

Staff Editorial

We need to learn to agree to disagree

Every year, in the week leading up to homecoming, students are asked to dress up for a different theme each day. Spirit Week is a quintessential high school tradition that brings the student body together; we wear cozy animal onesies on one day, represent our favorite professional sports teams on another, and we always layer our green, blue, and gray on Friday.

In other words, Spirit Week has historically been innocent and fun.

This year, however, Spirit Week, and specifically America Tuesday, garnered significant controversy, much of which appeared on the private Green Team Facebook page. On Monday evening, one student's post to the group of 779 seniors exploded within hours in political hashtags, paragraph-long comments, and satirical memes. Some students were belittled as unpatriotic and overly sensitive, and others were labeled as bigoted and not sensitive enough. In the seemingly never-ending stream of posts, comments, and likes that evening, there were many more ad hominem attacks and unfounded accusations than there were efforts to engage in civil discourse.

As student journalists, we believe in the necessity of freedom of speech, but also of respectful and educated discussion, especially in an academic environment, which should be the safest space that we have to express ourselves. On America Tuesday, students had the right to wear all-black outfits in protest, or to wear bright red caps and American flag socks in celebration, or to wear a regular outfit totally unrelated to Spirit Week. Students also had the right to not be labeled as unpatriotic, or nationalist, or ignorant based on what they wore.

Part of the controversy surrounding America Tuesday raised the question of whether or not this was a matter that should ever have been made political. As some pointed out, the Green Team Facebook page is not a political forum, and the members of Pep Club who planned Spirit Week presumably did not mean for America Tuesday to be anything more than a dress theme. However, especially in the current social and political climate, the flag and the values of our country are constantly being scrutinized and debated, and this was no exception. The argument that "this is not the place," which appeared multiple times on the Green Team Facebook, is an argument that has historically undermined critical thinking and detracted from progress. We should care, we should form opinions, and we should speak up.

But the manner in which we speak up often makes or breaks the effectiveness of our argument. Labeling people with whom we disagree as snowflakes, or as supremacists, or as snobs makes us more close-minded. Arguing online with people who we have never met, 99 percent of the time, leads nowhere. Jumping on bandwagons solely because our friends are already on them accomplishes nothing.

The most fulfilling discussions seem to be the ones that take place face-to-face rather than from behind computer screens. Especially today, too many of us have grown comfortable saying things on social media platforms that we would never physically say to another person. Physically articulating and defending our beliefs makes us more thoughtful and, well, smarter. Having open-minded conversations with people with whom we disagree also forces us to actually listen to opposing views.

National polls continually show that young people, regardless of their politics, believe in the need for change. Now more than ever, this change begins with civil discourse.

I'm offended that you're offended

by Arjun Thakkar



Whether it's in an online forum or just in class among students, there's been a lot of heated discussion taking place lately.

Perhaps it's a political argument, or maybe a fight about differing beliefs, but it seems as though everyone's more temperamental than usual.

The contention itself is nothing new. Individuals have always and likely will always argue about their opinions, and there's usually some kind of compromise that opposing sides can reach.

The one consensus that the vast majority agree on is that nobody should lose their freedom of speech to express their beliefs, even if others disagree with them.

That freedom of speech is what brings about progress, such as the universal right to vote. Even though we haven't achieved true equality among all individuals, it's in that cycle of civil discourse and compromises where we inch closer to that ideal world.

What's new to this recent brand of discourse, though, is how fired up participants are becoming and how emotional thinking is becoming more and more acceptable.

In other words, it's becoming justified to verbally attack someone else on the basis that they made you feel uncomfortable, even if their

intention wasn't to instigate.

I'm a member of an online group where users can make posts, and after an individual made a post about one of their beliefs, there was an uproar of activity against the user because other members were personally bothered by their perspective.

Other users who felt personally attacked by the responses took it upon themselves to convince them of the error of their ways.

Perhaps it's a bit premature for me to evaluate that situation, but it seemed like both sides were getting easily agitated for no good reason.

To clarify, there are certain situations where victims who've suffered from truly violent situations are more easily disturbed. This is obviously a reasonable form of sensitivity. It should also be painfully clear that hateful language shouldn't be condoned in any way.

The other side of sensitivity seems somewhat illogical, and that's because we're using our immediate emotional response instead of a more calculated one.

Let's say I'm playing a game of Monopoly, and after spending a couple of hours playing, I lose, probably because I somehow always lose first in Monopoly. Of course I'm going to be bothered by losing, but what's important is if I'll let my initial emotions get to me, or if I'll take a deep breath, relax, and realize that making a big deal out of the issue wouldn't help me in any way.

I'm not saying that everything in life's a game and we shouldn't take it seriously, but those responses are what I'd like to focus on.

Ofentimes we hear something we disagree with and we immediately feel offended

that someone else would have the audacity to disagree with us.

A journalist for the paper last week wrote a piece that was harshly criticized, merely on the basis that readers disagreed. What frustrated me was not the disagreement, but how quickly users were bothered by a feature piece that didn't intend to trigger the student body.

If we truly said "I'm offended and don't want to respond in a civil manner" at every point we felt that way, then we'd never achieve anything meaningful, primarily because most worthwhile work isn't achieved through comfort, but requires some sacrifice.

We profess to want everyone to feel comfortable to speak their mind, but is it not hypocritical with how quickly we bring judgement upon those who we merely disagree with, thus infringing upon the very thing we seek to protect?

The main effect this hypersensitivity has on us is that we become overly careful about what we're saying to the point where it inhibits conversation.

It's been said in multiple language classes that conversation should be a mix of spontaneity and thought, but with how sensitive we are to opposing viewpoints, one who wishes to contribute to a discussion about, say, politics, must have pre-planned a response that couldn't possibly offend anyone, which limits the conversation.

At this point, I've likely offended a few readers. In response, I say that I'm more than willing to have an honest, non-aggressive conversation about it. If we can find the points we agree on and find some sort of compromise, then we'll have made progress.

Stop telling me the Bachelor isn't real

by Mia Sherin



I enjoy "The Bachelor". I enjoy "The Bachelorette". And you know what, I even enjoy "Bachelor in Paradise," so sue me. The drama is a fun addition to my mundane life, my only problems ever arising when my mother criticizes me for perfecting a mug cake recipe instead of an essay.

And of course, the physique of the male contestants often motivates me to hit the gym, by which I mean go on a treadmill for ten minutes and then veg at the cafe downstairs.

I enjoy the show, despite it being a piece of trash, because it's my trash. So let me watch in peace.

When someone discovers my love of "The Bachelor" franchise, he or she typically responds, "But you know it's fake, right?" I'm tired

of this. First of all, these people are never qualified to make this statement, having rarely watched a season, an episode, or even one contestant-gets-drunk-and-falls-in-the-pool scene. So how would they, an uneducated peasant, know more about "The Bachelor" than me, a seasoned viewer?

The fact of the matter is that no one can really know. No one can know if the show is scripted, or if the contestants are urged to consume large amounts of alcohol, or if the bachelor is just a robot built with abs you could grate cheese on. So I must admit that I cannot know. But for the love of Chris Harrison, let me live in ignorance.

The world is not a pretty place at the moment, but I am trying to stay woke. I keep up with politics, I call my Senator, and I even read through the entire Green Team drama like a dedicated Trevian that I am.

I strive to not be ignorant, but when it comes to "The Bachelor," I am okay living in denial. Why do these uneducated-on-The-Bachelor peasants always try to stop me?

Does it bring them joy to rip apart my dreams? To know that a couple I spent weeks rooting for has a relationship solely based on discovering fame? Or does it warm their cold hearts to yuck all of my yums, even the ones closest to me?

You may be wondering how to respond in the event of a "The Bachelor" fan opening up to you. You may feel that your mind cannot even fathom an acceptable response besides, "Are you aware that a show you deem a spectacular piece of trash is actually all a lie?" I am here to tell you that it is okay to respond, "Cool," or "I've never seen it."

I enjoy "The Bachelor". I enjoy the escape it provides from the never-ending cycle of mental pain caused by the New Trier Institution. I'm kidding, of course. I worship this school.

Anyways, please keep your opinions about the reality of "The Bachelor" to yourself, and let the rest of us remain ignorant, just this once.

Let us be naive. Let us live in denial. Please, just let us enjoy our trash.

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by Arjun Thakkar



EXPECTED

GO GREEN!

PEP RALLY

REALITY

The New Trier News

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