

Staff Editorial

Faculty's voice valuable

The faculty discussion of Paterson Court raises several interesting questions about relationships among various groups in our community: between the College and the Town, between students and faculty and between the Court and, um, everyone. (See "Noise makes noise" on the front page.) For example, the Town's noise restrictions are ridiculous (no noises louder than a normal human conversation?), not to mention inconsistent (the traffic on Main Street?), but the College is part of the broader community and so bears a certain responsibility to the Town.

We're not really interested in discussing noise levels at Court parties, though. We're more interested in professors.

If noise on the Court is a problem, then whose problem is it? Any students whom the noise disturbs is an obvious answer, as is the administrators in the Dean of Students and Residence Life Offices who are responsible for enforcing College policy and for keeping everyone as happy as possible.

The faculty, though?

The Davidsonian is inclined to say yes. Hear us out. It is refreshing to hear from a group that is generally not involved with the Court. It seems to us that most faculty who take issue with the Court genuinely seek the students' best interests, which makes sense, given that, among the adults on campus, they are generally the people who know us best.

Yes, we might talk to a Dean when we violate the Code of Responsibility or deal with a family emergency, but these visits are usually few and far between. Professors, however, we see multiple times each week. We talk with them during office hours, conversations that are often equal parts social and academic. We eat dinner at their houses, meet them for coffee at Summit and sometimes end up telling them a lot about campus happenings. While we might not describe how drunk we got on Saturday during office hours the following Monday, or want to see our professors on the Court as we down terrible beer, we apparently tell them quite a bit.

And so it seems appropriate for the faculty to advocate for the students who complain to them. We are adults, and we do have the right to make our own decisions, even when they are bad ones. But being adults also requires us to listen to different opinions and to engage the holders of those opinions in dialogue.

Many, if not most, of us may disagree with faculty members' stances on the Court, but, as people who are older and wiser than us and in whom many of us confide, theirs are voices worth hearing.

The Davidsonian

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Eradicating racism must start at the root

"Let's make it rain on these niggas." Wait, a large majority of the Davidson community finds this offensive? I didn't hear any complaints the last several weekends on the court, where a large portion of the Davidson community had no problem partying to songs like this and others that openly used the term n****er or any of its variants.

How can we be so offended by this racial slur when it is scrawled across a dorm window when later that night we party to songs that explicitly drop the word left and right? How can we speak out against racism when we accept certain things, yet condemn others? Setting a double standard will stifle true progress.

A community that follows the rule of "do as I say and not as I do" will find that its message is lost amongst the majority of the community. I don't doubt for a second that n****er is an extremely offensive word that brings up a large amount of pain in the African-American community, but if we are going to truly change, and I mean REALLY change, we need to start at the root of the problem. We need to recognize the hypocrisy of our every day lives before anything meaningful can be accomplished.

Kevin Cook '09

Respecting the Honor Code: Academic Success

All incoming students, regardless of their majors, are bound to encounter at least a few paper assignments during their four years at Davidson. They must enter with a fundamental understanding of proper citation and spend their first semesters refining their skills. Occasionally, the proper way to cite one's work thoroughly and honestly evades a handful of first-year students. If a professor recognizes inadequate citations and believes that the errors are honest mistakes, he or she may choose to handle the incident without involving the Honor Council. While these occasions require attention, it is not always necessary to bring them to the Honor Council.

More provocative instances occur when students put themselves in impossible situations and subsequently resort to plagiarism as a way out. For example, imagine a student who procrastinates writing a paper until hours before it is due. This student might resort to one of two varieties of plagiarism. In the more flagrant form, the student personally produces little or none of a paper; instead, he or she copies entire sections from other sources and presents them as his or her own work.

At Davidson, such instances are rare. Plagiarism results far more frequently when a procrastinating student does not cite as he or she writes and then runs out of time to add footnotes. In the frenzied minutes before the deadline, the student can either accept a late penalty on the paper while

adding the essential references or he or she can turn in the paper without references, at the expense of personal integrity and the community's trust. Any student who turns in a paper without proper citations violates the Honor Code, even if the poor judgment arises from procrastination and a failure to cite while writing and not from a malicious desire to exploit the system.

Avoiding plagiarism is a simple matter. A student can do one of two things. First, the afore mentioned procrastinator could keep the paper until he or she includes sufficient citations. The student's grade will likely suffer, but receiving a lower grade for a late paper is a small price to pay for sustaining the privileges of the Honor Code and maintaining the community's trust.

Of course, the purpose of this essay is not to encourage late papers and after-the-fact citation. Procrastinators would be wise to start earlier and to cite while writing. It is best for a student to denote the text from which he or she obtains a quotation at the very moment the quotation enters the paper. Prompt citation protects a student from the frailties of memory—and from violating the Honor Code. As Davidson College students, we should strive to practice good writing and research techniques not only to develop as writers but also to preserve our community of trust.

John Watkins '09, Honor Council Member

DesPain's article lacks perspective on Iraq war

Bobby DesPain's editorial last week revealed an unconscionable lack of perspective regarding the war in Iraq.

His belief that Congress has no place in evaluating the conflict belies an ignorance of the Constitution as well as a complete lack of understanding of Congress' ability to declare war and oversee the armed forces.

Second, his comparison between Petraeus and Eisenhower is similarly troubling. Mr. DesPain's inability to differentiate between a conventional war fought by organized units with established, uniformed frontlines and the asymmetric insurgency [in Iraq] reveals a simplistic outlook that has no place in print.

But it only gets worse. Mr. DesPain then begins a bizarre and incomprehensible tirade against the "New York Times." He starts with a non sequitur regarding the Jayson Blair scandal and then implies that the armed forces' existence somehow absolves the military of all criticism. In doing so, he fails to make a distinction between the newspaper and the advertiser and subsequently proceeds to accuse both of "hating the military." To my knowledge, all the "New York Times" has done is allowed an organization to express its opinion by spending its own money on a (tasteless) advertisement. If Mr. DesPain wishes to disparage the First Amendment, he

should come out and say so rather than burying his argument in illogical prose.

What is ultimately most upsetting about Mr. DesPain's article is his offensive use of the word "atrocious" to describe the advertisement. Discussions of the war in Iraq are framed by the military scandals of Abu Ghraib, the gang-rape and murder of a 14-year-old girl in Mahmudiya and the massacre of innocent civilians in Haditha. It is truly disappointing to see Mr. DesPain wield the word in such an insipid manner.

I can only hope that in the future Mr. DesPain will try harder to be less naive and more thoughtful in his editorials.

Francisco Fiallo '09

The Davidsonian welcomes letters to the editor. Please e-mail submissions of fewer than 250 words to davidsonian@davidson.edu. We reserve the right to edit for content, brevity and grammar. Anonymous letters will not be printed.

Steven wuz here: a look at library vandalism

STEVEN TREIBLE
Guest Columnist

This article is, in part, a tribute to the masochistic souls who willingly descend to the nether level of the library. These people scoff at the aesthetics of life and say, "I would rather study surrounded by a putrid-colored carpet, under horrible lighting and in grotesquely etched carrels, than anywhere else on our gorgeous campus."

These people understand the benefits of the basement of the library. Down there, day and night blend together; the difference between 12 midnight and 12 noon is negligible. Regardless of the time of day, when you are down there you

feel like you are drowning; that you are, in some way, suffocating from the lack of proper air circulation. Perhaps this is why the basement's environment is so productive.

Many students have suffered down there, making their sufferings known through etching on carrel walls and bathroom stalls. Though some of these etchings are uplifting to the denizens of the depths, most are lowly, profane and negativity-inducing to whoever reads them. Although graffiti is an inevitable pastime for the meatheads who occasionally find themselves in the library, those of us who call the library home must rise up against the intruders with intelligence.

See **Basement**, page 11

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