

## In defense of the "middle" man



ON POLITICS

Maybe Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert have a point: the rational American needs a louder voice in the political arena. Last Thursday, both Stewart and Colbert announced dueling rallies in Washington D.C. to drum up support among both young and politically moderate voters. Stewart dubbed his gathering "The Million Moderate March," an event sure to highlight the oddities of the political extremes on both the right and left. What is bothering me about the rallies, however, is the question whether the majority of citizens, the moderates, need political comedians to be their standard bearers and leaders. Where is the political heavyweight stepping up to lead the "eighty percent?" Where is the leader who will step up, who realizes how much power one could seize by dominating the moderate vote? I'm not calling the tea-partiers or the far left-wingers stupid, but they are getting way, WAY too much attention. Perhaps this is a problem of the current United States electoral system, or perhaps it is a problem of the changed role of partisan news media, but make sense solutions need to be better articulated to put America back on the right track to the future.

What we witnessed this past week in Delaware was, for the Republican Party, a complete and utter failure of the electoral system practiced across the United States. Primaries for the major parties are supposed to ensure that the candidate endorsed by a particular party shares the mainstream values of the party's members. However, when a particular extreme of a party begins to promote a radical new approach, the rational moderate gets drowned out.

Why is the primary electorate choosing the most radical rather than the most effective? I find it difficult to comprehend why we are no longer looking for the best candidates rather than the last clowns standing. Take some of the primary winners in this 2010 mid-term election. Christine O'Donnell has stated she would seek a ban on abortion, tax-hikes, and masturbation,

and when asked wither it was okay to lie about Nazis protecting Jews, she said that God would provide a way to do the right thing. Consider Joe Miller, the Tea-Party candidate in Alaska who believes that unemployment benefits are unconstitutional yet has no plan to deal with poverty. Finally, consider Sharon Angel, Tea-Party candidate in Arizona who is in favor of abolishing the Department of Education, phasing out Social Security, and repealing ALL regulation on off-shore oil drilling. WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE AND WHO IN THEIR RIGHT MIND WOULD VOTE FOR THEM?

I understand that people are free to vote for whomever they like but is it really wise to abolish the Department of Education? Is it really wise to trust private enterprise to take care of our natural resources? That's definitely worked in the past... And what is this about legislating masturbation? Doesn't that contradict Ms. O'Donnell's anti-Big Government decree?

I want to be heard. I try to maintain a moderate perspective on the issues because no single party is 100% in the right or 100% in the wrong, but with cable TV shows selling partisanship to boost ratings, the polar divide our country is facing is dangerous. Why do we need to have a September 11<sup>th</sup>-sized crisis to unite our country? Don't we all agree on the fundamental issues? I'm not so sure we do anymore.

I'm not sure what can be done to rectify the issues, and the problem is not exclusive to the far right, White House Press Secretary is on record decrying the efforts of the far-left saying, "the professional left is not representative of the progressives who organized, campaigned, raised money and ultimately voted for [President] Obama," but it is apparent to me that one extreme of our country hates the other extreme and they are becoming so loud and outrageous that the middle majority is getting shut out. I don't believe either party has an indelible patent on the best policies and I'm open to new ideas. I want to change failed past policies and most importantly, I want the extremes to ratchet down the fervor so that the best centrist policies can be accepted. Does anyone disagree with me?

*Scott Matthews '13 is the Perspectives Section Editor and a Political Science Major from Greenwich, CT. Contact him at samathews@davidson.edu*

## The case for community bikes

RACHEL ANDERSON  
Guest Contributor

In last year's budget allocations, Davidson Outdoors only received about half its requested budget for the community bike program. The ATC told us that they were willing to fund repairing the fleet of bikes we have, but not to purchase new bikes. No new bikes means eventually there will be no program because every year some bikes get damaged beyond repair and need to be replaced. Our community bike program started in 1996 with about 20 bikes, and has been a symbol of our community's commitment to each other and to the Honor Code ever since. The bikes, in case you're a freshman, are yellow or black cruiser style bikes that lie around campus until someone decides to ride them. When that student is done, she or he leaves it wherever (preferably on campus and kick-standed) so another student can use it next. Finding a community bike on campus has been compared to finding an Easter egg. Many upper classmen have a memory of magically finding a community bike at just the right time.

Community bike programs exist all over the country and world, but ours is special because it operates under trust—it's free, and there isn't any accounting of who has used a bike. It should work because every student has signed the Code of Responsibility, requiring us to "not engage in any form of activity that results in or might naturally result in damage to property." If any community can support and sustain a program like ours, it should be us. Nevertheless, Davidson College students have a tendency to destroy the community bikes. Bikes get hurled against lamp-posts and off of balconies. Students break bike chains and don't think to return the bike to D.O. Davidson Outdoors expects to do standard maintenance on the bikes, but we depend on the student body to treat them

well. A year of riding shouldn't irreparably damage a bike.

This lack of respect may seem like a small thing (they are just bikes, after all), but ATC's unwillingness to buy the program new bikes shows that faith in the program is low. How can we say that our community follows the Code of Responsibility and Honor Code if we can't respect property we all share? Every time a bike is thrown off the balcony of an apartment or off the porch of a frat, someone is throwing it and most likely someone is watching. And probably laughing. And they are all probably drunk. Intentional destruction of property is a violation of the Code of Responsibility. Do our Codes really work if we only follow them when we are sober and up the hill? The bikes are just one example, but because they are a visible symbol of how our community works, our disrespect of them speaks volumes. We don't always follow the Honor Code and the Code of Responsibility, because we are humans and college students, but I think we can do better than this.

Tuesday, September 21st was Davidson Outdoor's Community Bike Awareness Day (CBAD) where community bicycles were repaired by concerned Davidson College students and set free on campus. The event's slogan was "C BAD, do better." We've seen what we can do to the bikes when no one cares. But if students who want to ride community bikes commit to the philosophy of the program and treat them as if they were their own property, we can have the successful program that we all pretend we have. And if people who don't care about the bikes commit leaving them alone, that would also help. Let's prove to ourselves that our commitment to respecting each other and the property around us is real.

*Rachel Anderson '11 is an English major from Minnetonka, MN. Contact her at raandersen@davidson.edu*

## PERSPECTIVES:

### gender

ANNA GRYSKA

Guest Contributor

Between classes in Chambers last week I saw one of the Perspectives signs that said, "After the prince rescued her they lived happily ever after." It struck me that the quote summarized the ending that many girls expect. I wondered why that expectation exists; it seems like a strange desire. It implies that the girl is in trouble and she can't get herself out of it. Who wants that? As I walked down the hall I remembered that at about the age of five years old, I would watch *The Little Mermaid* and then rewind my video tape and watch the ending over and over. At the end of that movie Prince Eric manages not only to rescue Ariel, but also to save her father and the entire ocean from Ursula, the Sea Witch. Then, after King Trident gives Ariel legs and she emerges from the waves wearing a sparkling gown with her hair flowing in the breeze, she and Eric kiss and have a big, white wedding. Then, we assume, they live happily ever after just like they are supposed to, and in turn, that is what all little girls are supposed to want.

It seems to me that gender roles are something that we learn to fill and expect others to live up to. Relationships are an area where this comes up quite frequently, and perhaps the place where we expect the most traditional gendering to appear. I know a lot of women who are very strong, assertive people. They are leaders on campus, have ambitious career goals, and valid opinions that they share in intelligent conversations. They do not let traditional gender roles stand in the way of their actions. But when it comes to starting a relationship, they become powerless, afraid to speak up or initiate anything because they worry that it might "scare him off." I have been a part of conversations in which people made comments along the lines of, "It's his job to ask me out, I'm not going to do that." It just seems odd to me that we think that way. Why does it have to be his job? With this mentality girls back themselves into a corner and will not allow themselves to do anything except get frustrated. At the same time it does not seem right to expect the man to take on all the responsibility of action, especially when one or both of the people involved do not adhere to gender roles in all aspects of their lives.

The whole situation becomes very confusing when we further these gender roles by fulfilling expectations. I'm not saying that all gender roles are bad and need to be eliminated, but maybe we need a new way to strike a triple balance between those expectations, what we want and reality. Take the case of a friend of mine, let's call her Meg. Right now Meg is very busy running two organizations at her school, applying for PhD programs and conducting research under a prominent psychologist. A few years ago she called me with exciting news: her favorite fraternity had asked her to be a hostess for their rush week! When I pressed to find out what that meant I was surprised it was considered an honor. Apparently she was to go to the house each night at 6:30, set up their common room, put out food on platters, and then spend the next few hours replenishing the trays and cleaning up. How can Meg be happy doing that job when she throws gender roles out the window in every other way she can?

If everyone is going to learn traditional gender roles from a young age maybe we all need to make a decision about where to apply them. Should we ignore gender in class and at work but then slip back into our assigned roles everywhere else? Or should we just get rid of our expectations all together? Either way some consistency could definitely make everything easier. But until that all gets worked out, I may try to give Prince Eric a little help.

*Anna Gryska '11 is a classics major from Houston, Texas. Contact her at angryska@davidson.edu.*

*Want to get involved in the discussion? Contact Sarah Cline, Jamie Hofmeister, or Mac Gilliland at sacline@davidson.edu, jahofmeister@davidson.edu or magilliland@davidson.edu, respectively.*