

Lending a Hand: Voting indecision, no excuse for apathy at the polls

Why is it that young people don't vote? This is not a new question. People have been asking it for as long as I became aware of the fact that I was a young person and that I had a vote. Drew Barrymore has been on a crusade across America on a bus asking people the same question. Politicians make special strategies to appeal to these particular voters. Research is done and polls are taken. But why is it that we keep coming back to the same fact that in past elections young voters did not turn out in big numbers. What might be even worse than this is that fact that young people are registered to vote and don't.

Is it that young people are too wrapped up in their own lives and could care less? Is it that they think that no matter what they do it is not going to make a difference? Is it that young people as a whole are not familiar with the issues and don't care to take the time to be? Are young people upset about the lack of good candidates with relevant issues? I personally think these reasons are the most ridiculous answers to this question.

I think it is a combination of all these things. However, I think that young people need to wake up. As one young person to another, if you are waiting for an invitation to vote, then here it is. Whatever reason you are giving not to vote is not good enough. Get over it. This is your world and your life. I don't care if you don't like the candidates, if you can't make up your mind or are fed up with the system. It does not matter. United States citizens are damn lucky that they have the right to vote and yet we don't turn out. The fact of the matter is that it is the participation in the process that makes this country operate. By not voting you are forfeiting your right to exist in the process. You are choosing to let everyone else speak for you. This is a shame because that person that is voting while you are home sitting on your couch watching TV and eating HoHo's could be someone that you vehemently disagree with. But by not participating you are saying, "Fine, go ahead. Rule me."

This point was made to me and put very poignantly by one of my professors, Dr. Jonathan Millen in the communication department.

During our senior seminar class, voting was brought up and a lot of people were saying that they were not happy with either of the candidates. People were saying that they might not vote because they were so displeased and didn't think that it would matter. Dr. Millen spoke up with his two cents.

"I would rather see someone go in and cast an empty ballot than to stay home and not vote at all," said Millen. "There is an important difference between apathy and dissatisfaction."

Bingo, I could not have articulated this point any better. There is a huge difference between not participating and being dissatisfied with the system. The two points should not be confused or related because they are not the same. So, be upset. Be dissatisfied, but vote. It might be the only way that you do make a difference in the system. By taking a step, an action, by doing something, you are making a conscious effort to change the system. Go in and be disgusted with the candidates. That is your right, but participate in the process. That is also your right. You can still go in, not pick anyone from either side, pull the lever and submit a blank vote. You are still voting. You are protesting, but you are taking part in the world and not being ruled by other people. Your vote will be marked down. It will go on the books as a blank vote but it will count. So make it happen, no matter what your circumstance.

If you are far away from home and can't get home to vote, you are not off the hook either. I ask, how hard is it to fill out an absentee ballot, especially with professors and the administration practically throwing them at you on this campus. If you live at home or if you are close to home, make sure you vote. If you don't have a car, find someone to drive you. Take a bus. There is no reason not to. Get there. Take part. Vote.



Melissa
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THIS WEEK IN HISTORY ...

OCT. 22, 1746

Princeton University is chartered.

OCT. 26, 1955

The U.S. Air Force officially reports that there are no such things as flying saucers.

OCT. 28, 1886

The Statue of Liberty is dedicated.

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how about some examples of the seriousness of this issue? Let's start off with the controversy over abortion. Should our country be pro-choice or pro-life? If the Supreme Court is mostly conservative and doesn't have enough liberal activists speaking out, then chances are a woman will not have freedom of choice. How can we look a woman in the face and tell her that during delivery there may be complications and because the Supreme Court has ruled against abortion she may die? A woman may have to risk her own life to have children. To add to the horror, think about that same woman and understand that not only is she losing her life but also, if she already has children, they will continue their life without a mother.

If you cannot relate to issues concerning abortion, or you have no strong opinion about it, there are plenty of other issues people of our

generation, and generations to come, can relate to. If you feel heated about welfare benefits, sexual discrimination, birth control, racial discrimination, education, affirmative action or a number of other hot-button issues, taking a further look into the Supreme Court and its Justices could make a difference.

I am not telling you which candidate I feel will make the better decisions about who to appoint to the Supreme Court. What I am giving you is a little background on the current Supreme Court: who they are, where they stand in the political spectrum and what decisions the Supreme Court has control over. I am giving you these brief ideas in hopes that you will go out and learn more detailed information and be inclined to vote on Nov. 2 for the candidate you feel will elect the best officials to help lead our country.

Letter to the Editor:

Poor sportsmanship mars charity flag football tournament

"But mom, it was for charity." I didn't know how else to start the conversation with my mother. After all, her daughter was lying in an emergency room in Trenton and I knew she wasn't going to be happy. Monday morning at the doctor's office, my first words were "it's an injury from flag football." FLAG football, mind you. Not some "let's tackle and kill everything we come in contact with" version of this favorite American pastime.

Or was it? With a completely torn ACL, several other knee complications, and a surgery tentative for December, I'm seriously wondering where

the flag concept of the game went. After spending the past week questioning it, I think I've come to a conclusion—it was erased, along with the whole idea of charity.

As many of you might already know, the purpose behind the Bronc Bowl (the flag football tournament that has taken place the past two Saturdays here on campus) was to aid St. Jude's "Up Till Dawn" program. If you're unfamiliar with this program, it helps raise money for pediatric cancer. So, in essence, wouldn't all of the teams be working together as one? I can't understand how the purpose behind the game

shifted from helping dying children, to making threats such as "I'm gonna mess you up," followed by intentional (not to mention, cheap) shots.

If someone from the Red Cross were to knock on your door, would you honestly consider giving them a black eye instead of a donation? The question I propose to our community is simple: where has our concept of sportsmanship gone? The willingness to compete does bring out intensity, but how can someone truthfully be so overcome by hateful competition, that they give their teammate a high five after witnessing an opponent scream

in pain? When it comes to charity, that is no better than laughing at a crying child going through chemotherapy.

Not to say that I'm comparing myself to someone with cancer, because I am very grateful that this is not the case. Also, if you haven't noticed, I've excluded team names for a reason. Bad sportsmanship extends beyond the playing field I was on; there is no sense in shaming an entire group when perhaps only a few deserve to have fingers pointed at them. Thus, the purpose of this letter is not to seek pity, or vengeance or to spread rumors, nor is it to make anyone

feel guilty. All I'm seeking is awareness.

Unfortunately after this past weekend, I think only one wrongful lesson was learned: doing things for charity makes sportsmanship, or lack thereof, irrelevant. This is why I ask you to keep your intentions pure. While charity work is supposed to be impressive, it is not when it is done for the wrong reasons. And this injured writer is not impressed.

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