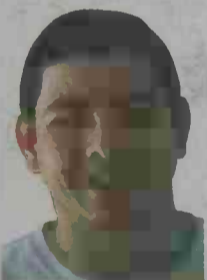
the aisle. This is the expectation when you have daughters in the U.S., one that is as foreign to Afghan families as their obvious bias toward sons is to our own. But if you ask my father if he was ever ashamed that he had three princesses instead of even one spitball throwing son, I'm sure he would say a firm "No."

The fact is, people should be proud to be who they are. No one should ever be made to feel guilty simply for being born a certain way. I am a firm believer that when a group, family, government or even an entire culture devalue a person, that person begins to feel devalued. And the last thing the female citizens of Afghanistan need is to feel belittled or insulted in any way.

The people of this war-torn country would be far better served by letting go of age-old prejudices and superstitions, and embracing the unique qualities that each person possesses, without paying gender any mind.

## Yom Kippur: Holiday or sacred Jewish holy day?

Yom Kippur is a time to reflect and improve upon aspects of people's daily lives



Garret Mann  
Guest Columnist

What is Yom Kippur? Let's strategically break this down. We can affirm that it isn't Hanukkah; there are no lavish presents, and since the entirety of Yom Kippur is spent fasting, there isn't a glorious feast and nothing symbolic such as a Menorah. So what is a holiday with no feast, presents or even a simple image that pops into your head when someone utters its name? The debate is over the definition: should Yom Kippur be considered a holiday or a holy day?

I will tell you this much — it is not fun. It takes place 10 days after the Jewish new year (Rosh Hashanah), simply because the number 10 is a significant number in the Bible, for example, the 10 Commandments. On this day, one is to judge him or herself as if he or she were being judged by

the almighty God.

"One must make themselves as uncomfortable as possible in order to focus on their actions of the previous year," Rabbi Murray Ezring of Temple Israel in Charlotte said.

You may be thinking, 'Good grief, not eating or drinking for 24-hours, not sitting in appropriate sized seats, no leather shoes, no showers, perfumes or any form of comfort, just to look back on the bad things I've done and make the equivalent of a New Year's resolution?'

But that is exactly how I think of it. Everyone wants to change or improve something, and what better situation could you subject yourself to than to starve yourself to a point of realizing you must change?

So you begin fasting at sundown the night before, go to the nighttime services for Yom Kippur to keep food off of your mind and then go to bed immediately afterwards, just to be woken up at 9 a.m. to your stomach growling. Upon visiting the fridge, you realize, "No, I can't do this." You go and get fancied up, but not too fancy, to go to Synagogue. Once you walk in the door you feel the aura — the feeling that everybody is starving just as much as you are. The place is packed, more so than any other occasion.

People actually have ticket stubs. The service lasts all day, and you get tired from the constant standing and sitting for prayers and the reading of the various laws to remind you what specific laws you have broken. Once you get home you nap to keep food off your mind, and by the time you wake up, it's time to go to an extravagant break-fast with all of your family and friends, to mingle, when all you want to do is eat.

At that point, the point of consumption, you realize what an essence this day has to it. This day is different than all other throughout the year, but each year, you don't realize that until the food enters your mouth. Everything you desire to change in the next year is recognized, and you understand what a holy day this is and should be.

## Unforeseen college expenses place strain on student budgets

Many costs for college students go unrealized including leisure, recreation fees



Kristen Case  
Guest Columnist

When you get accepted to college, especially a private one like Elon University, you expect to spend a decent amount of money. During the first year, when you don't know what you need in your dorm, you go to the local Target

or Walmart, and buy everything you might need — and even some stuff you won't need at all.

So when you've finally moved everything in and realized that you don't have room for everything you bought, you think you're done spending money, aside from the occasional night out. You've heard all the rumors about how penniless college students are and their survival purely on Ramen Noodles and Easy Mac, but most people are still convinced that fate will never befall them. The thought process is that everything you need is right here on campus, and Phoenix Cash is a better spending option than actual money.

But that's not the truth at all. There are many things that Elon students spend money on that they don't factor in to their budget at first. For instance, your car, groceries, textbooks and club sports dues.

Many Elon students have their cars on campus, which is an added cost that is incredibly unnecessary. The parking permit fee is \$160 in some areas on campus, not including the price students pay for their own gas money, or car insurance, which can be more than \$100 per month. Essentially, having a car on campus

can set students back about \$150 a month.

Shopping is not inexpensive, either. Supplying oneself with the college staple foods, like Easy Mac, Ramen and Pop-Tarts, even for cheaper than they are on campus, can add up. Buying these staple foods, has cost freshman Addie Haney about \$30 a month.

"It's sort of necessary to go grocery shopping sometimes, just to change it up," Haney said. "Sometimes the meals at the dining halls aren't what you want to eat, so it's nice to have a can of soup or something in your room."

Another trap that students get sucked into is buying new books from the campus shop — it seems to be the most convenient way to buy them. New books seem like a good thing. But that is the most expensive decision students can make. If students insist on purchasing books from the campus shop, the smarter choice is to buy them used, or to even rent them. But the real way to save money on books is to buy them from a completely different vendor, such as Amazon.com.

One Global Experience class requires the book "The River Between," which, when bought used, costs about \$14 from the campus shop. On Amazon.com, the same book is only about \$3, around one-fifth of the cost of the campus shop.

Another unforeseen college cost is sports dues. In order to participate in intramural sports, such as tennis, and flag football, students must pay a fee of \$20, no matter what sport, or how often they attend. Some club sports on campus require steeper fees.

In addition to paying for unexpected on-campus necessities, most students will go out much more often than they originally believe. Whether it is to the movies, or just out to eat, this is probably the number one hidden expense.

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