

## SPECIAL CONTRIBUTION

*Misperceptions product of student ignorance*

Webster's Dictionary defines "discrimination" as the "treatment or consideration based on class or category rather than individual merit; partiality or prejudice."

According to a recent student poll, Alpha Phi Alpha is perceived to be the number one discriminatory organization at Davidson College. It is hard for me to take this seriously when Davidson's campus is hypocritical and ignorantly judgmental itself.

While only seven to eight percent of all Patterson Court is integrated, 38 percent of Alpha Phi Alpha's current members are non-black.

In our short two year history at Davidson College, 26 percent of our membership has been non-black, which includes Cuban, Ghanaian, Jamaican, Bengali and Native American.

Before anyone starts pointing fingers about how Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. excludes certain ethnicities from their organizations, the campus needs to take a look in the mirror. It is the Davidson students who are blind to their own ignorance.

My point is proven on page two of the Jan. 25 edition of The Davidsonian. The caption under the photo with Rev. Dr. Otis Moss, Jr. reads "Members of the Black Student Coalition met with Rev. Moss after Convocation." Something is terribly wrong with this caption: these students are all Alphas.

The sad part about it is that no one really knows because it is incorrectly assumed that all the black people at Davidson must be a part of the BSC. How dare Davidson students say that the Alphas exclude certain ethnicities from our organizations when the mind of the Davidson student is ignorant enough to stereotype a picture of black males to be BSC members? The Alphas have yet to receive a correction notice or apology.

Some non-minority students said they would feel

uncomfortable joining the BSC and Alpha Phi Alpha. Has anyone stopped to think about what it would be like if the tables were turned? How do you think people of color feel when a majority of their activities involve being the minority, which is just what white students would be if they joined the BSC or Alpha?

Keep in mind that people of color at Davidson are the minority in the classroom, within their Patterson Court organizations, on their halls and during most of their extracurricular activities.

Before people begin to question the exclusivity of Alpha, they need to educate themselves about what we stand for. We hold true to our aims, "manly deeds, scholarship and love for all mankind."

The Alphas have awareness seminars and numerous programs on campus that students can go to to learn more about our organization. The opportunity exists for all students to learn and understand the different cultures on campus; however, they choose not to.

In conclusion, I would say that the average Davidson student has a fear of what is different and has trouble adapting to change. What many students do not understand is that Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. and the Black Student Coalition are not going anywhere.

It is time for all Davidson students to venture out of their comfort zones and embrace a new multicultural era.

As President of Alpha Phi Alpha and the BSC, I want to ensure all that we are willing to help facilitate this transformation.

But the real question is, is anyone willing to listen?

*Brendan Watkins '07  
President, Alpha Phi Alpha*

## Identity crisis

the proust affect



ETHAN JAFFEE

The campus ministry says that between 40 and 50 Jews attend Davidson. Last Thursday evening, six people went to the Jewish Student Union's (JSU) first meeting of the semester on the fourth floor of the Union.

Though it was my first meeting with the JSU in the three weeks I've attended Davidson, I became the club's third-ranking officer because nobody else had volunteered to fill the vacated post.

Why such lackluster JSU participation from Davidson Jews?

Two personal yet putative anecdotes will help explain our generation's lukewarm Jewish involvement.

The first comes from a Camus-induced connoption from my late childhood that I am sure you, my fellow Jews, could relate to. After emphatically unlatching the mezuzah from my door in a fit of romantic atheism, I remember rushing to my rabbi for help with my fledgling religion. "What is a Jew?" I asked him.

He held up his five fingers and said, "I look at Judaism as a five-part religion." Taking down one finger at a time, he said, "Jewish culture, community, state, ethics and belief in God."

"What if the belief in God is missing? Can a person still be a Jew?" I replied.

"That's the beauty of Judaism. You don't need to believe in God to be a Jew."

*We need to remember the millions who sacrificed their lives in deference to their Jewish identity.*

A religion that accepts members who do not believe in that religion seems antithetical. What's more, no punishments or moral reprehensions are proposed for these non-believers by our rabbis.

Imagine a Catholic boy telling his priest that he does not believe in Jesus. The priest then tells the boy, "Not to worry, belief in God is just one part of being Catholic."

This would never happen.

And one of the reasons that Catholicism remains the world's strongest religion is that its believers are instilled with a proper fear of God.

We do not have this fear. Because God does not play a predominant role in our Jewish lives, we do not go to JSU meetings. Because we don't go to JSU meetings in college, we begin to lose our Jewish identity. And if enough of us lose our Jewish identity, the Jewish religious tradition risks dying out not just in our Davidson microcosm but also in suburban America as a whole.

My second personal anecdote, something all Jews can relate to, shows how the lay Jew, not just the rabbi, trends toward relaxation of her Jewish identity. My father married a Christian girl. Of her son's marriage, my grandmother said, "I will not talk to that shiksa (my mother) until she converts." She did convert, and tensions eased.

For me and you, no such pressure in marriage exists. We enjoy the freedom, yet it reflects poorly on our tradition's cohesiveness. Interfaith marriages create notoriously skewed identities in their products. In 1950, six percent of Jewish marriages were interfaith. Today, 40-50 percent of marriages involving a Jewish person are interfaith.

If this trend continues, Judaism will become but a pinched ingredient in our future children's multifarious racial inheritance. The melting pot will do away with Judaic cohesion.

This is not to say that Jews need to not marry interfaith. Rather, as we marry interfaith, we need to remember the beauty of our 6,000-year-old religious heritage so that it may survive in the future when 70-80 percent of Jewish marriages are interfaith.

We need to remember how our grandmothers waved the heat of the Shabbat candles to their face before covering their eyes, welcoming the Sabbath bride. We need to remember the weight of the Torah on our Bar Mitzvahs. We need to remember the millions who sacrificed their lives in deference to their Jewish identity.

In respect to our heritage, the least we can do is volunteer an hour of our time to attend JSU meetings.

Then again, Judaism is matrilineal. Strictly speaking, I'm not Jewish.

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## Question science, not religion

face the nathan



NATHAN BRADSHAW

Back in December Matt Hall wrote a column regarding religion in the classroom ("Not-so-Intelligent Design," Dec. 7). The article condemned the idea of teaching the theory—or, as he said, the unsubstantiated idea—of intelligent design in the scientific curriculum.

Mr. Hall stated that religion's "value, however, is nonexistent in the classroom" and that we should "let religion remain in church and science remain in classrooms."

As should be evident, if only because I am writing this article, I disagree. However, my disagreement is qualified. I support completely the notion that intelligent design does not belong in the science classroom. Intelligent design has no scientific basis under the normal criterion of being falsifiable, and therefore it should not even darken the biology doorstep.

But the statement that religion is not something that should be an element of public education is one that makes me cringe.

*The dogmatic belief in science's ability to explain everything has ousted religion and philosophy almost entirely from the general system of education.*

Picture the following situation: two schools of thought, incompatible with each other in terms of education. One has more public and political power than the other, and since it is politically associated with the educational system, it outlaws the teaching of the principles of the lesser school.

The result: the dominant school's ideology becomes doctrinal among the public, while the opposing ideology is largely rejected and its propagators maligned as outlandish and not credible.

No, I did not just describe the situation of the Catholic Church discrediting any non-doctrinal science from the

foundations of the church until the high Renaissance. I described the latter twentieth and early twenty-first century America in which the dogmatic belief in science's ability to explain everything has ousted religion and philosophy almost entirely from the general system of education. Mr. Hall's statement that religion has no place whatsoever in the classroom is a prime example.

What basis does any religion or philosophy have? None outside of itself. Each spiritual or philosophical belief establishes its own justification with rules set by the school of thought itself.

What basis does science have? Again, none outside of itself. Science, or at least the current form of it, has only the justification that it may be proven by experiment. After proving its own legitimacy—in a self-proscribed system—science goes on to refute the educational legitimacy of any school of thought not founded within those same parameters.

What, then, is science but a worship of logic and experimental results? It has all the features of a religious or philosophical mode of thought. That this one school should be that chosen school into which we, as a country, insist upon indoctrinating students is frightening.

After all, what if academia had chosen Christianity, Buddhism or existentialism to teach unilaterally in the classroom? I have a hard time imagining the Supreme Court so much, as debating whether a doctrinal choice of that kind could be justified by the First Amendment's separation of church and state.

Solutions come in unpretty packages, as usual. One possibility is a separation of science and state, relegating scientific doctrine to Sunday school with readings from Darwin and Hawking.

The more attractive, though still messy, alternative is to acknowledge that the tangible proof that justifies science is no more valid than the intangible beliefs that justify religion. For the classroom, this leveling would force science to play on a par with religion and philosophy, whose educational values are equally worthwhile.

I am by no means advocating getting rid of science in the curriculum. Balance, not unilateralism, will be the best way to educate America's students. They need to learn to think outside the Bible—I mean biology book.

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