

Does black frat bring equality to Davidson?

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE—It won't be "First Night Down," but a group of certain Davidson College students will be making their first descent into Greek life next semester. Starting in January, there will finally be a place to put African-American men on Patterson Court, Davidson's fraternity row. The court will soon be home to a separate but equally fun place for African-American male students to participate in service, hang out, and be among their own people.



NICHOLAS CARLSON

"It's about time these black, er, African-American dudes had a place to feel comfortable," said one fraternity member.

Fraternities have a long history at Davidson. Unlike other schools', however, Davidson's orders of brotherhood serve primarily as places to eat. Women dine elsewhere, giving these young men time to discuss and form opinions about the world around them, away from unnecessary distractions.

"Oh yeah," said another member of the court, "I think these [African-American] dudes will definitely enjoy getting away from [African-American] [Women] for a little bit each evening. Lord knows I value my time away from [Caucasian] [Women]. It's just nice to be able to be yourself, talk about what you want to talk about. Likewise, I'm sure they have lots of [African-American] things to talk about away from the rest of us."

The most exciting aspect of this addition to Davidson's campus life is that it shows how far we've come. Like the Ludicrus and Cosby concerts before, the African-American fraternity is clear, appealing, proof that Davidson is making real progress in race relations, despite its proud attachment to its Southern heritage. Note the sign in the Alvarez Campus Center, "We Will Not Tolerate Racism" and you'll understand why it's so important to these students to have an African-American fraternity on campus.

One equality conscious student, Billy O'Hara, said, "I think it'll be great for race relations at Davidson. My [African-American] classmates and I will have something to talk about when we pass each other in Chambers every couple of weeks."

"An African-American fraternity will not in any way emphasize differences between students. The discourse at segregated dinners will not in anyway posit 'blackness' as other. I'm glad Patterson Court isn't foolishly considering Co-Educational, desegregated party-throwing eating-houses, assigned to random freshman halls with the option to quit if things aren't working out. That would be a travesty," agreed one professor.

Of course, Davidson's new fraternity will host its share of parties in the coming months. These include "Old North Day," based on Kappa Alpha's "Old South Day" and "Vietconga" like Phi Delta Theta's own "Talibananza."

According to Patterson Court Supreme Grand Chief Advisor, Forrest Jones, Davidson's first African-American fraternity will open its doors sometime next semester. As with all Davidson fraternities, bids will be granted on an entirely self-selecting basis. No hazing will occur. Plans for an African-American women's eating-house are not as of yet under way.

Naturally, more than a few African-American male students are pleased to have a place to call home at Davidson, said one fellow, "What the hell else am I going to do? Chill with the Knights of the Kappa Alpha Order?"

Davidson is a highly selective independent liberal arts college for 1,600 students of which at least a couple dozen are African-Americans. Since its establishment in 1837, the college has graduated 23 Rhodes Scholars and many, many, many people of color. Davidson is consistently ranked in the top ten liberal arts colleges in the country by *U.S. News and World Report* magazine. Davidson, co-ed since 1977, also supports women's right to vote.

Come on, Davidson, let's talk about something important for once

BY DARCIE DRAUDT
Staff Columnist

Okay. Second column.

For those of you who missed my first column—Gasp! What a shame you missed its laugh-inducing qualities!—here's a quick recap. First, I am a freshman. Second, I am a self-proclaimed dorky freshman who hates anonymity at the same time she feels really awkward getting attention.

And now, all you readers get to ascertain yet another glimpse of my relatively mundane college life.

I like to think. In fact, I like to think so much that I like to share those ideas with other people. I'm sure from the tone of this column, you have deduced so much.

But furthermore, I want to hear and discuss the ideas of fellow Davidson students. However, I'm not hearing them. We're smart people, right? It's not as though we don't have the capacity to think and speak well—we do so every day in class.

So why doesn't that spill over into non-class time? If we're

Trustee religion requirements hypocritical

BY NED CONWAY
Guest Columnist

I find the Oct. 22 article entitled, "Five trustees claim posts on ruling board," laughable as the Davidsonian and College President Bobby Vagt use the arena of trustee appointments to herald the increasing diversity of the trustees at Davidson College.

The article is misleading when it reads, "Although at least 16 trustees must be members of the Presbyterian Church (USA), the rest may belong to other denominations."

It is important to understand that when the article reads, "other denominations," what it really refers to is other *Christian* denominations, for, as Article I section 5 of the By-Laws of the Trustees of Davidson College states, "All persons elected as Trustees shall be active members of a Christian Church."

However, while one head of the hydra—that is, the Board of Trustees—makes it very clear that it does not trust the judgment of non-Christian students, another head, the Admissions Office, seems to think otherwise.

Our school actively recruits students of *all* religious backgrounds, as is evident from the Davidson College Statement of Purpose, which reads, "Davidson values its diversity and seeks to be a community that recognizes the dignity and inherent worth of every person."

To me, this contradiction in college policy sends a bizarre and upsetting message: the non-Christian Davidson students are similar to textbooks in that they are aids to make us better informed.

We appreciate the diversity they bring to campus, the exposure we gain to new ways of thinking, but in the end, after their four years have expired, we place no faith in their ability to govern our institution.

There is nothing wrong with Davidson's affiliation to the Presbyterian Church—that is not the argument here. Surely the required 16 presbytery trustees are capable of protecting the Presbyterian heritage of our institution, but to limit the other trustees to believers in Christ is outrageous. While President

W.W.J.D.? Church should embrace gay bishop

This past Sunday was both a happy and sad day for the Episcopal Church.

For the first time in the history of Christianity an openly gay man, Rev. V. Gene Robinson, was appointed Bishop. While many observers see Robinson's appointment as a sign that at least one Christian denomination is willing to adapt to the times rather than let itself dissolve into the annals of history, others feel Robinson threatens to tear the Church in two.

If religions fail to open up to an entire segment of society they will face an increasingly small group of followers.

As great a victory Robinson's appointment may be for both gay rights and religious equality, the controversy surrounding him reminds us just how archaic the ideas of many people within the Church still are.

Under what other institution do people feel they must mold modern society to fit their beliefs rather than mold their beliefs to fit modern society?

No modern business or government would openly oppose an appointment to high office because of an individual's sexual orientation. So why is it that a religious denomination, a group that supposedly acts as the moral backbone of our society, feels it appropriate to hold on to an idea that is blatantly homophobic?

Those officials within the Church who oppose Bishop

Vagt concedes the point,—"If you go back 30 years, the number of [trustee] non-males and non-whites would have been much less," the institution Vagt represents is *still* naive enough to think that judging someone by their religion is any different.

President Vagt lies to us all when he says, "the one thing that joins everybody [i.e. the Trustees] is affection for the institution."

In truth, there are two things that join the trustees: their affection for the institution and their belief in Christianity. I argue that it is only affection for the institution that should matter.

The Board of Trustees makes it very clear that it does not trust the judgment of non-Christian students, while the Admissions Office seems to think otherwise.

To me, it is not a question of *will non-Christians ever be trusted with making decisions for the school*, but rather *when will this occur?*

History tells me not to hold my breath. As long as there are check-writing alumni that protest the issue, just as they did with respect to allowing non-whites and females into this school, there will be no change.

And this is really the saddest point.

Although the school may recognize *today* how inappropriate it is to discriminate by religion, they are more concerned with the alumni response than with doing the right thing.

One day, as the admissions counsel continues to do its job correctly, the student body will diversify to a point where it will be impossible to exclude non-Christian students from governing our institution.

I just wish President Vagt, the Board of Trustees, and the institution as a whole would have the maturity and respect to make these types of decisions now—and for the right reasons.

Robinson on the grounds of his sexual orientation must realize that the world has changed quite a bit in the past 20 years, to say nothing of the past two thousand years.

Church officials have been wise enough to ignore the racism and sexism that runs rampant throughout the Bible because they know that no religion that embraces such ancient beliefs can survive in the twenty-first century. The next step is to embrace Bishop Robinson and all those who follow in his footsteps.

The very fact that the sexual orientation of a single man threatens to rip apart an entire religious denomination shows the instability religious groups face in the coming years.

If Episcopalians, as well as all other religions, fail to open themselves up to an entire segment of society that has thus far been excluded or looked down upon in their own religions, these religions will soon find an increasingly small group of followers.

There is, obviously, a great upside to all this controversy. The fact that Bishop Robinson is in fact a bishop shows that there is enough support within the Church to not just appoint a gay bishop but also to weather the storm of controversy surrounding his selection.

Hopefully, Robinson will be only the first among many new religious figures who, in Robinson's words, "reach out to people who find themselves on the margins." After all, isn't that what Jesus did?

proval. Perhaps we don't want to seem like a geek or sound pretentious. And while some of my friends assert they are fully amenable to discussing deeper ideas, they simply don't want to for aforementioned reasons. Well, others just give me weird looks for bringing up something esoteric or unconventional. Okay, so I get a lot of weird looks anyway.

But college itself is weird. Where else can you go to a "restaurant"—cafeteria-style though it may be—in pajamas and must wear footwear to bathe? And buying 19 meals a week in bulk for the whole year?

Superficial quirks aside, college is a place to learn. While this sounds very "value of a liberal arts education"-ish, people have told me countless times how much I will grow during college. And we should not necessarily grow unilaterally. I want to be challenged and questioned. I want to learn new ideas and others' perspectives.

These wishes are not selfish. We can all grow. We just have to question each other. Then we can prompt a new flow of Davidson ideas.



DAVID CROW