

CAMPUS VOICES

Campus Voices are written by members of the Elon community, not ENN staff members, and represent their informed opinions. Campus Voices and other opinions content are separate from news coverage.

Utilize the opportunities to gain new perspectives



Jason Dingle
Freshman

Incoming college students pack their bedding, clothing and laptop — as well as many of the morals, values and opinions from their pre-college lives — before leaving for school.

Their baggage includes their experiences in their digital lives as well, such as their Facebook, Twitter and Instagram feeds, groups and friends. We all arrive, floating in our own bubbles, and it is up to us to pop them — or not — as we see fit.

These days, more often than not, we spend time living within our own bubbles.

In addition to our friends, we also take to our Facebook, Twitter and Instagram feeds when we feel strongly about a national or world event — especially if it's fiery or controversial.

We don't read all the news — we read the news that reflects our viewpoints.

We don't talk to all of our friends or join a variety of groups.

We stick with those who agree with us, or that we agree with. On social media, not only do we have the power to follow or be friends with like-minded people, but we also can unfriend and block people who think differently.

Social media and search engines even encourage our tendency to bubble. Yes, bubble was just used as a verb.

A study recently published by MIT Technology Review revealed the results of a simple Google search. Two individuals Googled "BP." One person's search results were focused on the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. The other person received search results primarily on British Petroleum's investment news.

Google has so much information on who we are and what we search for, read and participate in online that it can provide us with search results that are most applicable to each of us. Facebook, Instagram and Twitter do the same thing for advertising purposes.

We are all shown the news, products and ideas we are most comfortable seeing. The unintended consequence? A reinforcement of our bubbles.

If you spend your time with only those ideas and people who agree with you, how are you going to coexist with those who have polarizing views, let alone work together toward anything?

It seems to me that we will just become more and more entrenched in our own ideas, and less and less willing to listen to other.

This is a problem. A quick Google of the word, "bigoted" reveals the following definition: "having or revealing an obstinate belief in the superiority of one's own opinions and a prejudiced intolerance of the opinions of others."

It is quite sobering to realize that, if we only accept what we want to, and not open our minds to other perspectives and opinions, we are in fact, not accepting people. We are, by definition, bigots.

There needs to be a bubble-popping movement.

There does not need to be a famous leader, experienced staff, pamphlets, signs or a megaphone. We need only ourselves, and maybe Mahatma Gandhi.

"Be the change you wish to see in the world" is a very famous quote, often attributed to Gandhi. But, no actual documentation proves that he ever said this. Gandhi did make a similar statement, however:

"If we could change ourselves, the tendencies in the world would also change. As a man changes his own nature, so does the attitude of the world change towards him... We need not wait to see what others do."

What if just a few of us open up a little bit, pop our bubbles and see what happens?

When faced with perspectives and opinions that are not in sync with our own, let's stop. Let's breathe. Let's lean on curiosity, not animosity. We are not listening if we're waiting to throw the latest article, factoid or statistic from our own comfort zones at folks who don't want to leave theirs.

Let's ask questions and avoid dismissing points of view so we can take the time to analyze and process and sit with the uncomfortable and see what happens.

Let's not approach someone who feels differently with the goal of convincing them that they are wrong, but with the goal of understanding that we might be. What can we learn?

We should look deep inside ourselves and realize that, no matter how right we each feel when confronted by someone with a polarizing opinion, we are but one variable of a human equation.

The reality is that we depend on each other in day-to-day life. Dismissing those who disagree with you usually does not lead to something good. Coexistence, as uncomfortable as this is for us sometimes, is not an option.

Understanding, consideration and acceptance of others' points of view, including political points of view, are concepts we need to get very cozy with, not just if we want to get through college, but if we want to move forward as a species.

Political posts need open discussion



Hannah Benson
Columnist
@elonnewsnetwork

Another day, another scroll through your Facebook feed. It's not long before you stumble upon a controversial video, shared by your lab partner from sophomore year of high school, with more than 40 comments from fuming adversaries who evidently think their opinion is superior.

"What's new," you think to yourself, as this one features your lab partner defending a man who wore a "Build that Wall" T-shirt in public. Your former classmate became enraged when others spoke out against his shirt and what

it stood for, while at the same time getting upset when people commented angrily on the video he shared, defending free speech.

The worst part isn't that he shared a video that might make you cringe or that he's partaking in the fruitless comments below it, but that he is surprised people came forth to challenge his view.

And here's where so many people are wrong. There's something very admirable about a person who willingly stands up to express what they believe in, as this isn't easy for just anyone.

But doing this alone isn't the crown jewel, the Holy Grail of achievement.

It's missing a crucial element — the ability to look upon the opinions of others that differ from your own and respect them, however little you agree with them.

This is the fatal flaw in the mind of an activist.

Though your side may have science, logic and reason backing you up, ostracizing the opposite side places you above them, meaning that you are foolish enough to write off anyone with an opposing view just because it's not your own.

But it is someone else's view. To attack someone and put down what they believe in because it's not what you believe in doesn't do anyone any good.

The noblest thing you can do is to look upon another's position with respect while waving your banner high. The best thing you can do is merely ask them why they feel that way, how they got to that system of beliefs and discuss how it differs from your own.

You don't get to shun someone's ideas because they are not your own. You get to interrogate, try to understand and push others to consider doing the same.

Maybe when we know all the facts we can start to get on the same page.

Maybe when we realize that posting a controversial video only invites discord, each side too proud to go down without a fight or stay quiet, we will stop sharing them with the intention to shun others or prove them wrong.

Maybe when we figure out that your list of Facebook friends, the nation and the world is at a stalemate, with two ardently passionate sides pushing hard in opposition, we can

stop lashing out at people with the opposing view and target those who are undecided. Or even better, not seek power in numbers but power within ourselves.

Sharing a Facebook post to spread awareness is more than OK, but attacking someone's opinions and shunning them for having a perspective we dislike will not create progression. This will only slow our advancements.

So stop sharing videos that make waves and being surprised when they do exactly that. Stop posting statuses to egg on the comments of your opponents.

Instead — should you find yourself with a unique and different point of view — get out there and fight for that view. Wave signs and march tall in the way that makes real change.

As grand as you may feel in your throne of individuality and style behind your social media profile, pressing the share button isn't going to change anyone's mind.

We all must honor Black History



Stephanie Ntim
Columnist
@elonnewsnetwork

In elementary and middle school we celebrated Black History Month with a large-scale performance exhibition. It was a time-consuming project, in which we sang old gospel songs such as "We Shall Overcome" and performed speeches from notable figures in Black History. I remember my friends and I were not always eager to wake up early on Saturday mornings for run-throughs and dress rehearsals.

As I reflect on that experience, I regret that I was not appreciative of my opportunity to narrate such crucial parts of American history. Now, I miss those lengthy days of rehearsals.

I miss our off-key renditions of hymns. I miss reciting powerful statements by heroes such as Harriet Tubman and acclaimed poet and civil rights activist, Maya Angelou. No other grade school I know would pay tribute to such intense yet relevant figures and events. As a child, it was rare to be given the chance to impart knowledge of Black History — a history that was quieted for centuries.

Luckily, the noise of protesters did not impede the resilient fight for freedom. The prevailing mood of hope conquered all fears.

We are fortunate to live in a country that recognizes the contributions of a historically disadvantaged population. There is no industry that has not been influenced by a person of color.

Academy Award-nominated films such as *Fences*, *Hidden Figures* and *Moonlight* are expanding conversations on being black in the United States. I remember watching *Hidden Figures* in a packed theater where black people and white people lauded in one accord the successes of revolutionary African-American mathematicians at NASA.

These exemplary women are included in a large grouping of pioneers who were

once unrecognized, but history has since praised. African-American stories like these should be hidden no more.

It is our moral obligation as a student body to denounce prejudice and wrongdoing even when such behavior becomes normalized in society. For too long the African-American story has been dominated by unfair stereotypes and economic disadvantages.

There is a perpetual struggle for African-Americans to be recognized as legitimate inheritors of cultural traditions founded on the land their ancestors tilled. And though many are thriving today, hardships continue to hinder progress. I challenge all of us to explore these histories to promote healthier relations among different races.

Black History is a living, breathing movement that our forbears started with hopes of cultivating a better environment for us. Their legacy is left to us. We, as in every human being, are capable of redirecting longstanding perceptions of race.

We march on each day motivated by a desire for improvement. Black History is not simply a month-long event. It is an integral part of United States history. Most importantly, it invigorates us in every season to crusade against bigotry and racism.

Thank you, champions of change, for your battle cries and teary eyes. I know you would smile at us for our accomplishments. We will continue to press onward, unmoved and unshaken by obstacles ahead.

As Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "Well, I don't know what will happen now. We've got some difficult days ahead. But it really doesn't matter with me now, because I've been to the mountaintop. And I've looked over. And I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land!"

We honor the bravery of our heroes with perseverance and determination in mind. We shall overcome because the mountaintop is in sight, not far from reach.