

Students lead solidarity demonstration



Davidson students link arms during a demonstration in solidarity with University of Missouri activists. Photo by Shea Parikh.

MARY CLICK
Co-News Editor

An estimated 250 Davidson students, faculty, administrators and staff circled the flagpole on Thursday during Common Hour in solidarity with student-activists around the country marking a National Day of Action.

"I'm proud of our community," said Rashaad Phillips '16, who, alongside Fabian Lara '16, planned Davidson's gathering against the marginalization of students of color at America's predominantly white institutions.

He and Lara were responding to a call to action made by Ravyn Brooks, a student at Missouri State University, last Monday, a week after protests led to former University of Missouri President Tim Wolfe's resignation. Mizzou student-activists had accused Wolfe of neglecting to address students' concerns about racism on campus.

"This is not only happening at the University of Missouri, but these same problems are happening at Davidson College," Phillips said, noting that he was pleased with the turnout.

The demonstrators formed a large circle outside Chambers, linking arms while students in the center led songs and chants such as "This is what America looks like" and "No justice, no peace."

Between chants, students gave short speeches and personal testimonies.

Joi Stevens '18 recounted being followed by a police officer while driving with friends to a fast-food restaurant. Many in the circle were audibly moved as she spoke of calling her mother in case anything happened to her.

"Picking which story to tell was the most difficult, because I have so many stories about race from Davidson," she said.

She felt the story she chose reflected a common experience. "The first thing my mother told me when I was learning how to drive was that if I was ever to be pulled over at night, to go to a well lit and populated area, only crack my window, and ask for another cop to come as backup," Stevens said.

Although she said she was nervous about sharing, she is now glad she spoke. "Everyone has to know the daily struggles of people of color, and they can't ignore them anymore."

Student Government Association President Pablo Zevallos '16 spoke about the exhaustion that stems from underrepresentation and prejudice. "I'm tired because whenever I see an injustice on this campus or elsewhere, I feel like I have to suppress my anger because I don't want to be perceived as dangerous or as a threat."

He defended his choice to support the event in a Wednesday night email to the student body, claiming, "Neutrality in the face of inequality does not exist."

Shuyu Cao '16 participated in the demonstration by reading aloud racist Yik Yaks from the Davidson area. She said the demonstration was unique because it gave students of color a chance to be heard.

"This event provided an hour that focused on people of color and allowed us to speak without limitation," Cao said. "There are very few events on campus that provide spaces like that."

Phillips noticed Cao's reading of the Yik Yaks seemed to make a big impact of the faculty and administrators present. "It was interesting watching the faces of the faculty, because I think they were realizing, 'Oh my god, I teach students who think like this. How scary is that?'"

He hopes the testimonies will increase awareness about the realities of racism at Davidson.

Lara and Phillips planned the event in less than 24 hours after reading about the call to action in *The Black Tribune*, an online publication edited by students at Loyola University-Chicago.

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Thank you for
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Davidsonian

Ta-Nehisi Coates discusses book and race relations in America

AJ NADDAFF & MADISON ABBOTT
Guest Contributors

In two weeks, according to Ta-Nehisi Coates, you will see a report of another black life lost to police brutality. He claims it is inevitable at this point. This somber thought reverberated across a sold-out John M. Belk Arena Monday evening, where an audience of students, faculty and members of the Charlotte community listened to the journalist Coates, this year's Reynolds lecturer, speak on the legacy of black criminality and the racial disparities that plague our nation. Coates said the crowd, which neared several thousand people, was the largest group he has seen during his seven-week book tour so far.

Known for a prose as brutally honest as it is lyrical, Coates serves as a National Correspondent for "The Atlantic." His story, "The Case for Reparations," published last year, earned him a George Polk Award for Commentary and is one of the most discussed non-fiction works of recent years. His newest book, "Between the World and

Me," made the shortlist for the 2015 National Book Award in the nonfiction category, as he seeks to understand why criminality has been imposed upon black people in a letter to his teenage son, Samori.

The book articulates his conclusions from investigations into how blacks have been criminalized in the United States. The death of Prince Jones, a classmate of Coates's at Howard University, instigated Coates's inquiries. Coates described Prince having been incredibly brilliant and charismatic; he was very fond of Prince and had "nothing but love" for him, as he used to say. One evening when driving through Prince George's County, Prince was followed by a police officer chasing a criminal suspect in a similar Jeep. He was followed across county lines and into the suburbs before being shot and killed mere minutes away from his fiancé's house. It

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Coates spoke to a large audience in John M. Belk Arena. Photo by Bill Giduz.