

An opportunity to clear the air

M. Anton Bruce

This commentary is a response to last week's perspectives section in *The Davidsonian*. At this time, I would like to take the opportunity to clear the air about a few things. In regard to your opinion on who should write articles about race relations, I feel that there is no way that someone is going to give an accurate account on a issue that is foreign to them without the guidance of someone that has experience with the issue. The issue here is the black experience at Davidson. In this matter, the writing skills of a non-black writer are irrelevant because he/she does not have the same experience as a black student. *The Davidsonian* may consider it insulting to ask a black writer to write about the black experience at Davidson; however, some of your black readers find it insulting to have an article written about their experience by someone who has not shared their experiences. This sharing can take place by living such an experience or by being told of these experiences. It could have been different if an adequate number of black students, administrators, faculty or staff had been interviewed; however, this was not the case. To the best of my knowledge no more than two people were interviewed. In this instance, the writer has to draw from what he *believes* to be the black experience. In my article,

I told of the experiences that I have *lived* as a Black student. Well written or not, what a person lives and what a person speculates constitutes a difference. Furthermore, the issue at hand is *not* the author of the article as much as its content.

It seems that some may find my attitude disturbing; the development of my attitude not my attitude itself should be the disturbing part. Believe it or not, I came here thinking that Davidson would be a welcome change from the racial ignorance I had faced in the past. However, this view was quickly blurred when a security guard asked to see my ID in order to validate my status as a student (To this day, I have yet to see a white student asked to validate his status as a student).

As for the comments concerning the contact with Blacks. For one, I said that content in the past had been minimal. Evidence of such contact (or lack thereof) is the numerous questions that some minority students receive upon their arrival on campus. Typical questions are: "What type of shampoo do you use? How often do you people wash your hair?" or better yet, "How did you get here" (i.e. do you play football or basketball) and the list goes on.

Secondly, if the author feels that my statement is an "inflammatory and insupportable generalization," he or she needs to examine carefully the staff of Davidson College. If one thumbs through the faculty and staff section of the college directory, he or she would plainly see

that the caption under the majority of black pictures reads "Commons" or "laundry staff" or "custodial staff." So the typical Davidson College student after their arrival here, regardless of their past mainly comes in contact with Blacks in the roles of cooks, maids and butlers.

Where does this leave black students? After four years of the same the same questions, actions, and excuses, an "attitude" such as mine could exist. However, before you state how disturbing someone's "attitude" is, you should first find why such an attitude exists. My attitude has been formulated because of the past four years of frustration. Some of this frustration is coming out in these articles. I am not trying to blame any individual(s) for the racial problems that exist at Davidson. However, the truth hurts sometimes and I apologize to those that are offended. To those of you that disagree, wake up because life is passing you by.

Finally, the author of the article comments upon the uncertainty of the amount of racism at Davidson College. Is one to conclude that racism should be allowed to continue to exist provided that it is minimal? An easy and straightforward solution to the current level of racism whatever its size is that we, the Davidson College community, treat each other with respect and dignity regardless of each other's nationality or race.

M. Anton Bruce is a senior from South Boston, Va., and is president of the Black Student Coalition.

"The black experience": ironic

Marta N. Bukowski

I am writing in response to the article written by Trent Stevens entitled, "The Black Experience at Davidson." I found it ironic.

The article was entitled "The Black Experience at Davidson" but one, it was written by a white person and two, it spent three and a half columns talking about the history of black students at Davidson and relatively very little on their present experience. Sure, the past is relevant but only to the extent that it can help improve the present and future of blacks at Davidson. The latter two eras are what deserve and need attention. Many students do not perceive a problem or if they do, don't do anything or even know what to do. For the most part, how could they if they don't bother to ask?

I am white and like many students at Davidson, I come from a predominantly white high school and mid to upper class neighborhood and train of thought. So, I was unexposed and chose to be unaware at that time to racial problems. However, coming to a small, southern school changed my perspective. I do not by any means claim to say that I understand everything there is to know about being black at Davidson or black in general. I cannot, I have not lived it. I really do not now that it is like to walk across campus and be asked by a policeman for my ID. I really do not know what it is like to stand out because of my skin color every day. I really do not know what it is like to be alienated from the social life. But I have questioned and

talked to several black students, and I can tell you that Davidson is not the blissful limbo it is for many of us who know Mom and Dad can and will pay for tuition, car and trips. We know we can easily approach and talk to professors. And know, without a doubt, that our history and historical figures are viewed as important to whom and what we now stand for. Or just in general we feel accepted for who we are and what we achieve not because we're athletes or in some other way making Davidson "look good."

It isn't just "their" problem, it's ours in more ways than one might think especially if you're talking about the past but as I said it is the present and future that are now relevant. Davidson should be a desirable place for *anyone* to attend and want to stay regardless of skin color or background and not just for those of us who are catered to because of our skin color and background. However, by its present course, Davidson is not and will not be a place that *anyone* can be unless awareness is made, barriers are broken and stereotypes dropped. If it is not, we will be cheated out of a true liberal arts education and an opportunity to make some valuable friends. We will also close our eyes and dismiss a reality that is not only present on our beloved Davidson campus, but in our communities and states, our nation and world. And in doing so, we will all fail at Davidson and Davidson will fail us.

Therefore, it is responsibility because it involves us directly in who we are and who we will become. Our attitudes, and/or a change in them, hold the keys to the future. The world is out there, and we have the rest of our lives to change it if we so chose but we are at Davidson now hopefully learning how to make a difference in the world,

but if we can't change things here and now, how can we change things "out there"?

My request, to those of you who have taken the time to read and think about what I have said, is to talk to some black students, professors, and townspeople, find out what they think and feel about Davidson, find out what you can do to change it for the better and do it because it is easier to go through Davidson, slide into Dad's job, and then wonder what those four years at Davidson meant.

Marta N. Bukowski is a junior from Vista, N.Y.

Opinions Policy

The Davidsonian welcomes letters and commentaries from its readers. The editors will attempt to print all opinions that adhere to the following guidelines:

- All submissions should deal with subjects of interest to the campus community.
- Submissions must be neatly typed or legibly hand-written. The editors will also accept work submitted on 5.25" or 3.5" IBM-formatted diskettes (and, truth be told, we're partial to them).
- All letters must be submitted by 7 p.m. on the Sunday before the expected publication date.
- All commentaries must be submitted by 7 p.m. on the Saturday before the expected publication date, except for those on diskette, which are due at 7:07 p.m. Sunday.
- All submissions must be signed. Writers must present the

editors with compelling reasons if they do not wish their names printed with their work.

- The staff will not edit commentaries for content or for style, but for the rules of English grammar only.
- Letters should be under 300 words in length. The editors reserve the right to edit and/or condense any letter.
- The editors reserve the right not to print submissions which contain factual errors, advertisements, or objectionable material, or which represent a viewpoint very similar to other letters printed dealing with the same topic.
- All submissions should include the author's address and phone number. Submissions to the "Commentaries" section should include the following information: the author's home city and state, graduating class, and major field of study (or profession).

ROLL

it up and beat your roommate with it

FOLD

it up and make a paper airplane or a neat hat

DIP

it in glue and make a papier-mache thing

or

THROW

it in one of those everpresent recycling bins

BUT FOR GOD'S SAKE,
DON'T JUST THROW IT OUT!