

The Pendulum seeks to inspire, entertain and inform the Elon community by providing a voice for students and faculty as well as a forum for the meaningful exchange of ideas

# Editorial

## One more time, Elon needs to pick a side

*Remaining silent about football player's explicit tweets does no good*

It's been two weeks since Elon University's own running back Jamal Shuman took to Twitter to vent about his dissatisfaction with coaching decisions made during the Elon-Wofford College game. It's also been two weeks since the website Deadspin ran a slideshow with a series of Shuman's tweets, showing the almost painful journey as concerned, or perhaps amused, followers pointed out that anyone could read these mini-rants, a concept Shuman apparently didn't understand.

To quote Rick Perry, "oops." Quietly, the football team suspended Shuman. The following week was a bye, and last Saturday at Furman University, he didn't take the field. This coming Saturday will be senior Shuman's last as a Phoenix and there's nothing to indicate he'll see any playing time this weekend.

But perhaps the most concerning part of this situation, that seems to have gone unnoticed, is the language Shuman chose to use in his tweets, which were displayed on Deadspin and open for anyone to read before he made his Twitter account private a few days after the initial

fallout. Shuman, like many, tweets in a casual form, using words like "dey" instead of "they," has very poor grammar and makes liberal use of the F-word. But one other word he uses is in another class entirely.

The N-word. Yes, that same word a large portion of the Elon community was up in arms about just a few weeks ago is commonly said by an athlete at this very school, someone who is supposed to be a champion for Elon's values.

Granted, Shuman changes the spelling of the word a bit, but the meaning is quite clear.

The Elon athletic department has four media relations staffers whose sole purpose is to manage the image created by athletes and coaches, like Shuman. What he says effectively brands the university to such a large extent that there are people

who are paid to oversee that.

And yet, as in the case with the poster censorship and the naked cast of "HAIR," we see a conflicting message emerging from the university. A stranger shouts the expletive from a moving car and a movement is born, but an athlete tweets it

and no one bats an eye. Yes, he was suspended, but for the content of his messages, not his use of crude vocabulary.

Once again, the message is clear. Pick a side when it comes to supporting diversity. Condemn it or condone it, but don't float around in the ambiguous ether, crying for diversity initiatives while ignoring those whose practices could inhibit that progress because they're seen as a friend to the institution.

afraid? Encouraging open discussion about diversity and the issues it encompasses can only contribute to the dialogue, literally and figuratively.

It seems that this incident especially deserved attention and public mention on campus if a national website featured the story. Deadspin's story has also received dozens of comments, most of which are negative or mocking Shuman's grammar and language.

The diversity and conversations of tolerance that came from last week's paper were refreshing to hear on a campus so often filled with apathy. But it has to continue, and why not with the difficult subject matter of language, particularly the use of a word that's been debated for decades. The Shuman incident may have been swept under the rug by athletics and the administration thus far, but that doesn't mean we can't pull that rug back and study what lies beneath.

The university should solidify its message and continue to look for ways to move the campus forward. Keeping silent only leaves us rooted in an intolerant past.

### Letters to the Editor

*The following were written in response to "Limits of Diversity?" in the Nov. 10 edition.*

Ms. Ferguson wants ResLife to explain to her why they didn't want to feature her racy posters on a tour. My response is this: are you kidding me? You have one poster where there are two topless girls, and another poster with young women in bed only in their underwear. It's all well and good to have these posters in your room, but why would you think that these posters would be appropriate for a faculty and staff tour of Colonnades, especially since you are an RA? I know I can't speak for everybody, but I think there are a significant amount of people who would not want to see posters like these on a tour of the room of a guy or a girl, regardless of sexual preference.

The reason ResLife was having tours was to show off how nice the rooms are, and those posters undoubtedly would have distracted from that. I would hope the same situation would not occur if the posters were of a gay couple holding hands or even kissing while upright and fully clothed, but of course, I can't say for sure.

What I can say is that it is not at all unreasonable for ResLife to ask her to take her posters down if she wants to feature it on a tour. There is always the option to say, "You know what? I would like to keep these posters on my wall. If that means you aren't going to show people my room, then so be it." Am I really to believe that the only reason this happened is because Ms. Ferguson is bisexual? I think not.

If it were a straight guy who had photos from Playboy or the like on his wall, I feel fairly confident that ResLife would also have a problem with featuring such a room as representative of the university. People seem to forget that this is a private institution that tends to be more conservative. It is not

violating any First Amendment rights. Plus, there are so many other, much larger problems in the LGBTQIA community than this. The fact that the It Gets Better campaign exists speaks volumes about this point. The idea that Ms. Ferguson feels that ResLife should explain themselves or even apologize is ludicrous.

This is political correctness at its worst, and I wish The Pendulum had not wasted space on it.

- Samantha Siberini  
Class of 2013

I am deeply concerned with the way the residence hall situation was dealt with. I understand that the pictures could have been inappropriate for the walk through, however the story seems quite suspect because there was no requirement for the stolen street sign which was not asked to be removed. What I find even more unsettling is the fact that ResLife never provided the student with a proper explanation as to why the sign needed to be taken down.

As students I feel that we need to reject the institutions that force us to conform to their standards, so that they can portray an image of Elon that follows the social norms instead of leading the causes in which the human spirit. Since my time at Elon, I have noticed that Elon will "make a push for diversity" when it is social acceptable, but Elon refuses to be a leader in issues that are not the social norm. Our duty, as students as well as citizens, is to challenge authority when they are in the wrong so that we can bring about a better society. If this incident is not brought to light, we would be doing ourselves a disservice.

I will not stand for such restrictions on personal expression and I do not think we as a student body should either.

- Benjamin Poole  
Class of 2013

On behalf of the Residence Life staff, I would like to apologize for an error in judgment during an Oct. 25 open house at the Colonnades Residential Neighborhood. In preparing for a tour by the campus community, I, and members of the Residence Life staff, asked one of the student staff members to remove two posters from the wall in her room.

While the request was intended to prevent visitors to the room from feeling uncomfortable with the explicit photos and content of the posters, we did not fully consider her right of expression in her own room. This was a mistake and I am sorry that we put the student in the position of having to remove the posters.

I, and the Residence Life staff, stand committed to support, affirm and value diversity and its full expression. We will learn from this experience and make a renewed effort to foster an inclusive environment in our residential neighborhoods that recognizes the richness in individual identities of all people.

- Elaine Turner  
Director of Residence Life

I see pictures similar to Ferguson's posters all over campus, and I think ResLife needs to be better prepared to show student rooms before tours. This whole problem could have been diverted if the ResLife staff had simply explained that explicit, gay or straight, posters are undesirable for a school tour. At the same time, I wish ResLife would put more effort into showing the true colors of Elon. Not some fantasy, perfect school that has no sex or alcohol. Elon is good at hiding whatever they want, kinda creepy eh? What really is Elon? I sure didn't know until I came here. I also understand that Elon wants to have a good first impression. It's hard to balance the truth with image.

- Kevin Newman  
Class of 2012

### THE PENDULUM

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