

## Letter to the Editor: hiding behind anonymity

To the Editor:

As I am a new student to Guilford College, that is to say I transferred here after a year and a half at Washington College in Maryland, I was unaware of the so-called racial problem the minority students claim to experience. The intensely liberal atmosphere that dominates Guilford is a sharp contrast to the conservative aura that exists at Washington College. In this way, the level of resistance the minority students experienced in acquiring a director of African-American affairs is unusual.

One must remember, though, no matter how liberal and progressive Guilford claims to be, it is still an old, small southern institution and therefore, slow in accepting changes in the status quo. Because of this thinking, I was resolved to allow Guilford to go through what changes it must in order to satisfy the growing black portion of the student body without my interference.

Initially I failed to perceive a racial problem, in part, because of my previous racial experience. The racially motivated

antagonism there was quite visceral. My compatriots and I often found ourselves in physical confrontations with white fraternity members for reasons I still fail to fully comprehend. So because I had not as of yet had to deal with card carrying klan members, I assumed Guilford might be as good as its brochures claim. However, my opinion began to change with the Molly Martin incident. In spite of this complex situation, I was determined to stay neutral in Guilford's evolution.

Given this college's small campus, it is virtually impossible to close one's eyes and ears to the movement to free Kwame Cannon from his lengthy jail sentence. I personally have no compassion for the plight of thieves; however, logic dictates that two life sentences for grand theft is unquestionably unjust. What's more, this decision is in dire need of review. Be that as it may, I am unmoved by the outcry for support.

My view of the racial problem at Guilford took a drastic change when on the night of March 30<sup>th</sup>, I saw a sign in Milner

which read, "FRY KWAME CANNON." As I said before, I don't have an abundance of sympathy for thieves, but this comment was totally unqualified.

I am unsure whether the person who exerted the effort to be so divisive is racist or not, but the substance of his note clearly implies a racist disposition. However, before I make an unfair judgment, I will extend to him the benefit of the doubt and assume that being berated with the glamorization of a petty thief is his motive. This is a plausible assertion based on another assumption: that most people are like me and have never heard of Kwame Cannon before coming to Guilford. Regardless of his motivation, though, his actions were none the less racially antagonistic and should be addressed.

My reason for writing this letter is not in defense of Cannon or his actions but rather the anonymity of the note and the racially motivated antagonism. Whether the author believes what his note says or not is not for me to say. Nor is it important.

What is important is that he claim his note and stand up for what he really does believe in.

Without question, racism is a concern in these United States. But cross burning is not what we need to fear. With all due respect to Martin and her injuries, cowards who attack women by night are not who we need to fear. To those who wish to combat racism in this college and this nation, the people who deserve our attention are those who harbor racism in their heart and manifest it with anonymity. Liberal or conservative, people have equal right to believe and promulgate whatever ideas they please. But to the authors of anonymous letters and notes, if your beliefs are based on reason and logical discourse, then bring them to a public forum as Guilford professes to offer. To whomever it may concern, regardless of one's political or racial opinions, if one does actually have the strength of conviction, they should say what they believe with confidence.

Akil Cornelius

## Generation Y: seeking out knowledge

BY EMILY DINGS  
Staff Writer

In the early '90s, Coca-Cola began an ad campaign for a drink called "OK Soda" targeted at the members of Generation X. Such slogans as "What's the point of OK Soda? Well, what's the point of anything?" sought the appeal of this generation. To Coca-Cola's surprise, the advertising campaign failed.

Perhaps the label "Generation X" should be changed to "Generation Y." As a generation among generations, we have been awarded the status of the letter "y" among vowels: only sometimes do we fit. Sometimes we share the values of past generations: awareness of social issues, a hunger for knowledge, and a devotion to family and loved ones. Sometimes, however, we are the unreachable generation whose collective conscience has splintered into sound bytes and video clips.

A great co-dependency of society and media is to blame for what we do and don't know and care about as members of Generation Y. *Newsweek*, one of the most popular sources of news among college students, is giving us what it thinks we want. For three weeks, Monica Lewinsky appeared on the cover of the magazine, because the staff believed that we wanted to know the intricate details of her alleged af-

fair with Clinton.

*Newsweek* self-deprecatingly mentioned the many letters to the editor it received criticizing its lack of attention to more newsworthy topics. However, as occurred during the excessive coverage of the O.J. Simpson trial, these letters were met with a note from *Newsweek* implying "look at this interesting sociological response our coverage has provoked," not "we will make a concerted effort to be more of a news source and less of a tabloid in the future."

The evening news on the major channels follows the same trend. Ten minutes of every half hour discusses an allegation against Clinton, five minutes cover something like Clinton's trip to Africa (the focus on Clinton, not Africa), five minutes go to the latest massacre, and the remaining time mentions conflicts in Yugoslavia or Iraq, focusing on U.S. involvement. This "news" coverage is broken up further by lengthy commercials.

Nevertheless, the media presents us with a distorted vision of the outside world because we let it. We get our news where we can, and don't blame ourselves if the details of Monica's love letters to the President are more accessible than the details of the conflict in Israel. We want news that we can digest while riding an exercise bike or standing in the check-out line. We are, above all, busy.

Some believe we are fundamentally different from other generations in that we are not moved by the same calls to arms. Our education has taken us through the gambit of romanticism, rationalism, impressionism, expressionism, modernism, post-modernism, minimalism, dadaism, capitalism, communism, behaviorism, Buddhism, activism and egoism, to name just a few "isms." We are left with a need for exorcism.

Enlightenment is no longer anything special, because the mass media has put us in epiphany overdrive. In the realm of us 20-somethings, a messiah would most likely be mistaken for a mental patient.

Skepticism and overload, however, are the kindest interpretations of our lack of knowledge about the surrounding world. More often we are depicted as the generation that wouldn't know if a war was breaking out outside the glow of our Nintendos.

Neither the media or today's youth is solely at fault for our poor test scores and lack of awareness about history and cur-

rent events. But Generation Y needs to show the media that it demands to be educated. As long as we listen to the details of Monica Lewinsky's private e-mails with the detached attitudes of half-disgusted, half-intrigued sociological observers, we are fostering ignorance.

Although it is not entirely our fault, Generation Y will continue to be blamed for its lack of awareness if we do not seek out knowledge. Informing ourselves will empower our wounded activist spirit, eliminating our "sometimes" status among other socially concerned generations. If our popular press is not teaching us where Yugoslavia is, we need to find out ourselves. The media will follow our lead.

As members of Generation Y, we have more information at our disposal than any preceding generation has enjoyed. Let us seek out the knowledge that matters and not let ourselves be overpowered by sensationalism. Let's reclaim the position of the letter "y" as a vowel in the words *morality*, *curiosity*, and *inquiry*.

Last week, Jacob Noble was misquoted in his editorial, "Plagued with violence." A statement was inadvertently attributed to him. The sentence should have read:

"The violence we, as Americans, thought only existed in black urban inner-city schools, points out one sociologist from the University of Georgia, is now spreading to the rural areas."

We apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused.