

The U.S. must not become a "banana republic"

Ralph Levering

Davidson rightly prides itself on seeking to educate leaders for our society--men like Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Senator Wyche Fowler in the past, and women and men of character and vision in the present. Without meaningful goals, however, the concept of leadership makes no sense. So what are the goals toward which we should strive?

Internationally, we Americans need to work for human rights, the reduction of spending on armaments and increased emphasis on meeting human needs, stewardship of the environment, and customs and institutions that can help to resolve conflicts peacefully. There obviously is much work to be done in all of these areas. Yet since the early 1960s, with presidents like John Kennedy and Jimmy Carter and Secretaries of State like Henry Kissinger and George Shultz, the trends have tended to be positive. Only in Central America, on balance, have we made the situation worse in recent years.

It is in domestic affairs that this country especially needs leadership that draws on our highest ideals. At home many of the trends since the 1960s have been negative, such that America increasingly resembles the "banana republics" of Central America that were the objects of derision in the early 1900s and that continue to have difficulty establishing stable, just societies and governments. Although the United States still has a larger middle class and greater

respect for law than most of these countries, the trends are disturbing. Combined with an economic downturn, these trends could transform our society into a "banana republic" much more quickly than we might think.

Although familiar to anyone who has not been sleepwalking through the 1980s, the major negative trends in domestic affairs bear repeating:

1. The ever-growing gap between the affluent and the poor, a condition very common in Third World countries. It is startling that President Bush has urged a substantial cut in the capital gains tax. If enacted, this measure would widen the gap between rich and poor even further while increasing the budget deficit. As Gandhi noted: "The world has enough for every man's need but not enough for every man's greed."

2. A feeling that most of the poor are stuck in their condition, which is characterized by poor education, inadequate housing, single-parent households, and menial jobs at best. Is it fair that only those young people who possess academic skills, affluent parents, or connections that will help them locate well-paying jobs are likely to live comfortably as adults in our society?

3. The sense that government at all levels is run by and for the wealthy, and that "public servants" themselves are on the make. The proposed \$50,000 pay raise for members of Congress, at a time when their salaries of \$85,000 already put them in the top 1 percent of wage earners, has heightened distrust of government.

4. The massive budget and trade deficits, leading to greatly increased ownership of American assets by foreigners. As most Latin Americans and Africans have learned from experience, trade deficits and foreign financing of public debt almost always portend trouble.

5. The widespread use of cocaine and other dangerous drugs by rich and poor alike. As the black sociologist C. Eric Lincoln commented in his talk at Davidson on February 1, something must be missing in the American dream for so many of us to be using drugs.

6. The return in the 1980s of an atmosphere in which overt racism is widely condoned, even in national political campaigns. Attitudes and policies based on claims of racial superiority have been the rule in many Third World countries, but were in retreat in America from the 1930s through the 1970s.

In short, our country faces serious domestic problems--a point easily forgotten in the relative comfort and conviviality of Davidson College. Reversing the negative trends will require educated, morally sensitive leaders with a vision of the common good. If places like Davidson do not continue to produce leaders like these, what kind of a society are we likely to have when our children and grandchildren reach adulthood?

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A black perspective of Davidson

M. Anton Bruce

After reading the article in the last *Davidsonian* about the black experience at Davidson, I became a bit upset. First of all, the article was inappropriately titled: There is no way that an individual who is not black can give an accurate account of the black experience. Also there is no way that one individual can speak for the thoughts and the feelings of an entire group. Perhaps a more appropriate title would be "A History of Blacks at Davidson."

I made the statements concerning Davidson students in the previous edition of *The Davidsonian* ("...they don't know and they don't want to know.") and I would like to provide some clarification of the statement. A typical Davidson student comes from a middle-to-upper class family and their experience with blacks is minimal. Many of these students have never seen a black person that had "equal" status with them. The blacks that were seen were cooks, maids, butlers and chauffeurs.

This situation is unfortunate; however, it does not excuse the ignorance that rages at Davidson College. I have come in contact with a student who stated that blacks were better off as slaves. This statement was not made in 1958 but in 1988. How can an academic institution allow such

ridiculous thinking to exist? Something must be done about the seemingly futile situation.

Many students blame the administration and the trustees for the minority student problems. To some extent, the administration and the trustees are guilty of a "hands off" policy. Sometimes I feel that they are closing their eyes and wishing that the problem would solve itself. With this type of policy there are two possible outcomes: either to not have black students at all, or to stop wishing and start working. The sooner a decision is made, the better. Action must happen because excuses and broken promises do not solve problems.

Even though the college's policy on the minority situation has been dormant, it cannot be said that the administration and the trustees are the only ones to blame for the uncomfortable minority situation. Students must share some of the guilt.

When black students come to Davidson there is a general feeling of receptiveness toward them. But it is just a matter of time before warm receptiveness turns to cold, hard unconcern and ignorance. Students who look you square in the face may not speak to you or use the technique of finding something interesting on the walls, trees or grass to look at instead of saying hello.

When this happens, a feeling of anger rushes over me because I have not been given the dignity of a person

because I have not been acknowledged as a human being. Arguments with these grievances state that the real world is cold and hard. My answer to that is bull----. Davidson prides itself on being a liberal arts campus, a family. How can Davidson be a liberal arts institution when the accomplishments of Africans and Afro-Americans are ignored? What family has a normal, loving father that neglects one child while loving the other members of the family?

Some students believe that some blacks are acceptable and others are not. I happen to be one of the non-accepted. What is wrong with me? My faults are: I happen to recognize the influence that my ancestors have held upon the world, I am proud to be of African decent, and I will not deny my heritage just to "fit in." Basically, I am not accepted because I am who I am.

The basic problem is that people have the wrong attitudes. Attitudes at Davidson must change if it is to be a liberal arts campus family. Otherwise, Davidson will continue to be a lying, excuse-ridden, and ignorant campus. If this is the way it is to remain, please tell me and others like me in order that we can prevent the suffering of future black Davidson students by telling future prospectives to go elsewhere.

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

Valentine's Day—a real holiday?

Suzanne Craymer

A starry-eyed woman fondles a diamond bracelet, Merlin Olsen smirks at Garfield bouquets, while crying couples exchange cards in red Hallmark envelopes. Are these scenes merely commercial hype or do people actually participate in Valentine's Day festivities?

According to an extremely informal Davidson poll, not many students take special notice of February 14. After all, Valentine's Day only applies to those who have dates, and Davidson is certainly *not* the dating capital of the world.

Most of the people I spoke with about Valentine's Day got that blank "Oh, that doesn't matter to me" look on their faces. February 14 is one of the only holidays that manages to make a large part of the country feel unloved.

"I either ignore it or I get ignored," commented a junior lady-in-waiting.

"I'm just wishing I had a Valentine, I suppose," moped a possible Prince Charming. Instead of sitting home alone, many "unattached" people simply decided to celebrate

something else. Others simply used the holiday as an excuse to blow off homework one more time.

The lucky ones who are supposed to buy all those cheesy Hallmark hearts and red dye seemed to take less notice of the day than those without Valentines. When asked about their plans, many simply shrugged and alluded to the remote possibility of doing "something."

"Go to a movie and get all romantic I guess," said more than one. Even on the day when love supposedly reigned supreme, classes still took precedent for many students.

"I'll go out to dinner with my date," said one freshman guy, "probably somewhere close like Mooresville because its on a weekday."

Valentine's still stand on card shop shelves and Merlin Olsen keeps his Garfield flower vases as most Davidson College students ignored the day--along with perhaps much of the nation. The only people who truly seemed to take notice were weepy women with diamond bracelets on bad television commercials.

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