

# Racial profiling is wrong no matter who the victim

By KHOURY ASHOOH  
Columnist

The most widely understood meaning of the term "racial profiling" is when, for example, a person of color is stopped while driving a car or searched while walking down a street, simply because of his or her race. It is not important what the person in question is doing, rather it is important that a person of the law for no other reason than physical appearance interrupts that individual in his or her activity.

Before I continue, I must ask the forgiveness of those who may feel that I am "seriously limited in [my] ability to write a sensitive and balanced article on the topic of" racial profiling simply because it may appear that I "will never have to face this difficult" situation.

The reason that I offer my opinion on this matter and others is that when I see what I perceive to be a social injustice—no matter what gender, race, or religion is involved—I feel an obligation to speak out against it. And racial profiling is an evil that has the ability to touch every last one of us.

That said, it is important to note that there are relatively few people who would not decry racial profiling in its most understood form. This issue reared its head more than once during the presidential and vice-presidential debates, and all four candidates are to be commended for their responses condemning racial profiling. It is absolutely abhorrent

that a person can be targeted without prior suspicion exclusively on account of the color of his or her skin.

But racial profiling, a term that is nothing more than a contemporary media buzzword for a form of racism or prejudice, has many more meanings. Racial profiling occurs when anyone is targeted for any reason simply because of race. Considering this general definition, racial profiling occurs much more often in the United States than one might think, and many more people are both guilty of racial profiling and targets of it than one might imagine.

When the federal building in Oklahoma City was blown up in April 1995, many Americans instantly suspected Middle Eastern perpetrators.

These Americans were guilty of racial profiling. Since "terrorism" and "Arab" often appear together in the same sentence, it has become almost natural for Americans to associate a bomb going off with suspicion of an Arab or a Muslim.

The media and pop culture are both responsible for the perpetuation of this prejudice. In some cases, the suspicion has proven true, as it did in the World Trade Center attack. Yet in Oklahoma City, the terrorist turned out to be a non-Arab, non-Muslim American from the Heartland. No matter, for the damage was already done to the reputation of Arabs. Often, the very mention of our ethnic background arouses suspicion (far be it from me to play victim, but my point remains valid).

This racial profiling of Arabs is dangerous to freedom in America, for it serves to spread feelings of distrust and to sharpen our differences.

Caucasians, and most often those referred to as White Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASPS), can also find themselves the victims of racial profiling. This happened last week on the Davidson College campus with the release of the October 19 issue of *Libertas*. An article entitled "Thick Surfaces" featured pictures of forty white males, and it appears that the reader is to assume that they are Davidson students of a bygone era. The authors of this article used these white males to show that Davidson was for a long time not a racially diverse campus, and they use their words to argue, in their opinion, that it has still not come far. This insensitive use of innocent people's photos is another example of the racial profiling that serves to divide rather than to unite.

There is no difference between the racial profiling of a black male in a car by a white police officer and the racial profiling of the forty white males in *Libertas* by the authors of "Thick Surfaces." In both cases, the persons in question are not known to be guilty, but because their race fits the preconceived notion of the person in mind, they are unfairly targeted.

Another form of racial profiling, this one in education, was addressed masterfully by George W. Bush in the third presidential debate. Governor Bush said that he was in favor of "affirmative access" when it comes to helping minorities. Short of being a dodge from the question of whether he was for affirmative action, Governor Bush's response was masterful. He used his experience as chief executive in Texas to show that minori-

ties can succeed without affirmative action when it comes to gaining admission to institutes of higher education. Affirmative action is another type of racial profiling. It presupposes that because of someone's race, that person is at an immediate disadvantage when it comes to college admissions because of a supposedly inherent prejudice against him or her.

Proponents of affirmative action claim that the policy helps to ensure fairness toward minorities, but opponents correctly point out that it often leads to what can only be called reverse discrimination. In Governor Bush's Texas, all students who finish in the top ten percent of their high school class automatically become eligible for admission at the Texas state college of their choice. This eliminates the need for affirmative action and takes the emphasis off of race and puts it onto student performance, where it belongs. Governor Bush's "affirmative access" is the type of positive step we need to combat all forms of racial profiling in America today. By sidestepping affirmative action in this way, he has also sidestepped those who only talk about getting something done.

There are no easy answers to racial profiling. The cause is often not something that can be cured by the actions of a politician or by the wishes of a society. Almost all of us are guilty of racial profiling in some form or another. As concerned students, we should attack those forms of racial profiling that are most visible in our society while working towards the end of racial profiling in all forms. But most importantly, we need to be strong enough to recognize that racial profiling does indeed take many forms, and we must emphatically decry this practice in all of these varieties.

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accepting and nonjudgmental atmosphere at Davidson, we must start by making it comfortable for ALL students, minority or majority, to hold their beliefs without an unprovoked assault.

John Pitts '04

## Sexual harassment warrants same outrage as racism

Last year, someone cowardly scribbled a racial slur on a poster in Belk residence hall. In response, the Davidson community took action against this unacceptable act of racism. We addressed SGA, held forums, and passed an amendment to the Code of Responsibility. As a campus, we resolved that discrimination will not be tolerated.

In recent weeks we have been confronted once again with instances of hate. This time it is not racism but sexism that threatens our campus. Opinions submitted to *The Davidsonian* have repeatedly employed sexist language and attitudes under the guise of comic relief or political commentary. Furthermore, several student responses posted in Chambers gallery have added to an atmosphere that can only be described as promoting sexual harassment.

I understand the importance of freedom of speech and curtailing censorship. The value of differing viewpoints on controversial issues such as politics and abortion is crucial in maintaining an open and diverse campus dialogue. Recent statements, however, do more than express opinions. They use hateful and offensive language that nullifies any intended political messages.

My purpose in writing this piece is not simply to express my disdain for the op-ed submissions and the responses. Rather, I want the entire Davidson community to understand the consequences of these words. Sexism not only affects the immediate college community, but the hundreds of prospective students who read *The Davidsonian* and tour our campus everyday. What would a young woman considering Davidson think when she read the words "slut" and "whore"

in a student publication or saw sexist language in Chambers gallery? More importantly, what would that prospective student think when she learned nothing was being done about it?

My question to the Davidson community, therefore, is what are we going to do in the face of blatant sexual harassment? Are we going to let a few individuals take the lead or are we going to come together, once again, and say that discrimination will not be tolerated? Last year, we boldly stated that hate has no place on this campus. Why do we not afford issues of gender the same level of outrage and action?

Alison Kalett '01  
Editor Emeritus

## Can't you take a joke?

According to Webster's Dictionary, a joke is defined as, "Something not to be taken seriously, a trivial or trifling matter." It continues, "Generally today [a joke] suggests humor that is light and sportive as banter."

A joke is not a fact. It is not proving or arguing anything...it is funny.

Recently, on the catkid.com website, "for Davidson students by Davidson students," the joke of the day was apparently degrading towards women. As a result, someone who read the joke wrote it down and sent copies of it to a number of faculty and students as well as President Vagt. Shortly thereafter the catkid.com website removed the entire joke of the day section at the request of Davidson College authorities.

Give me a break. If you don't want to read the joke, don't click on the optional display tab. If you read it and you don't like it, send in your opinion to catkid.com and your voice will be heard. Don't copy it down and send it to more people than probably would have seen it had it been left alone. If you were really so offended, then why spread it to offend others? If you were really so concerned with the well-being of humanity, then why continue the vicious cycle of sexism and inequality on this campus?

As a female, I personally think it was funny. But hey, I can take a joke.

Maggie McDougall '04

## All Hallow's Eve not what it used to be

By ANDREW MACDONALD  
Columnist

According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, Halloween began as an "Anglo-Saxon occasion for one of the ancient fire festivals when huge bonfires were set on hilltops to frighten away evil spirits." In the few millennia that have passed, not all that much has changed.

This past weekend on the Court reminded me of those ancient festivals when "ghosts, witches, hobgoblins, black cats, fairies, and demons of all kinds [were] said to be roaming about." While I did not see as many hobgoblins and black cats as many a young Saxon may have, I did see the cast of characters from the motion picture *Scream* stumbling about as if possessed by some mystical potion that dulled their senses and increased their voices.

However, before anyone could make the dramatic transformation from J. Crew to psychotic ghouls, one would have had to purchase a costume (at least I hope these people don't have this kind of stuff just lying around).

Finding the costume is where the problem lies. You see, modern day Halloween costumes suck. They didn't always suck. I can remember fondly of earlier times where I confronted neighbors with my devilish little Pirate costume or when I appeared from the darkness in a stunning rendition of a young Indiana Jones. However, these halcyon days are gone forever.

Halloween has been ruined. After three hours of searching through store after store Friday afternoon, I came to a terrifying conclusion: there are no good costumes or props anymore. That's right, there were no swords or guns, no eye-poker-outers, and not even a single bludgeoning device!

Aisle after aisle and not even a single rapier or pirate gun was to be found. What little I did find in the "death and dismemberment" realm looked hopelessly fake. The few pitchforks and knives seemed better suited to a toy store

in the Toon Town of Roger Rabbit fame than in the halls of that great cultural mecca, Wal-Mart.

What has happened? The Halloween I remember was one based on realistic attention to detail. You weren't loved if your parents didn't spend hours creating and then dressing you in the ultimate costume. Now, the realism is gone. I couldn't even find a cowboy gun. All that I could find were space phasers that made annoying sounds and looked like they were out of some 1950's B movie.

Granted, some might argue that our culture has moved past the realist approach to Halloween; and instead we are experimenting with new surreal and metaphysical styles. To these people, I would say that they have spent too much time in the VAC.

I lived through the terrible years of "let's dress Andrew up as a Pumpkin, he'll be so cute," and I survived the Power Ranger phase of the early 90's. But I cannot let this lack of originality go on any further! Who wants to live in a society where every kid appears in a generic waste of fabric and plastic? It is the degradation of America when so little time and effort is put into Halloween apparel and accoutrements. Sure, you can say that it is only a stupid Halloween costume. But how long will it be before the laxity in costumes becomes a laxity in homework, then in work, then in life?

Note: Andrew reserves the right to misquote the Encyclopedia Britannica (as well as other reference books). The view described in this article does not represent those of the Encyclopedia, the Anglo-Saxon race, or Wal-Mart. And it does not represent the beliefs held by the Soviet Socialist Workers of America who think that all Halloween costumes should be olive-colored with Stalin masks so that there is no exploitation of the middle class by power-hungry bourgeoisie in *Scream* masks.