

Nina Blount

On Reading Day

Davidson, as an institution, has always been committed to an academic standard far more rigorous than most colleges and universities around the country. It has assembled one of the most impressive faculties available in academia anywhere. Davidson's students are, for the most part, highly motivated and extremely bright. They generally enjoy learning and are eager and receptive to the teachings of their professors. Professors, in turn, try to make their classes interesting and challenging (usually, the "challenging" part of that equation is readily within their grasp).

That is the circle of life, and it is a delicate equilibrium between student and institution; each pushing equally as hard against the other. As we come upon exam week, however, we arrive at a breach of that equilibrium. As we all know, this week is a week of *de* optional class days but *de* no regular class days. Very few

professors ended their classes last week, and many of us have class right up until reading day. That leaves us with one day to gear up for exams.

Having only one reading day is absolutely preposterous and is one of the most frustrating aspects of academic life at Davidson. Throughout the semester there is a feeling of partnership-in-learning between students and professors, but it is on reading day and during exam time that students begin to feel like they are guinea pigs in a sleep deprivation experiment. Being made to jump through the flaming hoop of exams is hard enough, but having *one day* to gear up is unfair and only serves to breed a large degree of frustration and cynicism.

The self-scheduled exam system is, undeniably, a gift. It is

without a doubt one of the best aspects of Davidson's academic life. At Davidson, however, we become numb to the idea of work quantities. We hear "I have four papers and two tests next week" so

mulative exams. They are trying to memorize an entire semester's worth of work, often upwards of a thousand pages of text. The actual amount of time it takes to do that and do it well is baffling. Just

because we have six days to take our exams does not mean all that work can be done in that time. For this reason, and I speak for many students here, Davidson students have become masters of the *academic gauge*. What this means is this: if it is utterly impossible to study to the

point of total preparedness for all of your exams, you must gauge which exams are more important. By important I mean, which exam will be the hardest, or in which class you must do well on the exam. The other exams suffer. We learn to gauge our classes this way at the end of the semester, and

it is unfortunate that we do. I've heard my peers refer to it as "strategic exam taking." I would never advocate giving us more days in which to take exams, as I think that the current system is very fair. I would, however, implore the administration to consider adding reading days to the schedule. I realize this could mean decreasing class days or starting earlier in the fall. These are issues that can be ironed out.

Giving us one day to get ready for the exam week, arguably one of the most heinous and sleep deprived times in our young lives, leaves many of us with a bad taste in our mouths.

Along with my classmates, I will be gone after this May. However, Davidson is not getting any easier. I realize it is almost impossible to change a schedule already in place, but for the sake of the classes behind mine, the schedule must change. Give us more reading days.

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often, that these numbers mean nothing to us now. If we stopped to think about the actual *amount of time* that goes into four papers and two tests we would be more sympathetic. That's why one reading day is not enough. Many people are studying for three or four cu-

Will Bradshaw

A condom for all ... and for all a good night.

Some people were offended when Santa interrupted a perfectly wonderful tree lighting ceremony by tossing condoms into the crowd on Tuesday night. I can respect that.

These people are also very prompt about voicing their displeasure, taking a student-signed complaint and a condom to President Kuykendall on Wednesday morning. I applaud their organizational skills and their willingness to stand for their beliefs, but Santa deserves a little applause as well.

For anyone that missed the event, this is what happened. Students gathered outside Chambers, to nibble on cookies and wait for the show to start. Early in the festivities, Santa made her appearance on the roof. Then she made the fateful move. In honor of AIDS Awareness week, a handful of Trojans were sent floating down to the crowd below.

After that, it was much like any other tree lighting ceremony. People singing, candles burning, Christmas stories ringing in our ears. And it was nice. We all oohed and aahed as the lights came on, and I left feeling warm and fuzzy inside. It was not until the next day that I noticed anything might be wrong. I was eating dinner when I heard of the complaint Dr. Kuykendall had received, and realized that some people were offended by Santa's airborne gift.

But, I was never upset. Not in the moment it happened, and I'm not now. Now, I can even say why.

Over Thanksgiving, I was sitting in church with my family. I

don't like going to church when I'm home because I normally hear a lot about death, destruction, and human depravation. I'm not big on the three d's, but as I was half-listening to this sermon, the most amazing thing happened. The message changed.

"Sin is failure to do a concrete act of love."

Those are the words I heard,

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and I couldn't help but smile. It was a message I could believe in.

Now, if you'll humor me for a moment more, let me tell another story.

Friday night, I ended up talking in a friend's room at 2 a.m., when he said, "You have to think about the rules you're given." For him, following rules blindly could lead to a dangerous mentality where people stop questioning their actions. I think he's right.

There was nothing unloving about Santa dropping condoms off the roof. In a lot of ways, she was reaching out to the student body.

"Here, if you're loving somebody, take precautions," she could have said.

Now, many of the offended people will say that condoms don't prevent AIDS; they don't even prevent pregnancy for certain. Abstinence is the only sure way to

prevent the sexual transfer of the virus. Those people are right. But if you're having sex (and many people are), a condom is still better than nothing at all.

But, the offended people would go on. There is a time and a place for condom distribution. It can be done anonymously in college bathrooms. It can be done at Health fairs or wherever, but the middle of the Christmas tree lighting ceremony is neither the time nor the place. Well, why not?

Much of the campus was gathered there. It was a sensual, spiritual, loving event. We were outside, holding hands and singing songs by candle-light. Maybe there were young lovers in the crowd, staring into each others eyes over the final bars of "Silent Night." Maybe they raced back to their room afterwards, and maybe Santa reminded them to be cautious.

I applaud Santa for that reminder. I applaud Santa for making a statement about something she believes in and for making me laugh in the process.

And all the people who have questioned what they believe and still found themselves offended, thanks for speaking up. Even if I don't agree with what you said. If you want, call me (-6126) and we can talk about what you found so upsetting. Maybe we'll both grow from the experience.

But, if you were offended because you have always been told such things are offensive, then I urge you to question your response. Find your own beliefs instead of relying on everybody else's.

Kristen Richardson

Jingle (all the way)

It is somewhat unorthodox for an editor to reply to an article which appears in the same issue. There are two reasons why I am doing this. The first reason is that this is the last issue of the semester. The second reason is that Eric Sapp's opinion tripped me; it pleads for refutation. Sapp raises the question of whether the campus Christmas party was a suitable venue for the distribution of condoms. Had he stopped there, for whatever reason, I would have considered his point valid, disagreed quietly and moved on with editing.

Eric Sapp did not stop. He writes that he is upset with the fact that condoms were distributed at a tree-lighting ceremony. In reading his article, it becomes apparent that what he is against is not the venue, but the fact of condom distribution. Sapp makes no mention of the other ways in which AIDS can be contracted. Sharing needles, blood transfusions and unprotected oral sex all contribute to the spread of AIDS. It is amazing to me, that, at this point in time, anyone would question the centrality of condoms in the fight against AIDS.

Mr. Sapp says, "Telling people what they want to hear so the AIDS awareness movement will stay popular won't solve the problem." Let's break down this sentence. Do you want to hear about another person who is dying of AIDS? I, like so many people, have had friends die as a result of this disease. By definition there is nothing in the discourse about AIDS that anyone

wants to hear. But we *have* to hear about AIDS so we understand the implications of such a disease. The implications for us. AIDS is not a fad. It is not an awareness movement. Sapp implies there is some marketing involved in keeping AIDS awareness "popular." The idea that AIDS is something that must be kept popular is repulsive. It is demeaning to those infected, to the memory of those who have died, and to those who hold that memory dear.

Sapp then writes, "if we are really serious about working towards a solution to this problem [AIDS], we should consider an alternative measure that is clearly more effective than condoms." Sapp insinuates that people are not serious about this problem. Again, offensive. It is highly presumptuous for him to assume that he knows the solution to the AIDS epidemic. Highly-trained experts (like the Center for Disease Control and the National Institute of Health) support education and condom distribution as viable measures to help in containing the AIDS epidemic. It is not realistic to demand, or even expect, monogamy of anyone.

I do not deny Eric Sapp his right to object to the time and place of condom distribution. I question his knowledge about the disease and the insidiously political nature of his objections. The reason why we have to earmark weeks for "awareness" is because opinions like Eric Sapp's exist.

Write for Opinions.