

Reminders of racism hint at broken society

CLINT SMITH
Guest Columnist

For many, the holiday season provided an excellent time to recharge. While I enjoyed my break, it was also an unfortunate reminder of our society's shortcomings. During break, I was subjected to several incidents of racial profiling. Though these incidents may seem like coincidences I should have disregarded, they point to racist undertones that still smear our country.

The first incident occurred in my hometown of New Orleans. I sat at the dreaded DMV waiting for my number to be called. When it came time to take my photo, I smiled like it was my birthday and showed off the result of five years of braces and relentless brushing. Curiously, the receptionist told me not to smile "for identification purposes." I was puzzled because I had never heard of such a rule. I didn't give it a second thought and simply took a picture that made me look like one of "America's Most Wanted."

Before walking out the door, I turned to wish the receptionist a Merry Christmas. At that moment, she took the picture of the woman who had once been behind me in line. Standing in front of the screen, this woman smiled like she had just won a date with Brad Pitt. I expected the receptionist to tell her not to smile as well, but she didn't. She continued to make the woman's license without giving it a second glance. I wondered if this was due to the fact that I was black and the woman was white. I couldn't think of any other reason.

All I got from the receptionist when I turned to ask was her best effort to ignore me. After standing in front of her desk for a good five minutes, she turned to me and said, "Sir, I'm going to call security if you do not move." I wanted to scream and call attention to the situation, but realized that yelling would only make things worse. I left the DMV angry because I felt this white receptionist had not allowed me to smile because I was a young black man. That day, I asked some friends if this had ever happened to them. While no black girls said it had, at least a quarter of the black men I asked had heard of similar things. Was the DMV trying to force young black men to take mug shots as

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their ID picture?

The second incident occurred when my friends and I, all black, were driving home late at night. Minutes away from my house we were distressed to hear the sound of police sirens directly behind us. I was bewildered because I did not think I had violated any laws. The officer approached my car, asked me for my license and registration and turned back toward his car. When he returned, he asked me if I knew why I had been pulled over. I said that I had no idea. He claimed that I had "accelerated too quickly out of the stop light," a statement that stunned and infuriated me. I had never heard that rule and was fairly certain that it didn't exist. I had been driving on a road where the speed limit was 40 mph and I hadn't even exceeded 35!

The police officer said he would let me off with a "warning" and, in a contemptuous tone, told me to "have a good night and be more careful next time."

"Be careful of what?" I thought to myself, "Police officers like you who try to abuse their authority to incriminate young black men?" I rolled up my window and pulled away, feeling like the world was out to get me based upon nothing more than my skin color.

While racism in America may not show up as "white power" and cross-burning, it is still a prominent fixture in our society, simply more covert. I don't mean to say that all whites are racist—bigotry transcends cultural boundaries and can come from the words or actions of people from every creed, color and culture. The most important thing for us to know is that we can neither ignore racism nor heed its presence and do nothing. We have a responsibility to eradicate it from our school, our cities and our country.

Next time you hear somebody say something that may have a racist undertone, whether they are cognizant of it or not, let them know that it's not okay. In remembrance of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., let us not allow these ugly occurrences to mar a beautiful world.

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Free speech board lacks sincerity

MIKE WATERS
Guest Columnist

The Free Speech Board, located in the Alvarez College Union, stands as a 3x4 foot intermingling of honest opinion, devil's advocates, general buffoonery, school spirit and off topic mumblings from the chemically impaired. The subject of recent hub of controversy, the Free Speech Board attracts regulars to the Union who wish to view tabloid answers to serious questions.

The drastic contrast in tones between the question posed and the respective posts, as well as between posts themselves, is funny on occasion. The irony manifested in both the board's spectacular success and failure to achieve its goal is also at times funny. Today's society seems appropriately represented in the Free Speech Board: some people wholeheartedly try to tackle the problem head-on, while others kick back, play the comedian and go on "living the dream." "Funny," however, comes at a cost to all those involved. The Free Speech Board's failure is a minor but absolute refutation of Davidsonian principles. While the Free Speech Board is at heart a praiseworthy idea, its flippant-debate format and its silent tolerance of posts endorsing rape, racism and substance abuse necessitates its reform.

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Ross White '09, co-president of Just Peace, which sponsors and monitors the board, described the mission of the student organization: "to stimulate and provide a forum for student discussion about issues both on campus and globally." On paper, the Free Speech Board seems a perfect fit for an admirable organization's exemplary goal. Upon closer inspection, however, posts fall short of thoughtful and noteworthy discourse.

"We've had some minor problems with comments not related to post topics whatsoever and with responses with lots of expletives," White said. He also stated that while Just Peace does not endorse any views expressed on the board,

they leave the dismissing of potentially offensive posts to other posters who "call each other out." The ideology is understandable (The "Censored" Free Speech Board is not as catchy). However, the laissez-faire sentiment allows responses to the question "What can Davidson do about sexual assault?" such as "'No' means 'no' except when her body says 'yes'" and just as alarmingly "young money cash money" to remain in plain sight as anonymous statements tolerated by the Davidson community.

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The format of the Free Speech Board also hinders its ability to accomplish Just Peace's goals. Posts usually consist of blurry one-liners or what White calls "bumper sticker statements." The flippant, one-liner battles often fail to inform and always fall short of discourse representative of Davidson College. "We recognize the board has its limitations and that it is difficult to establish an entire viewpoint," White said. However, "Bumper sticker statements are better than nothing."

White and Just Peace are looking into creating an internet forum where students can fully communicate their thoughts. That move may not only lead to more effective argument but also might be able to assign accountability to posts.

This perspective is not a call to arms. This article is not an attempt to censor opinion. This article is an attempt to keep blatantly offensive and significantly harmful material regarding issues of race, assault, etc. out of public tolerance. Free speech comes with a caveat: we are all accountable for what we say. Just Peace's goal for intelligent student discourse relies on student ability to express fully their point of view. The Free Speech Board's lack of poster accountability and means for in-depth arguments therefore warrant its trip back to the drawing board.

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Reservations about Barack Obama



Washington and Lincoln.

Obama's foreign policy positions can only be described as disastrous. He has refused to characterize the Iranian Republican Guard as a terrorist organization, yet has openly suggested bombing Pakistan.

He also stands behind the idea of a complete military pull-out from Iraq; he apparently wishes to portray a weak America which quits while winning. Due to such successes, Obama decided to abstain from declaring his support for the architect of the triumphs, Gen. David Petraeus and our military. Obama, however, was quite ready to sign a letter attacking a private citizen, Rush Limbaugh.

His desire to be universally likable is also somewhat disconcerting. I would rather certain elements did not like the United States, like radical Islamists and individuals with no respect for women, children or humanity in general.

If these groups start liking the United States, a radical change in policy will be necessary. Obama has continually stated that Americans' security is inextricably linked to everyone's security. Now that is a quaint thought, but I do not understand in what way I can share security with a terrorist.

Obama includes the fact that he lived in Indonesia, from ages six through 10 and that his biological father is Kenyan as ample experience and credentials to justify his foreign

"Obama-mania" has spread across the country in the past month, or at least through the media. News organizations like NBC have drooled over the gifted speaker, Barack Hussein Obama. NBC got so caught up in the frenzy that it forgot to hide its leftist ties and openly declared its bias towards him.

Obama apparently lights the liberal fire. A President Obama, however, spells disaster for the country conceived by Madison and Jefferson and built by

policy positions. Apparently, in today's world this is enough to hand over nuclear launch codes. I have been to Italy for two weeks. Am I now an expert on Italian affairs? He has also stated that because he has family members in African tribal villages, he is better suited to help Africa. That would be great if he were running for President of Africa, but I would rather he helped Americans first.

Obama has also touted certain decision-making abilities that make him suitable for the Oval Office. Such decisions include consistently opposing the Iraq War. I am not sure how opposing victory makes for a good decision, but it is all he has.

A distinct anti-Semitic and anti-Israeli tilt also mars Obama's character. His mentor and pastor, Jeremiah Wright Jr., is a supporter of Louis Farrakhan. This pastor even traveled with Farrakhan to visit the Libyan terrorist Col. Muammar al-Gaddafi.

Wright has continually preached against Israel. Even though Obama has called Wright his spiritual mentor and moral compass, the Obama campaign has publicly distanced itself from him. In Wright's own words, Obama "can't afford Jewish support to wane or start questioning his allegiance to Israel."

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