

# The Davidsonian

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## Forum addresses attitudes and the black experience

### *Does racism exist at Davidson?*

By MUADI MUKENGE

1986: A black male student is handcuffed while sitting outside Little dorm by campus police searching for someone reported to be throwing rocks at windows. Although the student does not fit the description of the accused, he is not released until fellow students confirm his identity as well as his whereabouts at the time of the crime. In another incident, the white roommate of a black student seriously considers submitting the latter's paper to the Honor Council, saying that there was no possibility that it could have been written by the

person who usually spoke slang.

1987: A convicted white rapist roams Davidson's campus for several days without being questioned. In the meantime, police repeatedly demand to see the ID of several black male students.

Racism, in whatever form or degree, is not of the past and not far away, based upon the above student accounts. The issue was discussed at a forum held Monday in the 900 Room. Entitled "Racism 101," the panel discussion followed a documentary addressing a wave of racial attacks at the nation's college campuses.

According to Savander Parker, panelist and Assistant Dean of Admissions at Davidson, the purpose of the forum was to elicit responses from students--"get in touch with what you feel"--so that efforts could be made to address racial attitudes at Davidson before they escalated to the extremes shown in the documentary.

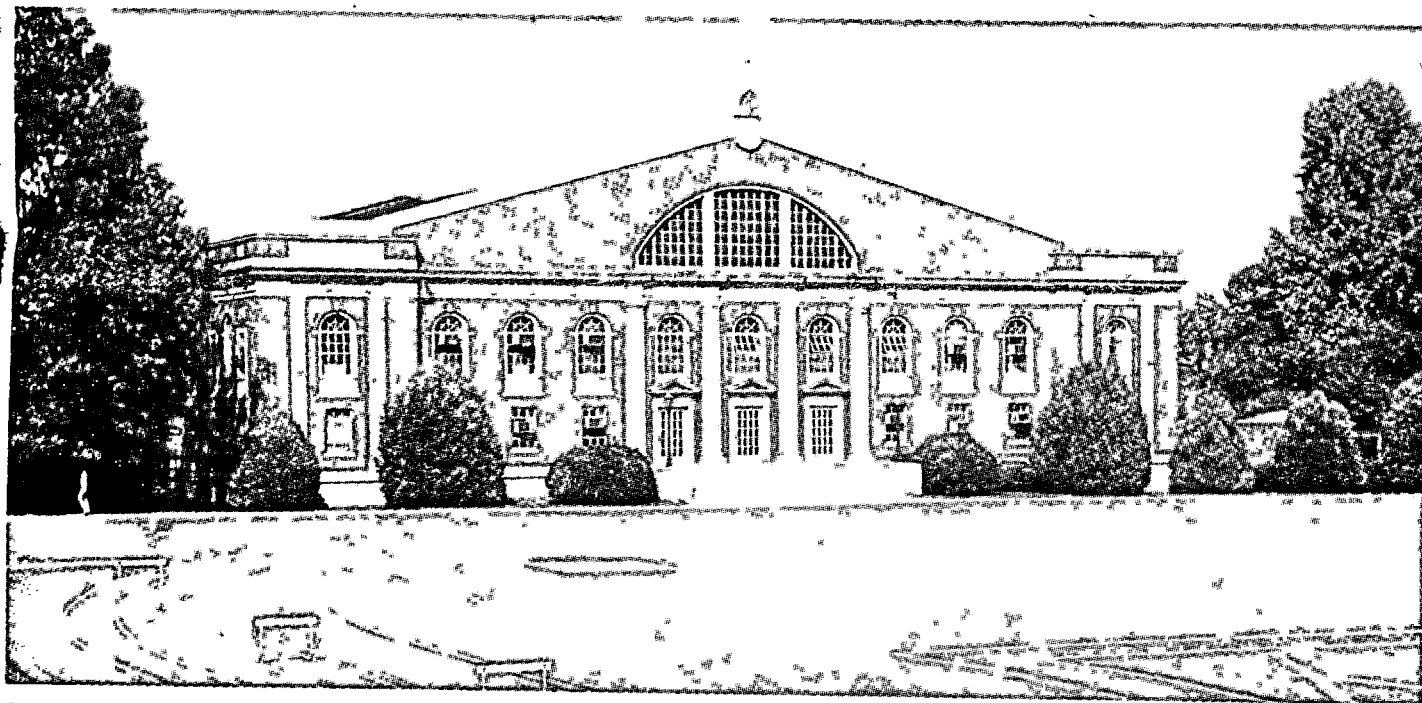
The documentary, produced by PBS, recounted various racially-motivated events which had taken place October 1986 through mid-1987 at several campuses, namely the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, the University of Massachusetts and

Dartmouth College. They included a newspaper article parodizing the speech of a "stereotypical" black student, the airing of racial jokes by a campus radio station and a derogatory leaflet distributed to black female students.

Although such blatant events have not occurred at Davidson College, the supplementary problems adressed revealed to be similar to the dilemmas on this campus. The program also addressed subtle racial attitudes prevalent at college campuses and the consequences which they provoked. Issues included black student participation in traditionally white Greek organizations, accusations addressing the qualifications of minority students and the effectiveness of efforts to create a comfortable environment for minority students.

Following the documentary, student panelists Sonja Miller and Marino Bruce, both seniors, recounted their experiences to the crowd of approximately 80 students. The session, moderated by William Bynum, assistant dean of students, especially revealed a frustration on the part of minority students with stereotypical racial attitudes, which occur along with less frequent blatant attacks.

Said Bruce of encounters with college police, "It's the type of thing where you attend an institution that is supposed to be—a family, the 'Davidson family,' but yet still to be a part of this family you have to walk around with ID or a sign saying 'My name is Marino Bruce and I attend



Saturday's game against Central Florida will be the last played in Johnston Gym. Tipoff is at 7:30 p.m.

Photo courtesy of Sports Information

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## SGA vice-presidential candidates take the stand

### *Meeting will set precedent for future elections, hope organizers*

By PETER BYNUM

Davidson's first candidates forum was held Tuesday night in the Chambers gallery for student government candidates. Conceived to combat what SGA president Harrison Murray termed "flyer warfare" in campus-wide elections, the event, organizers hope, will establish a precedent for future contests.

By asking candidates to present prepared statements and answer one impromptu question, the SGA attempted to provide students with an opportunity to hear each candidate voice his or her opinions and motivations for seeking office in student government.

If the forum has the desired effect, ac-

ording to Murray, elections will be based more on candidate qualifications than on popularity or effective advertising.

After Murray's opening remarks, junior Tripp Helms took the stand. Although he faces no opposition in his race for SGA president, Helms took advantage of the chance to discuss his plans for 1989-90.

Noting his two years of experience in student government, Helms claimed that he has seen the power of "organized student opinion" in affecting the administrative policies of the college. He wants to continue to use this power, but also wants the SGA to go a step further.

During his terms of office, Helms said he has seen the SGA "settle into a reactionary

posture" but expressed hopes that he will be able to help the organization "to set its own agenda."

Candidates for SGA vice president were asked to describe that office's involvement with SGA committees and also to define their personal views of the vice president's role in the organization.

Junior William Brewer told of his desire to get more of the student body involved with SGA committees and his intentions to be flexible in his duties, willing to "do what needs to be done."

Sophomore Dan Bruton took the podium next and briefly outlined his goals of widespread student involvement and good representation for the entire student body.

Junior Caroline Buxton reiterated the other two speakers' points and also expressed a need to improve the liaisons between students and the governmental departments.

Junior Tim Sparks went by the book and quoted from the Preamble of the SGA by-laws. He talked of his intentions to support the president and to devote himself to traditional duties such as appointing committee chairmen.

Although only 20 students attended the forum, Murray remained optimistic, professing his hope that each year student participation will rise and that the forum will soon be "an integral part of SGA elections."

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