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The College Revolution Will Be Flushed, Not Televised

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While sifting through emails from numerous college clubs desperately trying to bribe students with free food from off-campus restaurants (take a hint Bon Appetite), I was delighted to find the latest "demands" from Hamilton College's "The Movement." (For those familiar with my bathroom habits, I am a member of the Irregular Movement.)

I'm aware that many of you mindlessly delete or do not check your inboxes regularly. The Movement's latest crusade demands that Hamilton College install one gender-neutral bathroom for every one male and female gendered bathroom in college buildings. As I have stated in past articles, I sincerely empathize and, to the best a cis-gendered White male can, understand the various concerns and issues faced by the transgender community. I firmly believe the college should, to the extent it's possible, make Hamilton College a welcoming community for all of its members.

However, there are legitimate intellectual and logistical concerns when trying to meet these demands.

For one, and perhaps most obviously, a number of Hamilton buildings simply do not have the capacity to create new restrooms, which means older bathrooms have to be converted. Perhaps ironically, progressive government building mandates have codified the number of gendered bathrooms for many establishments. Usually, there must be a roughly 3:1 female to male bathroom ratio because women use restrooms more often than men. Taking away gendered bathrooms for gender-neutral bathrooms, it seems to me, would be a fundamental violation of female toiletry rights.

More broadly, The Movement's behavior speaks to a fundamental cultural shift in the West where an individual's comfort trumps reason, practicality, and frankly, enjoying life.

My favorite source for political theory and philosophizing, Buzzfeed.com, recently published an article about a Ben and Jerry's ice cream flavor named Hazed and Confused. (Before I go any further, I should give a trigger warning to the brothers of Chi Psi.) The parents of Harrison Kowiak lost their son after a botched "Hell Week" portion of a fraternity initiation program. They were "shocked" by Ben and Jerry's choice of wording when describing their frozen treat. Needless to say, the Vermont-based fascist (and perhaps worst of all, Colgate University alumni) owners did not change the name of the flavor.

Along those lines, a friend of mine received a set of guidelines given by Hamilton College in regards to fraternity party themes that are deemed offensive by the Hamilton administration. While the list of "Offensive Party Themes" does provide a few good examples of themes that ought to be avoided, many on the list seem completely harmless or entirely arbitrary. For example, any parties involving "skimpy lingerie" ought to be avoided (the puritanical streak in the left's rhetoric has always been alarming, how dare we allow women to dress the way they want?), but beach themed parties are considered entirely appropriate. The list even warns against having parties that "get women to wear as little as possible," (isn't that the ultimate point of all college parties?) but what if women are the hosts of the party? Other examples of bad party ideas include titles like "Gnarly on a Harley" (Is Hamilton College really afraid of offending the Hell's Angels?), "Porn Stars and Directors" (I apologize in advance if my bloated gut and mustache oppress you), "White Parties" (Sorry Babbitt 19, Dean Bonham would like to chat regarding last week's inadvertently homogenous shindig) and many others.

And to answer the final question on the party pamphet about whether I would be "wiling to send photos of your event to your parents, your national office, the campus newspaper, or campus administration," most of my weekend nights consist of me sitting in my underwear in my common room chewing tobacco, spitting, and shopping for exotic animal pelts, all of which would offend those different groups for very different reasons.

The legacy of oppression and discrimination carries a heavy and legitimate burden for all members of the College community and American society as a whole. However, those constantly complaining about alleged discrimination ought to hold their breath and count to 10 before unleashing any new demands. The fight to end contemporary racism and prejudices cannot be won with scatter shot directed at any possible set of parties, ideas, lecturers, or conservative campus writers that might, maybe, just possibly, hypothetically, offend one or a group of individuals.

Smear Campaign in Central New York

Phil Parkes | *Staff Writer*

With midterm elections in Central New York fast approaching, cable television has been plagued by smear ads knocking one political candidate after another. Meanwhile, New York was recently ranked "the nation's worst business tax climate," an unfortunate title in a nation with the highest corporate tax rate in the world. The present fiscal environment has prompted the Republican candidate for the 24th district of U.S. Congress, and former assistant U.S. attorney John Katko, to push for job creation and empower small businesses.

Katko argues that taxes associated with the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare) have hurt small businesses in Central New York, and continue to hamper local companies like Welch Allyn, Inc. that produce medical technology for a global market. Meanwhile, the percentage of eligible American workers pursuing employment continues to decline. The incentive to work is going to continue to decrease. By 2015, Katko notes, the marginal tax rate for a typical American worker will reach nearly 50%. He is looking to explore reforming Obamacare to alleviate stress on small businesses.

Local voters have voiced support for this type of reform. According to recent independent polling, New York voters support "repealing and replacing" Obamacare in its entirety 47 percent to 38 percent. Central New Yorkers appear to have suffered significantly under Obamacare, and congressional elections are a great opportunity to explore possible solutions. A perceptive CNY resident himself, Katko has invited his opponent, incumbent Dan Maffei (D-NY), to debate local issues numerous times during their respective campaigns. Maffei has responded by avoiding all opportunities to debate and attacking his opponent's character.

In one television ad, Maffei accuses then-federal prosecutor Katko of "playing politics" by pursuing reduced charges for former Republican government official John Gosek, who was arrested for soliciting sex from a minor. For Katko, who has won highest awards as a prosecutor for his "honor, integrity, and superior performance" under both Republican and Democrat U.S. attorneys-general, these are serious charges that call for serious review. But the ad fails to mention even the most basic facts of the trial. Defendants facing similar charges in the past, for one, received even lighter sentences than Gosek's. And Gosek's cooperation in prior investigations legally qualified him for a reduced sentence. The ad fails to provide credible or relevant information about Katko. And it says even less about Maffei.

In another series of ads, Maffei rails on Katko for perpetuating a "war on women" by refusing to support the Paycheck Fairness Act. Upon closer review, however, it becomes clear that Katko supports Central New York women wholeheartedly. He simply refuses to advocate for women by subjecting them to one-size-fits-all legislation that may do more harm than good. He understands that the "onerous regulations" stipulated by the Paycheck Fairness Act make hiring women less economically attractive to businesses. The cost of these regulations will hinder job creation and reduce benefits, harming male and female workers alike. In the end, Katko "attacks" women only insofar as he denounces a bill that in some ways makes war on women itself. If anything, his nuanced understanding of the situation indicates superior interest and dedication to the cause of women in the workforce. Maffei, for his part, effectively limits his thoughts about women's rights to a single cumbersome bill.

In Maffei's most personal attack, he calls out Katko for failing to properly secure a handgun he obtained legally after receiving death threats in 1999 for his work as a prosecutor. The gun was stolen from his vehicle and used in an April 2000 robbery where two men were killed. Although he did not violate any laws, and the weapon did not cause either fatality, it appears that Katko did not take all necessary precautions to secure his weapon. Still, voters on either side would be hard-pressed to directly relate the incident to his potential as a representative in Washington, much less to Maffei's own abilities, or any currently proposed gun-control legislation, for that matter. There is nothing remotely political about the incident.

And yet, all of these attacks have a political impact. They obscure what Katko can do for all who live in Central New York. They all point to Maffei's grave lack of political substance. For now, the voters of NY's 24th district must ready themselves to separate fact from fiction.

Citizens United Decision

Sarah Larson | *Staff Writer*

Citizens United has become synonymous with too much money in politics, corporate personhood, the abolition of democracy, and the Koch brothers. This is a misunderstanding. The heart of the decision is that the government may not ban political spending by corporations in candidate elections.

As an American, I agree with the decision. The government has no business regulating political speech. The First Amendment states, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

It is quite clear that any law that abridges speech is unconstitutional. As Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy wrote in his decision, "If the First Amendment has any force, it prohibits Congress from fining or jailing citizens, or associations of citizens, for simply engaging in political speech." Congress can't ban books, advertisements or movies. The dissent's theory would allow Congress to suppress political speech in newspapers, on television news programs, in books and on blogs. In the end, although the regulation may have had benevolent intentions, it amounted to censorship. As Justice Kennedy wrote, "This is unlawful. The First Amendment confirms the freedom to think for ourselves."

Another misunderstood part of the case is the issue of corporate personhood. Corporations are not evil as opponents of the decision assume, nor did the decision make corporations people. Corporations are composed of humans and human interests. Corporations can be responsible. If they can violate laws, then the same laws also protect them. The government has a "Direct and Serious" impact on corporations. Therefore, it is reasonable to believe that corporations have cause for concern regarding government regulation. Naturally, they should be able to speak about their interests. Contrary to arguments denouncing *Citizens United*, corporations are not buying votes. Votes cannot be purchased. Corrupt representatives are not the fault of the First Amendment, nor are voters that are swayed by fancy advertisements.

The foremost misunderstanding of *Citizens United* is that it was a landmark case. At the end of the day, the decision merely corrected contradictions in the law. The law at issue in *Citizens United* permitted the *New York Times* to endorse candidates while making it a federal crime for non-media corporations to do so. It also made it a crime for labor unions to distribute an endorsement of President Obama for re-election to its members. There is no principled way to distinguish between media corporations and other corporations. "Media" corporations have free speech rights that allowed for the publication of such things as the Pentagon Papers. Without being seen as entities deserving free speech protections, corporations are unable to defend themselves against accusations of libel, as in the 1964 case *New York Times v. Sullivan*.

This is not to say that there are no legitimate counterpoints to the case. Some argue that allowing corporate money to flood elections will corrupt democracy. However, Justice Kennedy acknowledges this openly in his decision and responses. "Disclosure permits citizens and shareholders to react to the speech of corporate entities in a proper way". It is the responsibility of the beholder to judge the information, not the responsibility of the government to prevent it from being produced.

The decision has not reshaped (for the worse) the way elections are conducted. Even though President Obama called *Citizens United* "a major victory for big oil, Wall Street banks, health insurance companies and the other powerful interests that marshal their power every day in Washington to drown out the voices of everyday Americans", it seem that his policies of corporate favoritism do more to further those industry interests than does the *Citizens United* decision.