

Bo Bartholomew and Adam Gess

# Diversity undermined

Every Easter at Davidson Jesus' death and resurrection is remembered. Yet as the events of the past couple of years clearly indicate, thoughts of Christ's death and subsequent resurrection are not the only thoughts that the Easter holiday triggers in the minds of Davidson students. In the past couple of years, there has been a growing aggravation among many Davidson students concerning the perceived forceful disposition of Christians on this campus. Consequently, individuals with strong convictions on these issues have decided that they need to voice their opinion.

Last week, in the course of the Student Government Association's weekly meeting, Intersivity Christian Fellowship came under attack for an apparent failure to comply with the SGA's criteria for charter renewal. As an organization whose stated purpose is "to share with the

Board of Trustees, the Faculty, and the Administration the responsibility for developing and maintaining Davidson as a superior academic community," the SGA is itself a representative of Davidson College, and is obligated to uphold the stated policies of the college. Thus, the SGA has decided to take issue with Intersivity's requirements for leadership which it argues do not comply with the college's nondiscrimination policy, particularly as it applies to the discrimination of homosexuals. The proposed action—deny Intersivity's request for a charter renewal.

I am not writing to give my proposed solution to this particular problem, but I would like to bring up a point that needs to be considered. Davidson prides itself upon its commitment to diversity and open-mindedness. The crosses that were put up outside of Chambers

the week before Easter appear to some to be powerful symbols from a close-minded group that is attempting to force its opinions on others. Indeed, the crosses do represent the very heart of the Christian faith. If it were not for the resurrection of Jesus Christ the Christian faith would represent nothing (thus, the importance of the cross as a symbol of the Christian faith). Yet what I fail to understand is why the cross and Christians in general have been singled out as a group that is attempting to indoctrinate this campus.

In my four years here at Davidson, I have witnessed a passionate cry being made for justice in the name of diversity. Over the same four years I have also witnessed a growing number of efforts to silence the voice of Christianity on this campus, and I find these two objectives hypocritical. If the Christian voice was silenced,

would diversity truly be diverse? It shows an alarming lack of sincerity, I believe, to rebuke the crosses when groups such as FLAG — not an organization opposing Christians, but a separate voice — are permitted to display portraits of nude figures in the Union, or their pink triangle flag in the library, all in the name of diversity.

As for the action awaiting a vote by the SGA concerning the IVCF charter, I believe it is time that we face up to our hypocrisy. If the SGA does indeed decide to revoke the IVCF charter, it will ultimately undermine this college's commitment to diversity. Intersivity's leadership qualifications concerning homosexuals are based upon a genuine and sincere religious conviction.

There is no hatred involved (homosexuals are in fact allowed to become members and are encouraged to join in the group's

activities), and their position is one that can be backed by logical and rational arguments. By revoking the IVCF charter, on the grounds that its leadership qualifications discriminate against homosexuals, the SGA will merely be attempting to deal with an issue of discrimination by creating another issue of discrimination, as it will be differentiating IVCF from its other charter organizations on the basis of a religious conviction.

As a result, the message it will send is that we here at Davidson College are willing to replace one form of discrimination with another so long as it conforms to socially tolerable norms. Thus, if this is diversity, I want no part of it.

This is a very difficult issue to deal with, I admit, and I do not propose to have all the answers. However, I do feel it is important that we carefully consider our actions.

Greg Garrison

## Religion, ideology, and hypocrisy

*In Germany they came first for the Communists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist. Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn't speak up because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me, and by that time there was no one left to speak up. — Martin Niemöller*

Last week, the SGA debated over whether or not to renew Intersivity Christian Fellowship's charter. IVCF does not allow practicing homosexuals (or

heterosexuals who are having sex outside of marriage) to be leaders. It does, however, allow them to be members. That is to say, anyone can come to IVCF and be a member, but only people who fit a certain set of criteria can assume leadership positions in IVCF.

This is ideologically distasteful to some members of the SGA, who claim that this violates the conditions governing whether or not a group can be chartered. In order to be chartered, a group cannot refuse membership in an organization to a student on the basis of sexual preference, except where appropriate and allowed by law.

Note that IVCF's requirements do not violate the membership conditions of chartered organizations; anyone can be a member. They only limit their leadership to people who hold the same religious views, including the non-practice of non-marital sex. There is no condition governing leadership in chartered organizations. Although there is no precedent for it, members of the SGA may attempt to apply the membership

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clause to leadership. Even if they do, however, they have no grounds for not re-chartering IVCF.

The clause allows for discrimination when appropriate and when allowed by law. IVCF's constitution is based on their religious convictions and a widely held interpretation of Scripture — which the Presbyterian Church (USA) also holds — which disallows practicing homosexuals from filling leadership positions.

It seems, therefore, appropriate that they can discriminate because their discrimination is based upon a lifestyle disallowed by their religion. It would be absurd to

require them to allow someone who does not hold their religious beliefs to lead their organization, and to force them to do so would be taking away their right as a religious organization to determine their own beliefs. It is also allowed by law. Religious organizations are constitutionally guaranteed the right to discriminate in such matters. If the SGA does not renew IVCF's charter, it will be a sad case of a decision which is not based upon the law of the land, nor upon the rules of the SGA, but upon what they find to be distasteful about the religious beliefs of IVCF. This is not government by law, but oppression by whim. There

is a term for such governments: despotism.

Although this decision may seem benign or perhaps noble, it will be an unlawful exercise of the government's power. Religious liberty lies at the foundation of a free society, and we must not stand by and let the student government rob us of this vital right.

In an institution that seeks to harbor and encourage diversity, such a decision would be highly problematic, ideologically hypocritical, a gross violation of our rallying cry for diversity, and a threat to the free expression of religion.

Jeremy Tarr

## Potty training

Most students on campus need not worry about cooking, washing, or cleaning. Davidson provides these services for us, so we may study, work, volunteer, and create without the interruptions of normal life. Unfortunately, many of us take these privileges for granted, especially when it comes to bathrooms.

Once a week, I walk into my hall's bathroom and cringe with embarrassment upon noticing it has just been cleaned. How empty it looks without the week's various sports sections scattered under the stalls and toilet paper stuck to the floor. I become embarrassed when I picture Mary facing this disaster while we sit obliviously in class. In fact, I become embarrassed for most of our school's population when I realize another spoiled student has abandoned the residue of a night's drinking beside the toilet for her to clean.

Such actions are weak, inconsiderate, and unacceptable for any person our age.

Suzy Burr

## Foster Free Expression

Here at Davidson, there has been a lot of talk recently about freedom of expression. People see certain types of expression as offensive and feel that those who choose to share their beliefs are imposing on the campus community. People feel violated and threatened by controversial displays. This should not happen at an institution which claims to strive for diversity and foster the growth of enlightened minds.

Instead of being viewed in a negative way, the expression of diverse beliefs should be taken as a constant reminder of our personal freedom and as an opportunity to strengthen our beliefs. Each time someone on campus expresses an opinion, he or she is actively supporting the constitution and the very ideal of freedom. Likewise, each time someone is witness to the expression of another's ideas,

he or she is given an incredible opportunity to test their own beliefs and to build a strong foundation upon which to base further learning. From personal experience, I can say that those ideas which are born amidst severe opposition are prized much more highly than those which exist merely because they remain unchallenged.

If we do not wish to take advantage of the amazing wealth of beliefs at Davidson, why do we strive for a diverse student body and faculty? Likewise, if we choose to be offended rather than seek to strengthen our minds, how can we support the idea that we have come here to learn?

If we really do want diversity, and if we really are here to learn, then we will cherish the sharing of diverse ideas rather than shun others' rights.