

Letters: Reaction to the Vagina Monologues immature and ineffective

Mocking signs do not achieve anything

I'm disappointed. I became disappointed in this campus before we performed The Vagina Monologues. Posters were torn down and flung on the ground. They were wadded up and deposited at my door in neat pink balls of "screw you, you liberated woman you." But I quashed my disappointment. I was hopeful. And then, when we finally got to perform, after hours upon hours of preparation by the cast, crew, and director, I thought my hope was justified. The three performances were heavily attended, all but selling out Love at least two of the three nights. The light, as it were, seemed to be on. Then, in the week following our performances, two conspicuous examples of ignorance and disrespect showed up on bulletin boards on campus. One was in the form of a poster advertising Kappa Sigma's yearly "Pimps and Hos" party. The other was a strikingly un-clever parody of our advertising: "Come to the Penis Monologues! It'll be huge."

Before you opt to read no further because I'm obviously a frothing, rabid femi-nazi, wait — because I'm not. Remember the "language is violence" debate? Honestly, Sundstrum's comments didn't really upset me all that much. I knew he was kidding. I wondered, actually, why everyone else didn't catch on. And I don't care, particularly, that Kappa Sigma chooses to put on a bash called "Pimps and 'Ho's." It's making fun of, and having fun with, stereotypes. Our most familiar media does it all the time. It just so happens that it's more socially acceptable to cast Jim Carrey as an idiot than it is to have a "Pimps and Hos" party. Kappa Sigma's party isn't advocating battery, and Jim Carrey's movies aren't advocating purposely brain damaging your children for amusement. We all know this.

However, someone at Kappa Sigma, and some other bravely anonymous people don't seem to understand what The Vagina Monologues are about. "Tired of Monologues?" as the poster advertising the "Pimps and 'Ho's" party asked -- now that's bad form. That's like ripping on Take Back the Night, guys, and we all know you wouldn't stoop to doing that. Take Back the Night is about REAL people, right? Real people here at Davidson who have been victimized. Well, news flash. The Vagina Monologues are about real people, too. And the money raised at the event goes to help real people. As for the "Penis Monologues" poster — that was in heinous form as well. Did The Vagina Monologues advertising say "Come to the Vagina Monologues! It'll be Wet and Ready!"? No. Our posters came straight from our scripts; one in particular

detailed the fact that 500,000 women are raped in this country every year. Informative, not inflammatory. The poster also says "A Benefit to Sexual



Violence."

But you were probably too preoccupied with the word "vagina" to notice that. It's a pity, really.

Explain to me, if you will, what comparison there is to be drawn between the very legitimate activity of advertising and raising money for organizations working toward an end to violence against women and these complete lapses of judgement. I submit to you that there is no comparison. I'm sure that those who composed the two lovely "advertisements" in question thought they were funny. I'm sure these individuals were delighted with their original "humor." But I bet they didn't think of this:

They have mothers. Maybe they have sisters; if they're lucky, they have girlfriends. THERE ARE WOMEN IN THEIR LIVES THAT ARE IMPORTANT TO THEM. And with a few smart-ass keystrokes, they've trivialized facts that are central to the lives of those women. To steal shamelessly from Bill Neville's program, "one billion women living on Earth today have been or will be raped or beaten sometime during their lives." Since women make up a little more than half of the world's population, odds are that you will one day confront this fact face-to-face. Think about that next time you decide it's cute to trivialize the work of more than 50 people who are raising money to combat that violence. Exercise, if you would, a little of that vaunted Davidson intelligence, or at the very least, a little common courtesy.

Nikki Thomas '02

There are other fora for gender debate

I have a few words to say regarding the posters bearing the word "penis" which were posted in Chambers on Monday. I do not know who put them up or their justification for doing so, and that is exactly why I am writing.

I can only assume that these flyers represent a response to the recent production of the *Vagina Monologues*. I fully support of the *Monologues*, their stated purposes, and the broader movement within which they are situated. I believe one of the intended goals of this all-woman show is not only to bring further awareness of women's experiences, views, and concerns but also to challenge society-at-large and to engage in a constructive debate on what gender relations are and what we wish them to be.

I do not believe, however, that one of the ways to initiate that debate is a single-word flyer with no explanation or carefully thought-out statement of belief.

Maybe the people behind this poster felt disenfranchised by the *Vagina Monologues*. Maybe they thought this show unfairly places emphasis on a single gender, becoming guilty

of precisely the same fault found in a patriarchal system.

Maybe they feel like any approach to transforming gender relations must take into account both masculinity and femininity. Adopting an all-or-nothing approach, letting the women go to one corner and the men go to another, decide their views, and then fight it out is only going to result in unnecessary damage to masculine-feminine relations.

I could project that there were women and men offended by these posters. Some might call them a dumb gesture, an unintelligent response to a wonderfully empowering show. They might say that I lend undeserved legitimacy or dignity to the flyers by writing this letter. I say that I have the right to think whatever I want when I walk in the halls of Chambers. I am allowed to want an analytical response, and if a lack of information constrains my ability to formulate that response, then I am allowed to approach the initiators of this flyer and ask for their views.

I understand the movement to end violence against women that is the purpose of V-DAY, and I acknowledge the role that creating a safe space for women and their bodies plays in said purpose. I think supporters of this movement must also recognize its unintended consequences and deal with them as they arise.

Because, ultimately, most of the perpetrators of violence against women are men, and their views and reactions to the *Vagina Monologues* and the movement as a whole must be taken into account.

The initiators of this might have had valid arguments with which I agree and disagree. I am writing this letter, however, because I do not know their reasoning.

Whoever posted the penis flyers clearly was trying to make a statement, and I would just encourage them to say it in a more intelligible way to push the discussion of gender interaction to a different level. We are none of us going to be satisfied by a simple lack of communication.

Katie Wilson '03

The Davidsonian

ALENDA LUX UBI ORTA LIBERTAS

EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

Aaron Houck

BUSINESS MANAGERS

Richard Vinson

Peter Clark

COPY EDITOR

David Johnston

NEWS EDITORS

Anna Kvanvig

Tim Cook

ADVERTISING MANAGERS

Jessica Mering

Peter Clark

SPORTS EDITORS

David Johnston

Matt Garfield

ARTS & LIVING EDITORS

Burgin Hardin

Martha Hunt

PERSPECTIVES EDITOR

Mara Mordini

Amy Poe

PHOTOGRAPHY EDITORS

Erin Berry

Matt Whited

CIRCULATION MANAGER

Maggie Kozicharow

<http://www.davidson.edu/student/organizations/davidsonian/davidsonian.html>

The Davidsonian is published Wednesdays during the academic year by the students of Davidson College. One copy per student. Please address all correspondences to: The Davidsonian, P.O. Box 219, Davidson, NC 28036. Phone (704) 894-2148. E-mail: Davidsonian@davidson.edu. Our offices are located on the third floor of the Union. Opinions expressed in letters to the editors or commentaries do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editorial Board of The Davidsonian. Subscriptions cost \$40.00 per year. Advertising rates are available upon request.

Copyright is held by the Trustees of Davidson College.

Who needs a labor union? Davidson community is stronger without it

Recently many of us on campus received a letter from an Anna Thompson using a Yahoo account. In her email she indicated a concern that Davidson does not have a labor union. If Ms. Thompson and the People's Labor Advocacy Organization feel that Davidson's lack of a labor union is a pressing concern, they should put up fliers on campus or contact the Campus Forums committee to have a campus discussion about the issue.

Instead, they have chosen to go behind everyone's backs using a Yahoo email account to send out emails to small blocks of students to avoid retribution from ITS in pursuit of their goals. These tactics alone should be enough to discredit their effort entirely.

It would also be nice to see some evidence of the supposed wrongdoing by the administration in their emails or on their webpage. It has been my experience that the administration goes out of its way to treat the staff tremendously well. Unless they can provide some evidence to the contrary, they should rest assured that I and other members of the Davidson College community will dismiss their group and its proposals. If they truly have evidence that the college administration has done something wrong, again, they should go through the proper campus or law-en-

forcement channels rather than making baseless accusations while veiled behind a Yahoo email account.

Also, an explanation of the supposed intrinsic good of labor unions would be nice. The first line of their email cites the fact that Davidson does not have a labor union; my reaction to this supposedly factual statement is "so what." They want students to act to try to solve the "problem," but how is Davidson's lack of a labor union even a problem?

Davidson College is a community in the truest sense of the word; absent any substantial evidence detailing the gross mistreatment of the staff, I view it as a positive that we do not have a "management/workers" mentality in our community.

Even if their premise about the goodness of a labor union at Davidson were to be accepted, I would like to know what unions have to do with diversity. All of their "literature" suggests that Davidson should have a union because we value diversity here. Certainly, we do value diversity, but diversity and organized labor are not synonymous. How would the introduction of a union into the Davidson College community further our pursuit of diversity? I cannot see any connection between the two.

Brandt Leibe '02