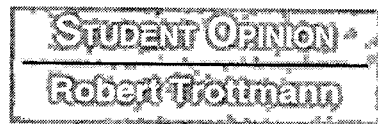


# Student upset by town's racial issues

As I walked through the night air at about 7 p.m. last Tuesday night, a million thoughts were going through my head: How many people will be here? What will they say? Will something be accomplished, or will this be a waste of time? Will I get the info I need to



write an article? But soon, my questions were answered.

I entered the Davidson Town Meeting with an open mind, and the realization that it had started about 10 minutes before I got there. The room was full of people, and they were standing in the doorway to the room, a total attendance of about 75 people. (That is a personal guess.)

The topic of discussion was not what I expected it to be, but it taught me a lot about the opinions, feelings, and life of this little 11-square-mile town, with a population of about 4000.

The topic was how we can improve Davidson as a whole. The discussion agenda had many parts, but ended up boiling down to what is being done, and what more can be done. The list of what is being done, from the Common Ground meetings, to helping bring both sides of the track together, to Ada Jenkins, strives to help the entire

community.

After we broke into groups of about five apiece, I learned what really needs to be done.

After two citizens were shot, race relations have been on a lot of town members' minds.

As I walked through the night, what I saw was a sleepy little town: little traffic, quaint little homes, clean sidewalks, and a new-looking Town Hall, with the fire station behind it, also new and clean.

But at the town meeting, I was reminded of "Christmas night." Townspeople don't say "the shooting," or even "the incident." They refer to

was here for a town meeting, not to be a "black poster child." She knew she was asked to speak because of her color, and also knew that her friend would bail her out.

At this town meeting about improving Davidson, race seemed to be under the skin of every comment.

The man speaking that night divided us up into groups by counting off, one through ten. I was a five. I followed my group, planning on not saying a thing, but being a mere observer.

Had I not represented Davidson that night, I could have opened my mouth more than once.

Later in the conversation, someone mentioned that there were few black kids in the North Mecklenburg Soccer league. To this, the older white man replied that black kids don't like to play soccer; it is a white-kid sport. The problem is not that the black kids don't know about the soccer league, but that blacks don't play soccer.

A lot of great ideas were brought up at that meeting, from a bike path to moving Town Day to the pond area to include the entire town (not just this side of the tracks). We can easily pay our problems away. From housing, to churches, to Town Day, money can mask the root of the problem.

The point is that people need to fix the problem one step at a time. If everyone took one step, the problems of the world would be fixed. That one step is fixing yourself.

Comments like, "The drug problem is the black kids trying to make money selling drugs to the rich, white students" should never be thought, let alone said. What happened Christmas night was the death of a young man, the death of an officer, and the wounding of a sergeant.

It was the root of all race issues in the town of Davidson. It was not a problem; it merely served to bring light on the true problem.

Ideally, sometime in the future, people will not be black people or white people, but people with black skin or people with white skin.

And by the way, kids play soccer.

*"Had I not represented Davidson that night, I could have opened my mouth more than once."*

the death of a young man and a police officer as "Christmas Night."

This was my first inkling of trouble. People here know something happened, but they just won't call it what it is: violence, unrest, death. During the meeting, a camera man from Channel 9 arrived. He asked to speak to a black woman about the meeting and "Christmas Night."

She walked up to a friend of hers, also black, and sent her to the cameraman. She said that she

The first comment in this brain-storming session for Davidson-improving ideas was one that jumped out at me and showed me the true problems in the town of Davidson. An older white man in my group said that the real problem was drugs. So far, I agreed that drugs can be a big problem, can breed crime, violence, and more.

But then he added to his statement. He thought that the problem was the black kids selling drugs to the rich, white kids at Davidson.

## ◆ LETTERS TO THE EDITOR ◆ Libertas article offends, seen as racist

We concerned students at Davidson College are writing in response to Mike Miga's article in last week's issue of the *Libertas*. First, we would like to state that we found the article deeply offensive.

Let's take a look at the first few sentences: "It's amazing the way Indians will find ways to make money. They trick you. They rip you off. They shit on you." Those sentences were simply shocking to us. Mike was referring to an incident when a poor Indian man put some crap on his shoe and a "shoe shiner" later appeared, offering to clean it. He later calls the man "ugly," "dirty," and "some little beggar."

While Mike's incident was unfortunate for him, we are at a loss to explain why he would generalize about all Indians—who are 1/6 of the world's population. You would expect to find such words in a racist publication, but *Libertas* decided to print it in a section called, "The World Outside."

If Mike had a similar experience in Israel or Africa, would he have stated similar, ludicrous, and general thoughts about Jewish or African people? Given his readiness to do so in the Indian case, maybe he would have done so. But we doubt *Libertas* would have ever printed such a piece.

We must ask the entire college: Do we send our students abroad just to return with racist judgments and inflammatory comments about the most unfortunate and disenfranchised people of the Earth? Moreover, we can not understand why Mike thinks conditions are totally different in India than elsewhere. In New York, it is not uncommon for homeless people to dirty car windshields, only to have other people pop up and offer to clean them for money.

Arguably, Mike looks in the wrong places to see who can rip off whom. The Savings and Loan scandal in the early part of this decade was a high-scale rip-off by the rich against the poor (regular taxpayers): Would (or could) Mike generalize about the American people from such an experience? Mike's beggar simply wanted to make a couple of cents, given that he does not have any other means (or hopes) of doing so. We find it totally unacceptable for Davidson College to be supportive of such thoughts in any form. That it was printed in a publication which the entire student body funds is also abominable.

*Libertas* receives thousands of dollars a year to express many different viewpoints on campus, but Mike's views should not be accepted by any educated, rational human beings. When thoughts such as these get expressed in a community publication like the *Libertas*, they run the risk of being dangerously legitimized and appearing mainstream.

For example, a recent showing of a 1930's German propaganda film defiling the Jewish race was attended by some of us. The film was sponsored by the German government and expressed racist sentiments (not unlike Mike's about Indians) regarding the Jewish people. We all know the tragic results of silence to such attacks. We feel the editors of *Libertas* were incredibly irresponsible and negligent in even deciding to print this letter.

Nevertheless, it is the absolute duty and goal of a liberal arts education to foster the understanding of cultural differences and realities. As students of this school, we feel saddened to be part of an learning institution which publicly accepts such judgmental conclusions.

We regret that Mike is bitter about his experience. But we must add that the strong majority of Davidson students who go to India return with positive experiences and enriched feelings. In fact, the "Davidson in India" program is one of the most popular study abroad programs that Davidson offers and is respected nationally. Mike, no doubt, had a bad trip. Unfortunately, however, he should not have taken out his frustration on a whole race of people.

We honestly believe that a quality liberal arts education has been lost on Mike. We can not see how he will be able to lead a "useful life of leadership and service" given his stated beliefs. Accordingly, we hope the rest of the student body now understands that Mike's sentiments are not shared by a strong majority of students who visit India, and that his generalizations were wholly inaccurate and unfairly pointed.

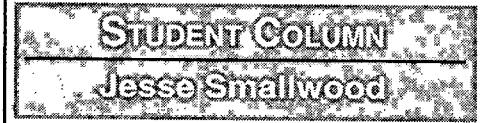
If Mike wanted to find a race of people to complain about, we surely hope that he does not think "Indians" can be used as "safe" example. History, science, humanity, and basic compassion tell us that no such example exists. Mike should learn that simple, fundamental lesson, and the college should do a better job of promoting it.

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|-----------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| Amali Amarasinghe '98 | Prashant Kaishap '00 | Naresh Nagella '98       |
| Renu Bhatt '98        | Deepa Kamath '98     | Sachin Phade '98         |
| Saadia Bhatti '98     | Rahul Karnik '00     | Vinod Thomas '98         |
| Fahd Gul '99          | Sean Keesee '98      | Shalini Unnikrishnan '01 |
| Saad Gul '97          | Gagan Khanna '01     |                          |
| Yasar Ishaq '00       | Uzra Khanjker '99    |                          |

## Are the stickers really necessary?

As a new semester dawns on Davidson, students find themselves having to buy many new items: books, clothes — and for Independents, PCC stickers. Some Independents find this extra admission fee to be burdensome and unnecessary.

To clear up some of the confusion about



why the \$20 per year is needed and what it is being used for, the Independent senators have investigated the situation and would like the present their findings. To aid our understanding of the situation, we met with Hallie Pitkin, President of the Patterson Court Council (PCC) and Jim Barber, the Patterson Court Advisor.

After reviewing the system, we have found the sticker system to be necessary and reasonable for our safety and security.

The PCC has had the sticker system for a while, but only this year have they started to card more actively than in the past.

The sticker system is necessary primarily for reasons of insurance. All of the fraternities' insurance policies require that they use a guest list system, whether they are serving alcohol or not. To get around this rule and to allow the parties to remain open to the whole campus, the PCC has created the sticker system to be, in essence, a very large guest list.

The sticker system ensures that they have control over who is able to attend parties, and thus, meet the requirements of the insurance

policies. If Davidson did not have this system, they would be forced to require fraternities to have closed, guest-list-only parties, like other schools do, and thus destroy the open-party system that makes Davidson so special.

The cost of the PCC sticker (\$10 per semester) also appears to be justified. The money gained from the purchase of stickers — \$1300 last semester — goes almost primarily to providing increased safety measures for the parties, such as police coverage, TIPS training, and wristbands, stamps, flashlights, and shirts for Risk Managers.

The money does not go to the houses, as has been rumored, but rather is kept separately in a PCC account.

Finally, we have found that Independents are not being required to pay an unreasonable share of the costs, as compared to house members. Each house is required to pay \$500 per semester to the PCC, plus an extra \$15 per hour for each party. In addition, each house provides

entrance monitors, IDers, bartenders, and Risk Managers for each party to keep the total cost down. The total monetary sum contributed by the houses adds up to greater than \$5000 per semester, as compared to \$1300 for Independents. Also, the cost of \$10 per semester, when looked at in comparison to a night-out in Charlotte, is extremely modest.

In conclusion, we have found the sticker cost to be reasonable and the sticker system to be both necessary and beneficial, in that it allows Davidson to continue to have an open party system on the court, which is beneficial to all.

We thank all of those who brought this question to our attention, and as always, we love to hear your comments and suggestions.

*"... the PCC has created the sticker system to be, in essence, a very large guest list."*

### To submit letters to the editor

Submit all letters to the Davidsonian office on the third floor of the Union by Friday at 6 p.m. Or e-mail any submissions to editors in chief Sarah Ogden or Randy Skattum at davidsonian@ davidson.edu.

Please turn in any submissions on a Macintosh-formatted disk, preferably in WordPerfect. Keep all submissions under 400 words.

The editors reserve the right to cut and otherwise adjust submissions as space requirements mandate.