

Re: Diversity

BY MBYE NJIE
Guest Columnist

Diversity is about more than just skin color. I agree wholeheartedly with Joe Taylor on this phrase. As for the rest of his argument, there was little else that I really could agree with. I agree that Davidson is a highly selective liberal arts school that contains about 1400 white students and about 200 non-white students. I would agree that many of the students are not that diverse in the way that they think, act, dress, or do a lot of other things, but there are also a lot of different and very diverse individuals in this group.

Joe asks, "is it not racist to claim that a black person is different from a Hispanic person because he or she is black?" To that, the answer would be a resounding no. It is not racist, because in this country the color of one's skin determines many things in their life. The fact that I am black does make me different from a hispanic or a white person, because they haven't gone through the same things that I have as a black man in this country.

I'm not sure if Mr. Taylor is trying to hint that minority students are only at this school because of the fact that they are minorities, but if this is the point that he is trying to make, then I once again would have to disagree with him. I will admit that some students do get into this school because of their minority status, but this is just the same as students getting into this school because they are legacies. Nonetheless, the school deems that these students are smart and capable enough to get in and to graduate. Mr. Taylor, the minorities in this school are in this school because of their intelligence, and not just their skin color. If the school tried, there would be more minorities, because I can assure you, there are a lot more smart ones out there.

Before I start this next rebuttal, I would like to preface it with the fact that I am not a member of any fraternity. It baffles me that so many people actually believe that the chartering of a historically black fraternity at Davidson is segregating Davidson. What do you call the other 6 historically white fraternities at Davidson? Last time I checked, these fraternities weren't founded by a group of diverse individuals. Due to the mere fact that Alpha Phi Alpha has a hispanic in their group, this makes it the most diverse fraternity at Davidson, because hey, 1 out of 8 is not bad here. Last time I checked, there weren't too many bids being passed out to the black students by the other fraternities.

The other fraternities on campus started off as historically white fraternities, and since then, minorities have been allowed to join these fraternities. Historically black fraternities were founded because there was a point where black men could not join these other fraternities, and they decided to form their own societies, and groups. These fraternities also allow non-black males to join their ranks. I've heard a lot of complaining about Alpha segregating the campus, but I don't remember seeing too many white males come out to the open forums and sessions that discussed the goals and ideals of this fraternity. These were the forums that would have let you know that even you, Mr. Taylor, were more than welcome to join if you believed in the same ideals and goals of their fraternity.

I would like to conclude by saying that I did appreciate your article Mr. Taylor, because you did have the guts to say something that most people would be scared to discuss. I applaud you for this, and your example is the only way that actual dialogue on any issue dealing with diversity can actually be reached. Before any changes can be made on this campus on issues of diversity, people have to be absolutely open to expressing their opinions and beliefs.

For everyone's sake, don't be 'That Guy'

It's the kid who sits in the front of the classroom, not so he can see better, but solely so that the professor can see him better. The kid who talks without being acknowledged. The kid who talks not to make a point, or to ask a question, but because he wants the professor to know he is smart. Usually smug, he basks in the fact that he is annoying the rest of the class. Instead of making him feel uncomfortable, the burning stares from everyone else in the class thrill him. He is "that guy."



MIKE GALDO

Everyone has "that guy" in at least one of their classes each semester. I remember freshman year, I had "that guy" in an English class. He interrupted the teacher, made brilliant points that I am sure he thought were completely original, and had an ear-to-ear grin even as the rest of the class moaned at his every word.

I had one "that guy" who started off sitting in the middle-front of the class room. After a couple of classes where the professor stood only at the left side of the room "that guy" actually moved over to the left so that he could be directly in front of the professor. I almost booted.

My worst class at Davidson was one where I had two "that guys." They vied for most annoying student for the entire semester. I had many a daydream about forcing them to battle it out Thunderdome style: two men enter, one man leaves.

I have to admit that I was once "that guy." It was a 10:30, Monday, Wednesday, Friday class. I had a 9:30 class before it and was pretty bitter at having to be up so early. So, I decided

to be amazingly annoying. I didn't embrace full "that guy" status. There was no desire for attention from the professor. I may be annoying and loud, but never a brown-noser. Still, the effect was the same. I am sure everyone else in the class wanted me to disappear.

Unfortunately, I have learned that Davidson is full of closet "that guys." Little over-achievers who really, really want to be liked. Most people here are fairly intelligent, so with enough preparation they can talk on a specific subject ad infinitum. Davidson doesn't have the same sense of grade competition that other top-tier schools do—that I am grateful for.

I couldn't imagine asking someone for notes and being refused because they were worried that I would get a better grade in the class. Still, there is a distinct pressure to succeed among many students. That is not a negative, but it has a tendency to lead to a bit of sucking up by many students. Sucking up is the first step to "that guyness."

"That guy" can ruin a perfectly good class. Obviously, if a class is discussion-based then people should be sharing their opinions. Even lecture-oriented classes need comments from the students to break up the monotony. I am certainly not a quiet person in class. I have had people in classes who talked all the time, but never reached "that guy" status.

It's all in the motivation (which is tough to hide when you talk). If you honestly want to share your opinion, want to foster discussion, or want feedback from either the class or the professor then by all means, please speak your mind. But please, do your sucking up during office hours so that the rest of us don't have to hear it. Don't be "that guy."

Flannel, shaggy hair, ceaseless smiles

Davidson cults: the second article in a series

Correction: It has been pointed out to me that no members of KA wear pearls or sundresses (at least not in public).



NICHOLAS CARLSON

[cue *Dueling Banjos*]

Davidson is by definition a Southern liberal arts college and in our survey of cult-like enthusiasm within certain crowds, we move from one style of the South, the preppy sons and daughters of post-plantation aristocracy, to those who play in grass that is blue, hike the trails of Pisgah, and own at least two pairs of overalls.

I speak of the loyal congregants of Davidson Outdoors. They wear lots of flannel.

You see them around campus just as I do.

Sometimes they don't wear shoes inside. Usually, their hair is ruggedly unkempt to downright shaggy. Once, I caught a few of them hanging a canoe from the ceiling of the union. I've seen them repel down the side of the Duke theater.

What kind of cult would they be if they didn't cluster? In Commons they laugh the loudest. At the Union they eat crop lunches (cornbread and beans, delicious!). Standing outside of Chambers, they look their most comfortable in nasty, nasty weather.

Mostly, however, they smile. They smile and smile all the time.

Sometimes I get mean, just to see if I can break 'em.

Get a haircut you dirty hippie!

Squeal like a pig!

Nope. "That's funny," they'll say and keep smiling.

Where members of some pseudo-cults get mad and write nasty letters, these rustic smilers just kind of nod their head and say, "Yep, I guess you got me."

What exactly are they smiling about? Have they found a psychedelic plant in the rain forests of North Carolina, the swamps of Florida? Does any one ever lose at Frisbee golf?

So I found the shaggy, the smiling, the corduroy pants wearing and pick-up driving Davidson Outdoorsman, Jamie Shelton and asked for his testimony. I asked him why he accepted D.O. into his life:

Jamie's answer:

"Davidson Outdoors promotes doing fun things, which in turn make you smile a lot. And the beauty of it is that we are not a group of people who have crazy outdoor skills. We don't bond over impressing each other with extreme stories. We just have a common interest in the outdoors and enjoy sharing that with others. The greatest thing about our organization, in my opinion, is the experiences that people have when placed in a group in the outdoors. The value of the experience is the interaction, rather than the destination of the trip."

"I consider D.O. to be a very inclusive organization. We want everyone to go on our trips, and a lot of people do. We are promoting a more balanced lifestyle. We encourage presence in the moment. And I think that we smile for all these reasons, because we are present in the moment, because we facilitate great group experiences, and because we know how to have fun playing outside. If our smiles make us seem cultish, we can't help it. And feel free to talk to us, we're friendly too."

Amen.

So sign up, smile, but do not drink the kool-aid.

Privatization the best cure for ailing U.S. space program

President Bush's recent unveiling of a bold new Mars initiative will rekindle old debates on the merits of space exploration. Liberals often argue that NASA should be funded prudently, as money is better spent on social services back on Earth, while conservatives tend to reach for the stars and fully support NASA. It doesn't really matter who's right, because no one has ever made a compelling case that NASA should exist at all.



MATT BANDYK

I am not arguing that space exploration is unimportant; quite the contrary, in fact. Outer space is far too important to leave to government bureaucrats.

In 1986, theorist Eric Drexler in *Engines of Creation* wondered why spaceflight remained so much costlier than air flight. Obviously, the technology of the former is far more sophisticated than that of the latter, but that is not the sole, or even the primary, explanation for the exorbitant cost of spaceflight.

Airliners can spread their costs over thousands of planes and several flights a day. But NASA only makes several flights per month, and maintains a small flight of use-once-and-destroy spacecraft, except for the shuttles, which only fly a few

times per year. Drexler cites a study by Boeing which shows that "a fleet of fully reusable shuttles, flown and maintained like airliners, would drop the cost of reaching orbit by a factor of fifty or more."

But NASA is a bureaucracy, not a business. They don't find it necessary to implement Boeing's more cost-effective method because billions of taxpayer dollars will always be at the ready.

If Bush moved NASA out of the hands of bureaucrats and into those of private investors, he could bring a sense of fiscal sanity back to this era of spiraling deficits.

In a free market, there is a strong incentive for organizations to streamline their tasks and be as efficient as possible, lest they fall behind the competition. NASA is a government-imposed monopoly. It is shielded from competition and has no strong incentive to improve quality.

Boeing's vision of spaceports running like airports may seem straight out of the Jetsons, but the million-dollar offers by businessman Dennis Tito and pop star Lance Bass for rides in orbit show that there is at least some consumer demand. While NASA dismisses them as "space tourists", entrepreneurs should regard Tito and Bass as evidence of a potential market for space travel.

Indeed, private companies have already accomplished the advances in space which most directly benefit us here on Earth, such as commercial satellites for our DirecTV. NASA, meanwhile, refuses to launch commercial satellites. They're too busy dealing with life-and-death matters, for example, as Reason's Tim Cavanagh describes, experiments examining "how moss responds to light and gravity."

Bush, while labeled a conservative ideologue by the left, is in truth a very anti-limited government President. If Bush moved NASA out of the hands of bureaucrats and into those of private investors, he could bring a sense of fiscal sanity back to this era of spiraling deficits.

Most importantly, because any private venture into space must produce results back home in order to turn a profit, he could give Americans a space policy that actually reflects their interests.