

LIMITED-TIME

OFFER

\$5 for 3 months

Rediscover the power of local news.

SAVE NOW

OPINION AND COMMENTARY Editorials and other Opinion content offer perspectives on issues important to our community and are independent from the work of our newsroom reporters.

OPINION

Jim Martin: Stop mischaracterizing Davidson group's protest concerning DEI | Opinion

BY JIM MARTIN

MARCH 07, 2024 6:06 PM



In this file photo, students gather outside at Davidson College about 20 miles north of Charlotte, NC. CHRISTOPHER RECORD/DAVIDSON COLLEGE

My colleague, Issac Bailey is one talented political writer. A careful reader? Maybe not so much.

His [March 6 critique of Davidsonians for Freedom of Thought and Discourse \(DFTD\)](#) is a perfect example. Our [letter to alumni](#) and subscribers objected to mandatory attendance at a highly provocative film whose theme was that all white people are racists. We also protested certain classes' declared intention to have straight, white students confess they are "oppressors" and show their allegiance to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI).

Instead of proving us wrong, Bailey scolds what he imagines to be our hidden motives.



Jim Martin

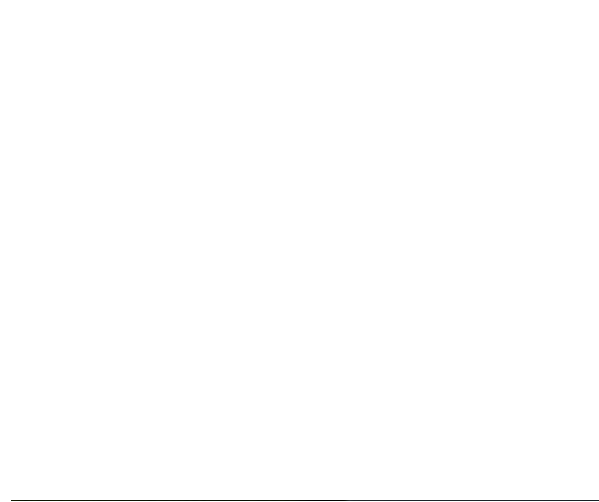
With fertile imagination, he says we're allied with "book bans, gutted DEI, and "even the ouster of Harvard University's first Black president." We did all that? There's not a single phrase in our statement advocating any such garbage. Had we wanted to attribute similarly unkind motives to him, a simple point would suffice: that those without reasonable evidence often resort to personal attacks.

Our protest was about two distinctive practices, which Davidson College seems to find acceptable: thought compulsion in the film and in a half-dozen or more classes, and highly partisan political postures being urged in classes where such issues are irrelevant. If they are so beneficial, why complain if we give them publicity they richly deserve? I suggest that disclosure by the college would have been better than discovery by DFTD.

Turning to the film, "[I'm Not Racist... Am I?](#)" Bailey said: "DFTD's misleading campaign was triggered by the discomfort of a few student-athletes." A few? How about a hundred or so football players? That's what Head Coach Scott Abell told

us. The most effectively integrated biracial group on the entire campus could have had lasting problems of disunity if Abell hadn't attended (uninvited) and held a meeting soon after to calm down how the film made them feel. This wasn't part of the intended program. If Abell hadn't cared, who would?

Bailey says the film was "a student initiative, not top-down as DFTD has suggested." Well, that's half-true. The student who proposed it didn't command anyone's mandatory attendance. The Athletic Department did this. Top. Down.

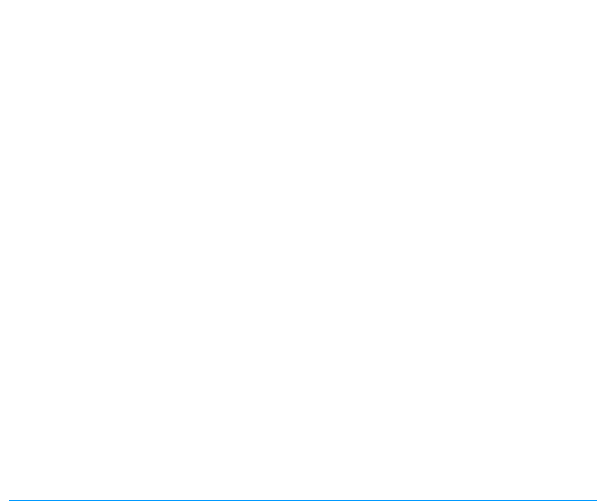


We're asked to believe this was just another healthy campus forum among eager truth-seekers. No, it was a darkly one-sided documentary from Cynical Race Theory influencers that "racist" and "white" are synonymous. What little time there was for 400 or so students to question the source or purpose of its radical view was led solely by one of the film's producers. No one with a different viewpoint helped lead the discussion.

It would be interesting to learn how Bailey feels about classes in Spanish, calculus and cell biology requiring students to "identify and confront oppressive behaviors" and commit to understanding how white supremacy and "other systems of oppression affect each of us," as required by some instructors.

Hopefully, he agrees that such trendy ideologies, lacking relevance to these courses, should be discussed, never imposed in unrelated courses. His leadership

could stimulate healthier discussion of academic freedom for students, as well as for teachers.



We respectfully petition Davidson's faculty and trustees to review these matters and set guidelines for whether and when such abuses are acceptable and worthy. Professors with such power over students ought to show more restraint before urging students to accept extreme, new, partisan notions.

Morning Observer

Start your morning seven days a week with a roundup of news to know from The Charlotte Observer and our North Carolina news partners.

By submitting, I agree to the [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Service](#).

Jim Martin, a Republican, was N.C. governor from 1985-93 and taught chemistry at Davidson College from 1960-72. He is a regular contributor to our pages.

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

Anyone can read the comments, but you must be a subscriber or logged in with a registered account to contribute. If you do not have a registered account, you can sign up for one below