

SGA Responds to Incident

During Homecoming weekend, an intolerable act of bigotry occurred on this campus. Written obscenities directed against African-Americans were found on a poster advertising a speaker. The incident has sparked feelings of disgust, anger, disbelief, and sadness. Many have begun to doubt the sincerity of this institution.

Ann Harriott Fisher
SGA President

Last week, at the Tuesday night SGA meeting, over a hundred students assembled to discuss and protest what happened. Then, on Wednesday night, the SGA sponsored a campus forum to consider, in greater detail, reactions and possible solutions. For two hours, over 300 students, faculty members, and administrators spoke openly and honestly about racism and its impact on our college. What came from the forum was obvious: Davidson college must make a greater effort to enhance and promote diversity.

As the largest and farthest-reaching organization on campus, the SGA must take the lead in tackling this vital concern. Therefore, I pledge several concrete action steps. First, we plan to appeal to the Faculty Executive Committee to give this college community a full day off for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. We will use a formal resolution, letters and e-mails from students, and a petition with hundreds of names as support. Second, we promise to send every faculty member and administrator a copy of a resolution passed last spring regarding diversity, hiring and firing practices, and class options. By resubmitting this important document, we hope these decision-makers will more carefully evaluate our suggestions.

The SGA will create a working group to examine the feasibility of placing a non-discrimination clause in one or both of the college Codes. Also, we will organize meetings with the Dean of the Faculty and other professors to improve minority studies in individual classes, to increase the number of culturally diverse classes, and to discuss the effectiveness of core requirements in increasing cultural awareness. Next, the SGA will help Dean Jeffries arrange a series of retreats for campus leaders. At the retreats, these students will help brainstorm ways their own organizations can embrace diversity efforts. In addition, we will push President Vagt

to stick to his commitment to raise the percentage of non-white students from 12.5% to 16% over the next four years. The SGA will continue to express to President Vagt and to the Board of Trustees the necessity of a successful and expeditious capitol campaign as this money could be used to allow Davidson College to once again 100% of every student's demonstrated financial need. This SGA, through a campus-wide election, will place the first student representatives on the

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Budget and Finance Trustee Committee and the Academic Affairs Trustee Committee. These representatives will be a direct link between the voice of the student body and the trustees, people who help make decisions regarding admission policies, financial aid packages, and tenure practices.

Furthermore, the SGA will continue to financially support organizations such as OLAS, ISA, BSC, and FLAG and also events aimed at promoting minority issues. Then, we will work to change the SGA bylaws to require all Senators to participate in half of all SGA-sponsored and co-sponsored events, many of which advocate cultural diversity. Finally, we plan to work with our own Solidarity Committee and Council on Minority Affairs to strengthen these groups and finalize plans for upcoming events.

I do not know what, or even if, these action steps will have any sort of impact. However, what I do know is that there is a major problem called racism in this country and even at Davidson College. Racism, prejudice, bigotry, a lack of cultural diversity, whatever you wish to call it, is a lack of understanding about people and unique backgrounds. It is a solvable problem. Nonetheless, minority groups or groups devoted to this issue cannot solely address this issue. We all must help. Therefore, by this Tuesday's meetings, I promise that the Student Government Association will start.

Historical Racial Timeline

From the College Archives

- 1956 - Cross is burned on Richardson Football Field
- 1960 - March 1, the faculty votes in favor of removing race and color as a qualification for admission to the college
- 1962 - May 17, the Board of Trustees notes that Davidson's charter never had set race, nationality, creed, or class as a condition for admission. The trustees then advise the faculty "to approve for admission those whom they consider properly qualified..."
- 1964 - Two black American students enroll at Davidson
- 1971 - Eleven black students enroll at Davidson
- 1974 - The first black tenure-track professor is hired. Thirty-two black students enroll at Davidson
- 1985 - Ku Klux Klan marches through downtown Davidson
- 1986 - a black male student is handcuffed

while sitting outside Little dorm by campus police searching for someone reported to be throwing rocks at windows. Although the student does not fit the description of the accused, he is not released until fellow students vouch for his whereabouts at the time of the crime.

- 1986 - The white roommate of a black student seriously considers submitting the latter's paper to the Honor Council, saying that there was no possibility that it could have been written by the person who usually spoke slang.
- 1987 - A convicted white rapist roams Davidson's campus for several days without being questioned. In the Meantime, police repeatedly demand to see the ID of several black male students.
- 1991 - Dr. William S. Hutching II, class of 1978 becomes Davidson's first black alumnus to be elected to the Board of Trustees.
- 1998 - There are currently five black tenured professors of the Davidson's 140 faculty

What Will Follow?

Allen Lee
Black Student Perspective

What has happened on campus since this incident (in reference to the racial slur written on a poster) has been quite commendable. The events of the past week did much for my confi-

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dence in this school. White students, standing up off previously apathetic seats, are clearly and vocally joining others already in the struggle for greater understanding. This reaction is applauded and celebrated as a much needed first step. Now an essential and previously missing component is beginning to be filled.

However, as we all search for answers there is one looming question: *What will follow?* It is great to see a community band together and face the evil within its mist but what of next semester? What of next year? Will these recent enlistees in the struggle renew their commitment voluntarily or will another incident be required to rekindle their flame? Also, let us not forget the ones whose minds are still closed to reality. What force will be needed to jar their intellect? I stand eager to aid those who step up to act. I also stand looking, listening, and anticipating the answer to these questions.

The Power of Two

Apathy stands at the real heart of the matter. Overall campus awareness and tolerance must improve.

Kristen Taylor
Sophomore Perspective

Two words. That's all it took to set the campus on its ear last week, literally, as the talk of the weekend was not the quintessential hook-up, but rather a racial slur. Then, a ubiquitous yellow flyer magnified an isolated incident of two words into a visual assault a hundred times over. I am not discounting the importance of advertising the meeting, but I disagree with the sensationalist way in which the flyer was written. The distributor of the flyer commented at the meeting that she wanted everyone to be affected in the same manner as the original hall that found the flyer. Quite obviously, the campus was already concerned about the issue and the unnecessary repetition of these two words only spread the message of hate across campus.

The real heart of the matter, though, is apathy. Beyond the legalistic alterations under consideration, instituted perhaps in the guise of improving overall campus awareness and tolerance, will we as students, faculty and staff change? Will we continue to discuss this matter or again become ab-

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sorbed with burning out light bulbs? As we take all the correct steps to address the issue, it remains to be seen whether anything can be done to correct it. At the forum, mandatory monthly meetings, workshops and a black history core requirement were advocated although making attendance mandatory only resolves the issue of empty seats. As well, this issue was manipulated into a vehicle to push for a full day holiday for MLK Day. Neither of these solutions adequately addresses the individual commitment to tolerance and acceptance that is needed. The only realistic outcome focuses on affecting the mindset of our community. By incorporating the lesson we have learned into our everyday

life, we thereby make it obvious to ourselves and others that acts of this nature are intolerable and inexcusable. As members of this community, we have all been violated. This act, a violation of the Code of Responsibility, has violated all members of our community. Our responsibility under the Code forces us to ensure that this act is not seen as acceptable or something that can be overlooked. It all started with two words of hatred, and I propose we delve deep within ourselves and end it with two words of action: do something.

SEE? PEOPLE HAD OPINIONS. THEY WROTE THEM DOWN. YOU COULD, TOO, YOU KNOW.

