

Struggling with the present

Last week, The Davidsonian tackled one of its toughest challenges yet during my editorship: the "flyer incident." My knowledge of it began with phone calls at the beginning of that week, when we were finishing up the issue before last. I heard two or three versions of the story, along with requests for running front-page news articles and reprinting the flyer itself.

My first reaction was shock and disbelief: *Someone wrote that where?* I was, of course, aware that racism exists on our campus, but I never knew it would take such a blatant form. But from the (now seemingly ephemeral) discussion the incident sparked, it was time that it did.

I, along with the rest of the editorial board, was faced with a dilemma as to how to handle the incident. First, there was the issue of News. The flyer incident was significant, but it alone wasn't much of a News story because there weren't many concrete facts behind it. We didn't have a "who," and therefore we didn't really have a "why;" we had a general "when" and a definite "when;" but the "what" was the meat of the story. Some may say that the "why" was pretty evident, but from a News standpoint, there was no evidence to prove that. All we could say was that *x* people thought it meant *y*, and by doing that, we ran the risk of polarizing the campus. Neither did it seem the job of the News section to begin a "proper," non-polarizing dialogue. The rigidity of the News section, in this case, proved rather inconvenient and restrictive, but it was something we were able to deal with because of the subsequent SGA meeting and forum that provided more concrete bases for the story.

We also decided that re-running the flyer would be dangerous — although it would provide shock value, it may also have turned readers off so that they would have missed the *real* centerpiece, the article. We also feared that the flyer could too easily be taken out of context and reproduced without the accompanying article (especially since The Davidsonian — sometimes — makes it onto a web page).

And as for the editorial section, I decided to hold off on stating my opinion until others had been given a chance to state theirs. Last week's was one of the most successful Op-Ed sections this year, I believe. Absent was the rambling that readers have been complaining about. In Op-Ed we had a solid array of opinions.

I have to say, though, that my opinion somewhat differs from those expressed last week. I, like so many others, continue to struggle with the flyer incident, and what it means for our campus. Waiting a week to write this has helped me organize my thoughts a bit more, but to be honest, I'm still wading through. I think all of us are. (It disturbs me, though, that the incident — and its ramifications — have been so

quickly dropped from conversation. I thought the point was to begin a dialogue??)

My first question is this: Flyers, posters, and ads are defaced every day. How is this flyer any different from the Madonna-Rama flyers scrawled with "Come hook up with drunk sluts"? People see that; they may laugh and walk on, or they may throw they flyer away, but rarely would it receive this kind of attention. So how is it different? Honestly, I don't know. But it is, and I know that. Why? Is it because we take racism more seriously than mysogonism? Or is it that racism has a longer history of "mattering"? My first thought is that there *shouldn't* be a difference, but I know that there is. It's a thought I'm still working on.

My second question is, is there an excuse for this? Speaking again from a News standpoint, we really can't know *why* the person/people defaced the flyer. There could have been any number of reasons — most likely, as Dave Rosenberg pointed out in his opinions piece last week, it was some drunk kid who thought it was funny. (If they'd really meant it, mightn't they have chosen a more permanent canvas — like the BSC? To me, the impermanent nature of the action implies that the perpetrator(s) were more motivated by stupidity than hatred — but who can tell?) Regardless of intent, the effect is the same: shock, hurt, the entire range of emotions we went through when we learned of this. Regardless of intent, it was an offensive act of offensive words, words that I don't want to repeat — *ever* — words that I didn't want to see on SGA meeting flyers.

But maybe we needed to be shocked for once. Sure, a few of us come out for the Diversity Week festivities, but shouldn't every week be Diversity Week? Shouldn't mixing with those of other ethnicities and races be a given by now? And yet, it's not. Perhaps what we needed to begin a true, on-going dialogue of how race relations work (or don't work) was a flyer incident. My only question now is, how many of these "incidents" are we going to need before we really *get it*?

Sarah E. Ogden

◆ LETTERS TO THE EDITOR ◆

Conflicts of double majoring

To the Editor:

Thanks to Sarah Ogden for exposing a real and difficult problem for the current junior class of double majors — the conflict between required senior colloquia in two departments. Although belated for this particular class, the solution to the dilemma that Ogden identifies is simple: individual major advisors, department chairs, and the Registrar — official advisor to all double majors — need to alert double majors at the point of declaration that they should take one colloquium in the junior year and the other in the senior year.

That we have not advised effectively to this point owes to nothing so much as the element in the system that Ogden graciously concedes: double-majoring is new at Davidson and those of us trying to administer the system are just now discovering its bugs. But please don't give up on desiring and declaring double majors—or on us. I'm sure we can start getting it right from now on.

Cynthia Lewis
Chair, Department of English

Opening celebration for the Gender Resource Center

To the Editor:

Now that the Gender Resource Center has opened its doors for an alumni reception and a planning committee has been approved by the SGA, it is ready to be used by students, faculty, and staff. An opening celebration is being planned for Dec. 3, from 7-9 p.m., but the space is open every day from 10 a.m. - 10 p.m.

I am writing to invite all members of the Davidson College community to use this space for formal meetings, informal gatherings, studying, displaying art *and* as a resource center. One can schedule official meetings through the College Union, but there is also a calendar in the Center if you would like the space to be free for any reason. Do not feel obligated to write why you are meeting in the space, but please leave a contact person's name. Once again, I encourage this community to make the Center a comfortable, well-used environment.

Ann Culp
Co-Coordinator Gender Resource Center Committee

Racial issues on this campus

To the Editor:

On Wednesday night, Oct. 28, I was one of the overflow crowd who gathered first in Perkins and then in the Gallery to discuss the racial issues on campus. The students, faculty, and staff who attended are seeking ways to take positive steps toward a commonly shared goal of increased understanding, awareness, and appreciation of each other. We are looking for action.

Several concrete suggestions were made, and we will see letters of petition regarding course offerings and minority-faculty representation, planning for a Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday, Honor Code revisions, and several other initiatives. But many of us are still looking for something that we, individually, can do. We know we must continue our dialogue individually and collectively in a variety of settings. I urge each student to contact a friend, or a friend of a friend, who is a junior or senior in high school. Think of someone who is a student of color, someone who represents a point of view or life style under-represented on the campus, someone who thinks creatively about issues. If you believe Davidson is a good match for this student encourage him or her to apply to Davidson, and then remain active in the application process. You can help Davidson College reach out and embrace more students who can contribute solutions to our shared concerns. Do it today.

The staff of the Office of Admission and Financial Aid is committed to attracting and enrolling students who will enrich our lives and help all of us address the hard issues. Each of us can be part of the solution, and I encourage you to support the efforts of the College in the area of student recruitment.

Eleanor Payne
Senior Associate Dean
Admission and Financial Aid