

PERSPECTIVES

Happy St. Patrick's Day!

STAFF EDITORIAL

"Charm" is a word not often associated with St. Patrick's Day. Rightfully, so for some obvious reasons. Any holiday whose token delicacies are green beer, Guinness and, in the best of both worlds, green-colored Guinness, can't end with a great deal of heart-warming, festive magic, much less personal dignity.

But there is something charming about St. Patrick's Day. Mostly that it's a masquerade. It's a chance for all Americans to pretend that for 24 hours their blood runs green instead of red. We celebrate the history, sing the songs, dance the jigs and march in the parades, all for a culture that we may or may not be descended from. And for an entire day, no one cares or notices who's really Irish and who is not.

Irish heritage is everywhere in America. Most Americans claim to have some vague ancestral connection to Ireland, but regardless of birthright, all Americans share an "Irishness" in their cultural roots. American literature, music and food borrow from the Irish tradition—that is, they do as long as we have Joyce, folk and potatoes. More importantly (perhaps) is that Americans also have in common with the Irish a fierce sense of independence, a willingness to defend themselves and their beliefs and a strong devotion to home, family and friends. This last quality makes me think of why St. Patrick's Day is so widely celebrated in America. Despite the issues that separate us, St. Patrick's Day is a day for all Americans to meet in the local pub, enjoy a green-tinted beer, sing an Irish song off-key and forget our differences. It's this type of resilience and kinship that has sustained the Irish through hundreds of years of war, rebellion and social and religious division. And it's this same spirit that brings Americans together on St. Patrick's Day.

One of my best friends, who happens to be from an Irish-American family, was telling me that he has a job interview today. When he told his father about his interview being on St. Patrick's Day, his father said, "There's no better day to have a job interview. Everyone is in a good mood." Rather than conclude an article on St. Patrick's Day by quoting Yeats, Wilde or an Irish proverb, I believe that sentiment suffices. On St. Patrick's Day, enjoy the good-natured atmosphere. Reconnect with old friends and make new acquaintances. Be Irish for the day and remember: "Everyone is in a good mood."

Diversity key to the liberal arts

CHRISTOPHER MARSICANO

Guest Columnist

Let me set the record straight. I have never met Spencer Cowan (author of "Diversity is a Red Herring"). Despite what he may say, I have never "flagellated" myself for coming to Davidson, nor have I ever "worshiped at the altar of diversity". Far from it, I worship at Davidson United Methodist Church. And that church was part of the reason for my coming to Davidson.

In 1954, my grandfather was the minister at Davidson United Methodist Church. While at DUMC, he counseled many students and really got to know them personally. He often shares stories of the brilliant young men who graced the halls of Chambers when he was working just down Main Street. I was always intrigued by his stories of the international students from Africa who found adjustment to the 1950s rural south rather difficult. He also tells stories of prejudice against gay students at a time in which psychologists marked homosexuality as some mental defect or disease. He talks about how he advocated for women to join the incoming classes and how his pleas for civil rights often fell on deaf ears. And then, after all of that, he notes how a few dedicated student leaders changed the way we see Davidson today.

Davidson students picketed Main Street in the 1960s when those stuck in the past tried to shut-down african-american-owned businesses. A few pioneering female students landed on campus in 1972, changing this campus for the better. Just this year, students showed incredible support when they perceived a threat to the well-being of homosexual students. These acts not only served as progress in basic civil and human rights, but also in the academic arena. These students pushed for "what was right and just" and for the greater academic excellence of Davidson College. Students like these are why I will never flagellate myself for going to an institution that many feel is lacking in diversity.

Racial diversity in higher education is the next great battleground for educational institutions. Those that rise to the challenge will succeed in recruiting the best students, hiring the brightest teachers and creating the strongest academic opportunities. Cowan questions why this type of diversity is important and suggests that "students and faculty who would excel at Davidson and who would grow to have a lasting love for the institution" are the only ones worth recruiting. Let me

respond to his challenge and detail why diversity matters.

The question of why diversity is vitally important to this institution can only be answered by the "students and faculty who would... grow to have a lasting love for the institution." Davidson College commits itself to the liberal arts education. We are not a professional school and thus encourage broad majors, value interdisciplinary studies and seek a full understanding of how our subjects interact to ensure a truly holistic perspective.

In talking about liberal arts education the Davidson College Statement of Purpose notes, "As a liberal arts college, Davidson emphasizes those studies, disciplines, and activities that are mentally, spiritually, and physically liberating... The college encourages student engagement with other cultures through domestic and international studies. The college... encourages a variety of social, cultural, and service activities."

How can we engage with cultures dramatically different from our own if all of the students look the same? We cannot seek to provide a liberal arts education and thus a diversity of academic and cultural experiences without also seeking to provide for diversity in our students. Cowan notes that diversity of experience is dramatically important to our academic and social lives. How can he not understand that race provides perhaps the greatest diversity of experience?

Though I may never experience what it is like to grow up as an African-American male, I can still seek to learn from those who have. I can use the education I have received to foster an intense respect for the commitment the brothers of Alpha Phi Alpha give to each other, or learn from the deep constantly changing relationship experienced by a close Korean-American friend among her very Americanized peers and her culturally Korean parents.

We've come a long way since my grandfather was minister at DUMC, and we can't look back. Learning from our fellow students who differ from us can only further the cause of effective education in and out of the classroom and greater our understanding of the world around us. If we don't fight for more diversity, we will have forgotten the mission of the school we hold so dear.

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The Davidsonian

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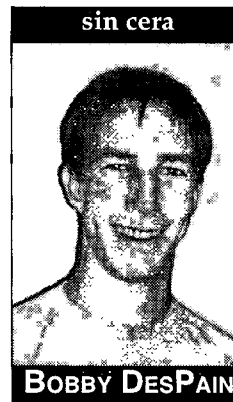
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Absolute truths absolutely necessary



Forget red and blue. Our country has gone gray. In order to make ourselves feel better in the short-term and avoid consequences, we have rejected the black and white of absolute truths. Is a world without absolute truths easier? Absolutely. Is a world without absolute truths what we have? Absolutely not. Absolute truths exist. We do not make truths but discover them. They exist the exact same, in all places, at all times, independent of whether we believe they are true.

We reject this today. Today, we hold up cultural diversity and cultural relativism. We assure one another something can be true for you and not for me. We say that no one culture has it right because how can you know what is right. We turn right and wrong into "I don't know," "I don't care," or the combination "I don't know and I don't care. And what is happening? We are witnessing the disintegration of the family. We are losing the strong mother and father unit and paying for it. We have a soaring number of out-of-wedlock births and high poverty, poor test scores and graduation rates. The point is when you reject the absolute truths of right and wrong, you get a lot more wrong. What can we expect? In the words of C.S. Lewis, "In a sort of ghastly simplicity we remove the organ and demand the function. We make men without chests and expect of them virtue and enterprise. We laugh at honor and are shocked to find traitors in our midst."

However, do not think the whole blame falls on non-Christians. A large part of the so-called Christian church has also failed. It too has refused to be stalwarts of truth. It cannot be counted on to hold firm. Who is going to back the horse that does not think it will win the race? No one. Thus, over 75 percent of regular teen churchgoers have left the church by their 23rd birthday. Tossing gasoline on the church flight fire is the fact that churches are not arming their congregants against the secular atheism that awaits them once leaving the pews.

Kids and adults alike are unaware of the evidence beyond the Bible. Even though unsurprising to believers, science, the atheist's supposed ace in the hole, points to God. Rational thought and science both point to the Christian worldview. To put it short, the universe has a creator; the creator is the Christian God. Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the only path for a heavenly eternal life, and the Bible outlines right and wrong (For more information read *What's So Great About Christianity*, *The Reason for God*, *The Devil's Delusion*, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist*, or anything by C.S. Lewis). The church has not put the proof for those statements before their congregants' eyes. Fortunately, there are Christians picking up the slack. Frank Turek, who was in Davidson's midst last week, tours the country providing evidence for the existence of absolute truths and God. He exhorts non-believers and believers alike to recognize the wrongs of the world and work to change them.

Christians are often criticized for being judgmental. Secularists on both the left and the right suddenly become Biblical and quote Christ's pronouncement to "not judge, or you too will be judged." Do not be confused, secularists are not against judgment, they are against the absolute truths that condemn them. In fact, secularists are all about judgment. Telling a Planned Parenthood worker she is an accomplice in taking a life or telling a homosexual activist you agreed with Prop. 8 and watch the eruption of judgment. The secularists also misconstrue Christ's message, as can be expected. Matthew 7 tells us not to avoid judgment of others, but to judge with love in our hearts. We are meant to take the speck out of our brother's eyes only after we have removed the log from our own. Christ wants us to recognize the rights and wrongs of the world only after we have recognized the rights and wrongs of our own selves. Even further in John 7, Christ orders us to "stop judging by mere appearances, and make right judgment." Thus, find the evidence, recognize the truth and make the judgment.

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