

Identity as plural

Colin Vaida

I think the Davidson discourse on LGBTQIA inclusion is obsessed with sex. When I opened the Davidsonian from two weeks ago and read the results of the survey presented by the Task Force on LGBTQIA Affairs, I found myself not surprised and simply upset at the entire situation. I am tired of this hetero/non-hetero binary we have on campus and the obsession of issues related to it. I am tired of the constant call to action on campus based on singular identifications. And I am tired of defining my identity on whether I like penis, vagina, both or neither. Sexual preference and the subsequent identification have me extremely exhausted, and the constant barrage of Davidson culture concerns regarding sexuality is problematic.

The recent SGA elections, the RLO flag issue, LGBTQIA visibility and this survey all represent a preoccupation with sexual preference. Looking at the SGA presidential candidates, every single one of them rightly claimed the importance of visibility on campus for all communities, especially those who identify as non-straight. But, this identification of non-hetero simply denormalizes and stigmatizes an entire group of people over who they want to have sex with. This constant talk of inclusion based on sexuality just goes to further a group's sense of oppression and invisibility. We highlight individual groups who are on the outside looking in and justifiably demand equal visibility and inclusion, but we fail to realize that this essentializing of people into a single identification is painful and harmful. We treat these issues in an identity vacuum without noticing that people are plural and not just one essential thing. The talk on LGBTQIA visibility and inclusion falls into this trap of defining people through a single identity, non-heterosexual, and in this way we forget the other parts that make an individual. Thus, we contribute to the continued invisibility of persons on our campus and continue to focus on sexual preference as a demarcation for inclusion. Pointing to LGBTQIA as a

community or group of people who share this essential identity is not factual and extremely problematic. People are twelve different things before their sexual preference and the direction of this discourse frustrates me.

Race, gender, sexuality, nationality, language, occupation and more all go into the pot of what makes up an individual, and a lot of times these parts of us conflict.* As a white male learning to be a feminist, a lot of the time these two identifications clash, and given my privilege it is often difficult for me to understand and empathize with oppression when I have never experienced it. These two identities that are a part of me do not always match, and I have to live with this difference, but Davidson's current language of inclusion ignores these differences. Given my personal example, I am sure many others on this campus deal with similar issues of identification, and

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to treat inclusion through single monolithic communities ignores the identity conflicts within us. This monolith of non-hetero baffles me; sexuality is a spectrum not a well-defined binary between two opposite ends (heterosexual and not heterosexual). I want a community that respects sexuality AND understands the plurality of an individual. Our campus needs to shy away from language that universalizes an experience such as sexuality. Sexuality and the engendered stereotypes are not tangible realities, but rather societal norms imposed on us through institutions of state, religion and more. Rather, our campus requires a varied sense of human beings, not a dialogue dominated with surveys that create a binary.

This commentary does not want to disqualify the work that is being done and the work that needs to be done to promote an inclusive community. I just do not

want to set up LGBTQIA as something different than what is normal, as if those of the hetero Davidson are part of what is uniform and correct. This discourse that permeates our campus is a good one, but it needs some direction and clarification. In order for our campus to understand each other I encourage a lens of ambiguity with which to view one another. Ambiguity shies away from assumptions, and traditional definitions of what it means to be woman, man, gay, straight, transgender, bisexual etc. I strongly encourage everyone on campus to take a Gender Studies and Sexuality course with which to enrich your understanding of how to view the person as plural. And if not a GSS course, there are plenty of other resources with which to learn more, including lectures on campus, student club activities and GSS faculty. I also encourage more people to write and express their opinions in this publication and others on campus. This dialogue needs to continue and action needs to use it as a spring board. So please take this commentary and talk with me and others on how we can solve the issues Davidson faces.

*Some of these identities are not tangible constructs of who we are to begin with. Many would contend, myself included, that the notion of race and gender are societal constructs. Differences between people (penis-vagina) are assigned appropriate behaviors and attributes, when in fact they do not exist. The same could be said for most of the identifiers in this list. My own subsequent identification works within these constructs despite my own recognition of their fallacy, because of my inclusion into this society.

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Revisiting the revisited

Calley Anderson

As Christi Moore previously stated, the 8th Annual Apocalypse Greek Step Show was a fantastic success! Yet, as she addressed, not everyone was able to see it that way. It's funny that the events of Spring Frolics 2012, or the so-called "Davidson Riot," have been brought up. To

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many individuals on campus, these two events hold key similarities. I agree, they do, but for very different reasons than what the general populous might believe. Unlike the majority of the Davidson community, I was present at the "riot" and the Step Show Afterparty. I watched both events unfold and made careful note of the aftermath, but it is not the extremely problematic and racist aftermath that I am concerned with at the moment. That is another story for another time. I want to go back to these two events that are not synonymous at all unless you account for the police presence.

In both these instances, despite the fact that there was more than an acceptable amount of police officers present on campus, I remember police presence more than I remember police activity. During the events at the Black Student Coalition house two years ago, I watched as fellow, mostly black, Davidson students broke up fights and attempted to restore order. I saw people I knew and cared about placed in harm's way in order to protect our friends, our students, our house and even individuals who were relatively unknown to us. What did I see uniformed officers do that night? I saw one officer mace an entire house of people that were, for the most part, attempting

to keep the situation under control. I saw officers throw menacing shouts and stares at a crowd of confused people. I saw officers attempt to shove brown bodies off this campus, many of them being students and residents of Davidson. I watched BSC executive board members, including myself, roughly forced out and away from our house. I saw and felt nothing beyond utter disrespect from the police forces that supposedly stormed on this campus to "protect" us. I felt more protected by my roommate as she shielded me from a man twice my size. I felt safer with my friend as he pulled me out of a window, attempting to shield me from the mace.

I wish I could say that I was surprised when I encountered almost the same treatment last weekend. Again, I watched Davidson students put themselves in harm's way to prevent violence from erupting before any

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officer did anything. In fact, because of the efforts of these Davidson students and others, no violence truly erupted. Nothing happened. Yet I watched as blue lights flooded our campus again. I watched as police officers spent more time, energy and resources forcing brown bodies off campus than attempting to resolve what had, at this point, become a non-issue. I watched as a police officer told my roommates and I to "get in your cars and get out of here" despite the fact that we have been Davidson students for quite some time. When we mentioned as much to the officer, he proceeded to tell us to "go on!" and "get!" Again, I watched as brown bodies were disrespectfully herded off this campus like animals. I watched as a white student shouted "shut up!" at us, unprompted, as we attempted to reason with the police officer.

Like many, I was immediately reminded of the events of Spring Frolics before, but not because of the amount of ethnic minorities on campus or the "scuffle" that

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DavidsonNews.net has claimed I should be familiar with. At this point, the only situation that I am familiar with is harassment by those who supposedly have pledged to serve and protect this community. I am familiar with being targeted simply because I am black which, for some reason, allows an officer of the law to assume that I am not welcome and a threat. There is a major disconnect happening on this campus, specifically in relation to the ethnic minority community. We are at a place where the college seems to be keener on policing students of color than protecting, supporting and thanking them. If I were to go on the basis of my experience at these two events alone, I don't have a protective police force. Instead, I have extraordinary friends.

I didn't write this article out of anger or to point fingers. Rather, I wrote it to tell a story. It's a story that has been glossed over, if touched on at all, in my years at Davidson. Being treated so disrespectfully is painful, frustrating and unnecessary. I know that the Davidson community is one that constantly strives for more inclusion and more conversation. If anything, situations like these tell us, above everything, that we need to strive harder.

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