

Code words and crayons: segregated halls stem from segregated minds

Charlie Shaw's article "Theme halls created to bring diversity, not segregation" in last week's Davidsonian has offered no examples regarding how segregated halls can improve diversity at Davidson.

In your first paragraph, Charlie, you state that your wise mother always told you to "make sure you know the entire story and all the details before you share it with someone." Unfortunately, your

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article is full of unsubstantiated assumptions rather than facts. Here are a few. In your article, you state that 99.9999 percent of the students in graduate and professional schools are white. On the basis of your figure, you believe one in one million students in graduate and professional school are black, Asian, or of Spanish descent. Clearly false, the ratio is much higher. My suggestion, listen to your mother's advice before you pick up a pencil.

Second, you never, I repeat, never stated how an African-American studies hall would promote diversity at Davidson. You accurately noted that there is both factionalism and segregation at Davidson College. Instead of suggesting ways to deal with this problem, you support an idea which furthers the existence of segregation. You also bootlegged biblical quotations while making widespread generalizations concerning the student body at Davidson. As an African-American who wishes not to be subject to generalizations by whites on the basis of skin color, one would think that you would not do the same to others.

Can African-American halls provide the answer to your social ineptitude and inability to relate to people of various races? If so, let's take this idea to the logical extreme, viewing the future at Davidson College. Suppose Charlie Shaw got his wish-and-any-ethnic group could have their own hall on campus under the guise of "a study hall." Why not make each hall a miniature ghetto? They would create perfect story lines for a Wayans Brothers' production.

To make assumptions and exaggerate situations, Richardson could become a hall predominated by Italian-Americans. Only males who

wore wife-beater shirts, drove Irocs, ate five servings of pasta per day, and sported 2.7 pounds of body grease — so as to improve their full body sheen — would be encouraged to join.

To further segregation and enhance racial stereotypes, Cannon could be a predominately Irish hall where each student had to own three "Beastie Boys" albums as well as the latest "House of Pain" CD. Higher lottery picks go to those with a "F*ck me, I'm Irish" pin. Duke would be the African-American dorm. As a result of the political lobbying power of Charlie Shaw, we get the best dorm on campus. Here, 40's of Olde English would be dispensed from Coke machines and Puff Daddy and omega arm brands would be commonplace.

Finally, the "All Others" dorm would be Sentelle. This dorm would be a hodgepodge of races. On Monday night, "Kama Sutra" could be viewed on the lovely big screen followed by "The Last Emperor." Friday nights would be a "Seven Days in Tibet" theme party and a cultural gala marked by snake charming and rhythmic gymnastics.

My sarcasm obviously flew over your head in the last article. I laid it on rather thick in hopes that you would get it this time around. Back to reality. Segregated dorms, under the code words of "study halls," offer no practical use at Davidson. Rather, they echo times reminiscent of the antebellum South. To me, segregated halls resound with the phrase, "separate but equal." Since our forefathers shed blood and tears to do away with this concept, you are doing them an injustice by pleading for retrogression. Davidson is supposed to give you the opportunity to meet people from various walks of life while you expand your cultural basis. Its function is not to give you an opportunity to shut the door on other races and keep an attitude of closed-mindedness. A college environment is intended to not only provide you with the tools necessary for success in the future workplace but also your future life, as well. I sincerely hope that in your future workplace, there is a feeling of comradery rather than disdain due to the fact that your workplace isn't filled with people of your same ethnic background.

Again, I pose the question which you never answered in your article, how does segregation and separatism make for a more diverse and well-rounded student body? Intuitively, the words

diversity and segregation seem to be functional opposites. You state that "if more blacks enrolled at Davidson, we could fill more than one table and thus be considered part of the mainstream."

This is not the case. A larger number of people being segregated from others will never constitute being mainstream; it simply results in segregation at a higher frequency. Segregation is segregation, no matter the number of constituents.

What segregation does entail is a reinforcement of stereotypes about certain people. If a white student had never encountered a black student prior to his/her enrollment at Davidson segregated halls will not lead to an understanding between races.

Rather, this will allow the said person to justify his/her own racism. He/she will adopt the attitude that you don't want to interact with whites, and he/she doesn't want to interact with blacks. How can segregated halls possibly bring an end to this type of thinking? All students should strive to extinguish negative racial stereotypes making others aware that people are people, regardless of skin color.

If the school were to segregate living halls, what would this look like to a perspective student? As a black high school student, would you honestly attend a school where the majority of blacks were pooled in one hall? Don't you feel that this would turn away more students than it would attract? If you want to increase diversity at Davidson, you should try to get more students of color to attend. To increase cultural awareness at Davidson, you should take active steps to interact with other cultures and appreciate the differences, not bottle them up and segregate them on a hall alone.

Charlie, I, too, was born into a family with a black mother and a black father. My uncles and aunts are also black. Living on the outskirts of Philadelphia, I, too, was accustomed to being around blacks. My father, two sisters, and my brother, are all doctors. They have had to interact with whites their entire lives. It's a sad reality, but you must realize that if you do work in a professional workplace, a large percentage of your co-workers will be white. You should take the opportunity to learn how to interact with whites while you still attend college. Chances are, you will not be provided with "African Studies" bathrooms

and tables in your future workplace.

I personally find it hard to believe that being black, you "need" to eat with people who look like you and talk like you. It is one thing to enjoy the company of people who have similar interests, as you. It is another to enjoy the company of people who "look like you." Your statement in the last week's Davidsonian was as ignorant, as white people stating that they feel the need to eat with people who "look like them." There is a word for that type of mindset: racism. If you wish to be in the company of other individuals because they "look like you" (i.e. they have the same skin color), you are, by definition, a racist. Do the entire student body a favor — Go to a bookstore, pick up a couple copies of Mein Kampf, and start the Fourth Reich, but please, do it somewhere besides Davidson College. Throughout this campus there are blacks like myself, whites, and others who wish to bring an end to racism. Your mindset serves us no purpose at Davidson.

My statement of Jim Crow laws at Vail Commons is directed at the entire student body. For the same reason the blacks don't eat with whites, whites don't eat with blacks. There is a general lack of camaraderie among students, blacks, whites, Indians, and Asians at our school. Maybe the entire population at Davidson should make note of this and address the real problem rather than treating the apparent symptoms.

What appalls me most is the fact that this hasn't encountered more opposition from students or faculty. I am disappointed that my college wants to segregate rather than integrate the student body itself.

Often times we draw parallels to Princeton, Richmond, Duke, Stanford, and other great schools, but if we can't deal with a simple problem of diversity, how can we compete with these schools? Truly intelligent people don't want to be associated with a school known for racism.

To quote the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. from his "I Have A Dream" speech:

Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to open the doors of opportunity to all God's Children. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood.

A democracy gives us the power to change our government's policies; use your power

I went with a group of students to El Salvador to learn about the political, social, and religious situations in this country — a country devastated by a 12-year civil war.

This civil war was fought by con-

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Joslyn Ogden

servatives on one side who desperately wanted to preserve the status quo and by guerrillas on the other who wanted to see more equitable political and living conditions for El Salvador's poor.

Moral correctness is always difficult to discern, but as I began to learn

more factual information about the conflict, I began to lean toward the side of the leftist guerrillas who were fighting for social justice.

The more I learned about the conflict, the more angry I became with the United States.

As time passes, U.S. citizens are learning more about the level of participation that the U.S. had in myriad of Latin American conflicts, and I have become disenchanted with the supposed "moral superiority" that we think we have. We cannot afford to rest on the laurels of our Puritan history. Our government does not always act in the best interest of the people.

The U.S. Department of Defense sponsors "The School of the Americas" on the grounds of Fort Benning, Ga.

This school trains elite battalions from Latin American countries in war techniques, including psychological torture.

I can understand how (although I disagree with why) this school was funded throughout the Cold War. But I can't find any justifiable reason for the U.S. to pay for the training of a foreign state's soldiers in techniques that are geared toward torturing their own people.

Many may be thinking, "Just another liberal idealist on a soapbox."

Well, I beg to differ. This isn't about drawing lines in the sand toward the right or the left. This is about doing what is morally right.

As citizens of the most powerful country in the world, we bear a special responsibility to the rest of the world.

How we choose to spend our money often has a direct effect on others' lives. That is not something to consider lightly.

It is our responsibility to vote and participate in a government that actually encourages us to voice our opinions.

I believe that if everyone who reads this issue of The Davidsonian wrote a letter to their congressional representative voicing their disapproval of wasting taxpayer money on the "School of the Americas" it would make a difference. Unfortunately, we live comfortably distant from many of the problems caused by our government and aren't motivated to act upon the great privilege of living in a democratic country.

If we don't use the system, then the power that should be the people's

quietly slips into the hands of those who desire power for selfish purposes.

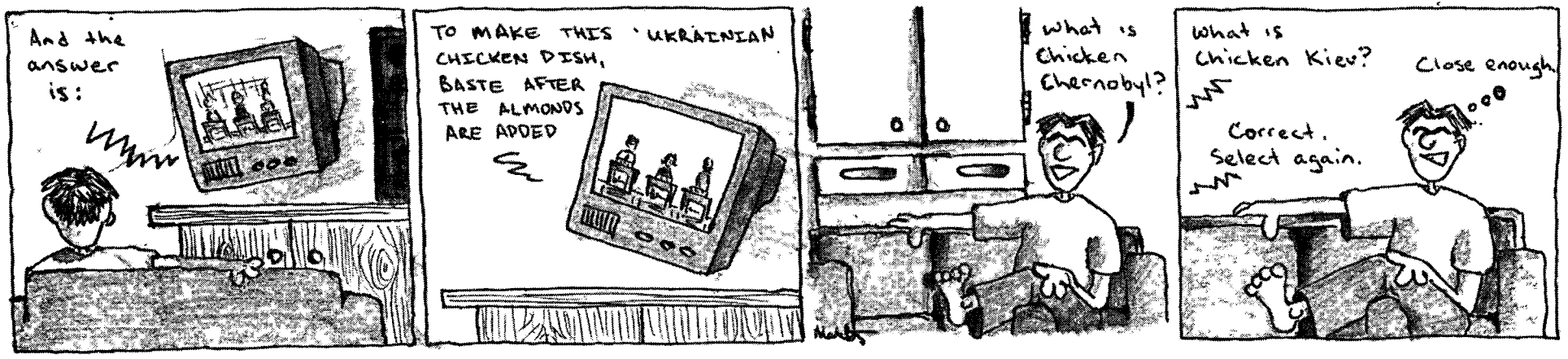
I hesitate to use the words "moral decay" to describe our country, but with an admittedly inexperienced voice, I will.

Something is wrong with our country and our priorities.

I am bothered by the fact that it seems people are more interested in hearing about Clinton's sex life and contributing money to his legal defense fund than being fiscally responsible and encouraging the government to act in ways that will benefit people's lives.

We must remember that in fact it is not "their" government but "our" government; it is our privilege to use our creativity and intelligence to fix this salvageable system.

Alenda Lux except on weekends - by Nate Lotze



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