

## Crosses still create controversy

Jennifer Solberg

### Still searching for diversity

I am writing in response to Cormac Conner's letter regarding the three crosses erected in front of Chambers before Easter Break. According to Conner, because the crosses were placed in front of Chambers, instead of a more innocuous location such as a church, they "forced" the Christian faith on the religious minorities on campus. He claims that these crosses illustrate the lack of cultural acceptance at Davidson and cries for a heightened awareness and respect for the multiculturalism on campus.

I must admit that I was not surprised when I read this letter. It reeked of the "Cultural Diversity" fervor that has spread more rampant than conjunctivitis on this campus. I object, however, to Conner's claim that these crosses represent the evil of closed-mindedness that should be beaten out of our sheltered white heads.

On the contrary, I believe that his letter itself is witness to the failure of the Cultural Diversity movement on this campus. We have been expected to be mindful of other points of view on campus, yet the movement has not been progressive. This is because we have not been taught to respect other cultures. We have been taught only to accommodate them.

Don't misunderstand

me. I believe that, if approached correctly, the concept behind Cultural Diversity could succeed. I believe that if one can learn from someone different from themselves, they should do so.

At Davidson, however, we have not been educated in the acceptance of other cultures. We have been taught that the majority must be subordinate to the minority because majorities are, as a rule, oppressive.

The debate over the crosses in front of Chambers is proof that the Cultural Diversity has harmed the majority. This is not the first time a display was set up in the exact location as the crosses, yet it is the first time anyone has objected to it. For example, the FLAG display last semester was not commented on, while it definitely advocated a particular perspective.

The reason it was left untouched by the Cultural Diversity police is that it represented a minority at Davidson. The crosses represented an equally legitimate group on campus. The only difference was that the group happened to be the Christian majority.

What the Cultural Diversity movement has done is to suppress the values of the majority while welcoming those of the minority groups. Members of the

majority have been taught that they are oppressive, overwhelming, and closed-minded. One could almost say that they have been taught their mind-set is inferior because it is so dominating.

Ideal Cultural Diversity, however, has nothing to do with a majority-minority relationship. It has to do with the coexistence of multiple mind-sets, each respecting the validity of the others. It is not important how many individuals hold a particular opinion. An idea is just as valid if one person holds it as if one hundred people hold it.

I realize the crosses may have made a significant number of people uneasy. The FLAG display made many people uneasy as well, and I admit to being one of those people. Does that mean the FLAG display should have been placed elsewhere, where I wouldn't have been forced to see it on the way to class? I think not. Cultural Diversity has nothing to do with uneasiness. It has to do with acceptance.

This acceptance must go both ways. Just as the majority must accept the minority's culture, the minority must also accept the majority's culture. A cross is as valid as an AIDS ribbon. This must be understood in order for Cultural Diversity to work.

G.P. Diminich

### In defense of Christian tradition

I am writing in response to the letter "Cultural Diversity Davidson Style," submitted by Cormac Conner in the April 24 issue of *The Davidsonian*. I strongly disagree with Mr. Conner's contention that the crosses placed on the Chambers front lawn "forced" the views of Christianity upon non-Christian members of the Davidson community and that the crosses do not create an "ideologically open atmosphere" for non-Christian students.

First and foremost, Davidson is a Presbyterian institution and maintains close ties to the Presbyterian Church. According to the school's Statement of Purpose, "Davidson commits itself to a Christian tradition that recognizes God as the

source of all truth and, and finds in Jesus Christ the revelation of that God." Thus, as a Christian college, Davidson commits itself to celebrating Jesus' death and resurrection, represented by the crosses placed in front of the Chambers. Therefore, Mr. Conner should not be shocked by their presence.

Second, I take issue with Mr. Conner's belief that the crosses, which symbolize Christianity, "forced" the views of Christianity on non-Christians. The front of Chambers is used to make people aware of issues concerning the campus, whether by FLAG displays, fliers, etc.

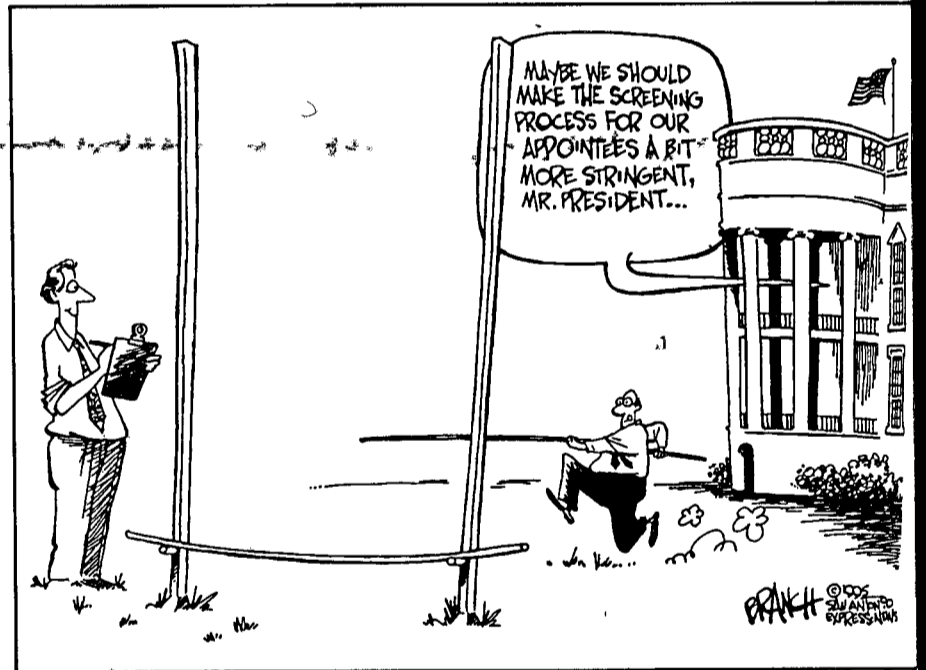
The presence of the crosses did not coerce people to accept Christian beliefs, but instead made people more aware of Christ's sal-

vation. When FLAG had a kiosk display a few months ago, I do not recall Mr. Conner writing a letter to *The Davidsonian* complaining that the FLAG display imposed FLAG's views on others.

Finally, implicit in Mr. Conner's argument is the notion that the crosses create a closed atmosphere on the Davidson campus.

Jesus expressed his love for everyone, and for Mr. Conner to suggest that the cross display leads to a closed atmosphere is simply ridiculous.

While I respect Mr. Conner's views, I do not believe that the symbols of Jesus' death and resurrection should be sacrificed on the altar of political correctness and multiculturalism.



Ike Bailey

## Why Davidson?

-Ike's farwell statement-

Davidson College is a hard-sell for any African-American student. The academic reputation and the small town atmosphere doesn't outweigh the culture shock the majority of us face. Still, I chose Davidson because I wanted a challenge, and I definitely got one. I wanted to grow, and I grew tremendously. Yet Davidson wasn't perfect.

Early on, I felt alienated and alone. I was one of the few black spots on a clean white wall. Some of my anguish was caused by some preset misconceptions. White students expected me to be the stereotypical black, and I thought they were all stereotypical whites. I expected to be called "nigger" and encouraged to leave. In other words, things were tense because we allowed them to be. My alien-

ation didn't come from those words, or any similar actions. Instead I felt alienated because I lived in an environment which was trying desperately to make me experience its finer points. There was not one service denied me, or so it seemed.

I was encouraged to go to court parties, join a fraternity, play ultimate frisbee on the lawn, and hang out at the Backstreet Cafe. I could listen to Dave Matthews Band and admire all the white pictures on the walls. My hallmates invited me everywhere, until they realized my level of interest. It seemed I could do anything I wanted, besides be myself. No one asked me who I was or what I liked. I am for cultural diversity, but I still need to celebrate the positive aspects of my own culture.

After I got over this I realized something. Because I am a student here, that means I am Davidson. Yes, Davidson is a conservative, white, Southern, liberal arts college. But now, because of me, it is also African-American, liberal, and Southern. Then I started to notice the BSC and a minority Dean of Students Office. I was proud that Spike Lee and Maya Angelou spoke at my school. I was proud that African-American history was taught as a class and talked about in forums. I was encouraged to know that all the good and bad of Davidson reflected the good and bad of Isaac Jerome Bailey. For four years I have seen Davidson do a lot to make me comfortable, but enough hasn't been done yet.

One tenured African-American in over a century and a half

doesn't encourage me. Allowing the African-American history course to be put on hold for an entire year doesn't encourage me either. I would love to have studied under at least one African-American male PhD., but Davidson didn't allow me that luxury. Cultural diversity starts with the student body but should not end here. I wanted to see more black pictures on the walls and not just during the shortest month of the year. Davidson has done a lot, but it needs to do more.

The administration can institute every multi-cultural program possible, yet that still would not be enough without the help of students. White students have to be more willing to step-out of their comfort zones. African-American students have to be willing to face

up to the resistance they will face when trying to speak out. Other minority students must not allow everything to become "black and white" issues because they, too, have concerns.

Davidson has made me grow and allowed me to love. Davidson has made me more open minded but I shouldn't learn through alienation. There must be a better way. If I had to choose again, I would return to Davidson.

Despite my hardships and complaints, Davidson gave me everything I need to succeed in my future life.

Davidson has made me realize that hate never defeats love and fear will never be erased with silence.

I am Davidson and so are you.

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