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# W&LSpectator



A question of honor and tradition,

**Has Lee's Legacy Died  
Among Faculty and  
Administrators?**

Inside: Hoops '92

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# W&LSpectator

W&L's Student News Journal of Fact and Opinion Since 1989

## CAMPUS PERSPECTIVE

10 Lee's Legacy Betrayed . . . . . by Jamie Tucker

*Though Lee's influence is still alive at Washington and Lee, several members of the current administration fail to perpetuate that legacy, not only through their action, but through their inaction. Consequently, newer members of the faculty do not maintain the Honor Code with either the respect or gravity which it requires—all of which leaves it vulnerable to dissolution.*

## SPORTS

12 Hoops '92 . . . . . by Robbie MacNaughton

*Though picked near last in pre-season polls, the Washington and Lee Generals will field a team full of surprises. The Spectator's Sports Editor teams up with Professor of Economics, Art Goldsmith, to predict the outcome of the ACC.*

## ESSAY

13 The Honor System and the Lewis Hall Vandalism . . . . . by Cameron Humphries

*In a letter to the law school dean, a group of minority students listed a series of actions they wished implemented. While well intentioned, these requests endanger the Honor Code and Lee's legacy of gentlemanly behavior by de-emphasizing it. Only by adherence to the values which Lee espoused, and not by the establishment of detailed rules and regulations regarding human relations, can Washington and Lee achieve racial cohesion.*

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*"Duty is the sublimest word in our language. Do your duty in all things. You cannot do more. You should never wish to do less."*

—Gen. Robert E. Lee



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## Signs of the Times

**C**ampus response to the City of Lexington's decision not to display the Confederate Flag in its Stonewall Jackson celebration this summer ranges from primarily apathetic to strongly indignant. The flag, many feel, symbolizes the racism, hatred, and bigotry for which the South has long stood and for which it has yet to overcome. In fact, well-meaning civic leaders such as Mayor "Buddy" Derrick and city councilman Brian Shaw, opted not to use the Confederate Flag for that very reason, fearing that its presence could offend the celebration's participants.

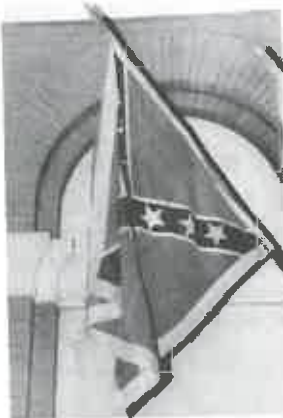
But not using the flag in the ceremony, ironically, serves only to firmly entrench and establish such erroneous characterizations of the flag. By extending credibility to critics of the symbol, they contribute to the erosion of what it symbolizes.

When any symbol is successfully debased or removed, or merely fundamentally altered, that which it symbolized is also destroyed. If the flag for which Stonewall Jackson fought symbolizes racism, then he himself can also be said to symbolize racism. Furthermore, those who fought under him, and those who commanded him, must also symbolize racism. They too, must have fought and died for a principle which we today rightfully condemn.

If the City of Lexington can remove the Confederate Flags from Stonewall Jackson's ceremony, then soon there will be those asking W&L to remove them from Lee Chapel. There will be those telling us that Lee's legacy was not one of honor, but one of bigotry, that Washington and Lee ought to apologize for its

namesakes, rather than taking pride in their history. That we are in fact a Southern institution will become a source of embarrassment, a fetter which diminishes the reputation of the school. And for this reason, our Southern culture will be dismantled, as its values such as honor and gentility, are dismissed as inadequate relics, perhaps even racist (and now sexist) themselves.

And if this seems too far fetched, consider Professor Peck's condemnation of General Lee in the May 1991 issue of *The Traveller*, describing him as "the man who fought to defend the system of slavery." As a graduate of the University of Virginia and a professor of this institution, she ought to know better. Consider that within the administration, Southerners are the exception rather than the rule, that President Wilson's best explanation of Southern culture is a friendly voice on the other end of a telephone line, or more importantly, that a committee such as the CRC was established on the basis that the concept of honor was not enough.



The Confederate Flag in Lee Chapel

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## To the editor

### LITTLE KNOWN TRUTHS ABOUT HOMOSEXUALS

Even some homosexuals are honest enough to admit that sexism is rampant among homosexuals, as several homosexual authors document in their books. (Professor Martin Duberman's *About Time*, Gay Presses of New York, 1986; Eric Rofes' *Gay Life*, Doubleday, 1986; Dennis Altman's *The Homosexualization of America, the Americanization of the Homosexual*, St. Martin's Press, 1982.)

A probable cause of all that homosexual sexism is the heterophobia that afflicts many homosexuals. As the homosexual author Dennis Altman noted in his abovementioned book, many homosexuals are psychologically "threatened" by the thought of love of the opposite sex: "Undoubtedly for many homosexuals there is something threatening in the idea of intimacy with the other sex."

Altman admits also, incidentally, that the frequency of drug and alcohol use among homosexuals is disturbingly high.

And at least two homosexual authors, Duberman and Altman, concede that racism is likewise rampant among homosexuals.

It is evident to thinking people that many homosexuals are sexist, racist, heterophobic bigots full of prejudices, sexual hang-ups and inhibitions. For these homosexuals to complain about so-called "homophobic" people is stupendously hypocritical.

It is also evident to thinking people that instead of liberals indulging homosexual bigots by pushing all that irrational "gay rights" (sad wrongs) nonsense, the liberals ought to encourage homosexuals to seek counseling in order to overcome their prejudices and psychological insecurities.

Too, any politicians who pander to the homo/bisexual bloc, instead of working against it, just do not have high enough moral standards to deserve political offices and should be rejected at the voting booth forthwith, in my humble opinion.

Mr. Wayne Lela  
Downers Grove, IL

### FROM RECENT ALUMNI

As much as I dread the thought of financing the *Spectator*, I have to admit that it's a fairly good magazine. Plus, an educated moderate (believe it or not, I'm more conservative than you might be willing to think) needs to know what virtues *not* to espouse. And I agree with most of your anti-PC arguments. I wish the magazine a long and healthy life.

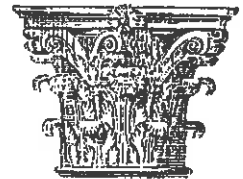
Ms. Laura Taylor '90  
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I am always willing to help out a good cause. I would really appreciate the opportunity to keep in touch with the school and this is a good way.

Mr. Michael D. DeMelfi '91  
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# General Opinion

## THE IFC COP-OUT

On Thursday, November 21, the Inter-Fraternity Council voted to approve the re-colonization of the historically black fraternity, Alpha Phi Alpha. With that vote the W&L community regressed into institutionalized segregation.

Twenty years ago none of the fraternities at W&L was integrated. Today, six of the fraternities have or have had at least one black member. True, the progress has been slow, it nevertheless has been progress. Now, rather than continuing forward, the IFC has abandoned ship.

Perhaps the most persuasive argument offered in favor of Alpha Phi Alpha is that it will enable the University to recruit more minorities. But do we want students to come to W&L intent on joining a segregated social fraternity? And just how social will this fraternity be without a house, without any plans of acquiring a house. The Fraternity Renaissance is the University's \$13 million testament that fraternity houses, the locale where bonds of brotherhood are cultivated and strengthened, are an integral aspect of Greek life.

Yet, the most disappointing and distressing aspect of the IFC proceedings, consisted not in the decision itself, but in the manner that several fraternity presidents who originally opposed the fraternity's colonization, changed their vote to dodge the odious label of "racist." But one is not a racist simply because he disagrees with eleven

black students. But some presidents attempted to preclude any accountability by requesting a closed vote.

Before reaching the IFC, Alpha Phi Alpha was first approved by the Student Affairs Committee, where E.C. President Giles Perkins cast the only dissenting vote. In his statement to the IFC, Perkins claimed that perhaps some could fault him for "living in the ideal" and foreseeing a time in which all the fraternities were integrated. Some could fault him? This is to his credit. Once we have stopped striding for perfection, what ideal do we have to target?

But the Alpha Phi vote was not decided on principle, but on pragmatism and expediency. With the return of Alpha Phi Alpha, the wishes of the myopic (for blacks and whites to each go their own way) have been achieved, meanwhile the long-awaited dream of integration has been pushed back once again.

## BUT, IT SAID "WHAT?"

The Health Education Committee recently attempted to re-educate the W&L community concerning an admittedly sensitive and difficult

subject, sexual assault, in sponsoring the play *But I Said "NO."* But what message exactly was the play trying to promote?

For example, a typical episode of the play included a young woman angrily biting the genitals of a male. While this successfully incited the laughs and cheers of the audience, somewhere the message was lost. During this particular scene, the

young actress stated, "we were kissing and having a good time...the next thing I knew his ——— was in my mouth." She must have known how it got there. Are we to believe that she didn't?

And wouldn't parents and alumni be pleased to know that their daughters are subjected to such chivalric entertainment? Not to mention that the play's extremely vulgar language consistently profaned what was supposedly an important message concerning rape.

It is encouraging that the Health Education Committee is addressing the issue of rape. But why not sponsor a program that informs women and men how to avoid getting into precarious situations? Much of *But I Said "NO"* simply cracked jokes and made slurs, degrading society and men as a whole. Ironically, these productions which portray men and society as animals, are the first to portray surprise when they fail to meet certain behavioral standards. Why not stress abstinence from sex until marriage? This may seem unrealistic here knee-deep in the sexual revolution, but the consequences of that revolution which liberals still promoted is being witnessed with the vengeance of AIDS and the increasing reality of sexual assault. Rape is a difficult issue which cannot be resolved by silly, pedantic articles such as Professor Simpson's piece in the most recent issue of *The Traveller*. She claims that "college women are being raped by nice, ordinary college men. How does it happen?" Well Dr. Simpson, it doesn't happen. Nice, ordinary college men do not rape women.

The propaganda pamphlet issued by the Offstage Theatre Company of Charlottesville, who presented *But I Said "NO,"* claims "only 57% of women who were raped labeled their

### NOTABLY

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*Much of But I Said 'NO' simply cracked jokes and made slurs, successfully inciting the laughs and cheers of the audience. Somewhere the message was lost.”*

experience as rape." Who is kind enough to inform the other 43% that they too were raped? When one national survey includes "verbal coercion" as rape, it causes one to wonder what new sensitivity the feminist movement will touch.

## MILITARY BAN STILL IN LIMBO

Time may well be the great physician—especially as it pertains to the law school's ban on military recruitment. Last winter, the AALS (American Association of Law Schools) urged institutions to prohibit the United Military from recruiting on their respective campuses. Why? The AALS faulted the military for its homosexual discrimination policy. That the Supreme Court upheld this policy mattered little to this legal society which placed itself above the law.

W&L's law faculty, eager to garner a designation among the politically correct quickly voted to ban the military from this campus, ironically, while over a thousand students gathered in the Warner Center in support of our armed services. Six months have passed since Wilson merely tabled the suspension and the debate regarding whether or not the law school ought to accept the pronouncement of a second-tier accreditation agency. Six months have passed, and all is quiet on the alumni front: the ban on the military is all but forgotten, and President Wilson has resumed his Capital Campaign, all without having to address why the military ban remains in place, albeit in limbo.

In fact, President Wilson must have great faith in time's healing powers, for he now claims that he did not support the ban at all. According to Wilson, the extent to

which the Capital Campaign affected his suspension has been exaggerated by those seeking to paint his presidency as one in which the powers of the purse overshadow steadfast maintenance of ideals. This is an interesting change of heart from the man who earlier regretted that "homophobia" among alumni forced him to suspend the law school faculty decision. But while minds may be subject to forgetfulness (and forgiveness), written records are not. Facts, as they say, are stubborn things.

In his written justification to Dean Bezanson, President Wilson lists one reason and one reason alone for suspending the ban: "I have concluded that the University's best interest requires us to suspend the application of this placement policy to the military services." Before parents and alumni open their wallets, perhaps they ought to ask Wilson why he did not revoke the ban, instead of supinely suspending it where it could be just as easily reinstated. And President Wilson, if you wish the W&L community to believe that you truly oppose the ban, revoke it. Otherwise...

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

For nearly two decades the National Endowment for the Arts has wasted billions of taxpayers' dollars on a host of programs designed to promote the national culture. Most notorious of these "artistic" ventures include "Annie's Sex Kitchen," in which members of the audience are encouraged to explore the actress' vaginal canal with a flashlight (which she, or rather the NEA, provides free of charge); Andre Serrano's "Piss Christ," in which a crucifix is submerged in a vat of urine; numerous NEA subsidized displays

which require participants to walk across the American flag taped to the floor before entering; and who could forget, the 1989 Robert Mapplethorpe art display where museum authorities were arrested for displaying the exhibit in a county where pornography is illegal.

To insure that the students of Washington and Lee remain on the cutting edge of modern art, the W&L chapter of the ACLU recently displayed some of this trash—all under the guise of celebrating "Freedom of Expression" as part of its 200th Anniversary observance of the Bill of Rights. Wouldn't the founding fathers be proud? Not to mention parents and alumni, who would be shocked to learn that not only are they subsidizing the good efforts of the NEA via their hard earned tax dollars, but also through their tuition dollars and gifts to the University?

But of course, comparing the NEA to the University Library display gives the library display far too much credit—at least an elective body (the Congress) empowered the NEA. Who voted to allow the ACLU to utilize University property for its political agenda? At least participants in the Cincinnati art show had some idea of what to expect from Mapplethorpe. Unsuspecting library onlookers have no idea that they will even be subjected to child pornography that *Playboy* or *Penthouse* would never publish—they couldn't, it's against the law. But under the cloak of "Freedom of Expression" the ACLU has subjected any number of students, and worse yet, visitors, to offensive material.

And this is not a question of whether or not the constitution protects Mapplethorpe's and others right to produce such perverse rabble under the guise of "artwork." It does. It is a question of whether University capital should be used to support its promulgation.

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## Lee's Legacy Betrayed

The Honor Code suffers from a dearth of the type of leadership General Lee displayed as both a role model for students and as their companion.

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*Jamie Tucker is a senior from Macon, Georgia.*

December 1991

After the War Between the States, General Robert E. Lee served five years as president of Washington College making a tremendous impact on this small institution. The greatest of Lee's legacies at Washington College is the dedication to the principle of honor. When Lee came to Lexington, he insisted that every student conduct himself in a manner befitting a gentleman. President Lee also emphasized the importance of trust within the college community, and hence, placed the responsibility for such honorable behavior into the hands of the students themselves. Today, more than one hundred twenty years later, the significance of these attitudes survives at Washington and Lee in the Honor Code, which has evolved since General Lee's time, to become a more formalized code which governs matters of honor in the student body.

The initial success of the system which Lee introduced is attributable to the extraordinary leadership of Lee himself. Lee did not guide students merely by uttering his opinions on honor; he lived in the same manner, setting an excellent example for the students who attended the college. The personal rapport that existed between Lee and the Washington College students also contributed to the success of the Honor Code. Lee was held in such high esteem by the students that their desire not to disappoint him largely contributed to the Code's success. Biographer Douglas Freeman chronicles many accounts in which students acted primarily in order not to disappoint the General. Among them includes an instance when General Lee wrote home to a boy's mother, "to tell her how [he was] getting along in college." The young man in turn responded, "I trust I may ever live worthy of your commendation." Lee warned the boy of the dangers of alcohol, and additionally the boy agreed that he would no longer use intoxicants while he was at Washington College (Freeman, 281-2). Freeman recounts that the General considered the students "his boys," taking a

*by Jamie Tucker*

genuine interest in their days in Lexington.

Students who attended Washington College while Lee was president benefitted from a previously unheard of level of autonomy which Lee extended to them. Today, students at Washington and Lee still benefit from the Honor Code, likewise, and as the White Book states, "Students enjoy unparalleled academic and social freedoms." Students can schedule their own exams and take them unsupervised, and a student can be taken at his word.

The Honor Code at Washington and Lee began some time during the first decade of this century, yet, virtually all accounts attribute today's Honor Code to General Lee and his leadership at Washington College. The role of honor at Washington and Lee today, however, cannot attribute its viability to the leadership of Washington Hall. To the contrary, the Honor Code suffers from a dearth of the type of leadership General Lee displayed as both a role model for students and as their companion. Though a general trust still exists between students and administrators, actions taken over the last several years have only jeopardized the existence honor at Washington and Lee.

The influence of new and young professors, many of whom have recently completed graduate work in academic environments that lack W&L's sense of honor and integrity presents the Honor Code with a distinct challenge. They, like each entering freshman class, do not understand the Honor Code. But unlike most entering freshmen, these professors sometimes do not trust the Honor Code, and unlike all entering freshmen are immediately placed in positions of authority where their attitudes toward the Honor Code directly and significantly affects it. For this reason, the Executive Committee offers an orientation for new faculty to acquaint them with the Honor Code. But the increasing number of incidents in which primarily new faculty are doubting students' word alarmingly demonstrates the insufficiency of this orientation.

For example, certain professors regu-

larly require that students produce notes from the infirmary to prove that their absence was in fact due to illness. One only supposes that if a student chooses not to seek medical attention from the infirmary that they are little more than at the professor's mercy. The benefits of the Honor Code which the White Book proclaim are of little solace to the freshman who is told that his word of honor is not enough. Rather than instill pride in this institution, these professors' actions serve to empty the Honor Code of all its significance, in effect killing it.

Not as common, but nevertheless as important, concerns the proctoring of examinations by new professors. Last year, one such professor even told his class that he did not believe in the Honor Code, explaining why he intended to remain in the classroom during the exam. Finally, students in this class in effect drove him out of the classroom by asking him repeatedly when he was going to leave. Another professor in her proctoring of an examination only allowed students to excuse themselves to the restroom one at a time. Is this professor so cynical or paranoid that she believes students would actually gather in the restroom to compare answers?

These instances raise questions regarding just how these new faculty members view the Honor Code. Do they see it as some outdated tradition to which they must pay lip service, but may otherwise ignore? Do they believe that students routinely use the Honor Code to "put one over" on their professors? Or do they simply not trust it, hardened against it following years of exposure to widespread cheating, stealing, and lying on other campuses?

This is not to say that all of these new faculty members do not have good intentions. Some do. They simply lack understanding of how much these ideals are valued at Washington and Lee. This leadership comes not primarily from the EC, but Washington Hall. And when Washington Hall has not been silent on the Honor Code, it has taken actions which demonstrate that it, too, is above the Honor Code.

No where is deception more blatant than in the case last February, that followed three students' suspension for breaking windows in a newly renovated fraternity houses. A special issue of the Spectator stated then that "As students, we simply take for granted that members of our community do not attempt to deceive one another. Yet this whole procedure involved one deception after another." President Wilson and Dean Howison, deceived the student body not only by offering conflicting accounts of the process by which students were dismissed, but by also offering contradictory justifications for undermining the usual process.

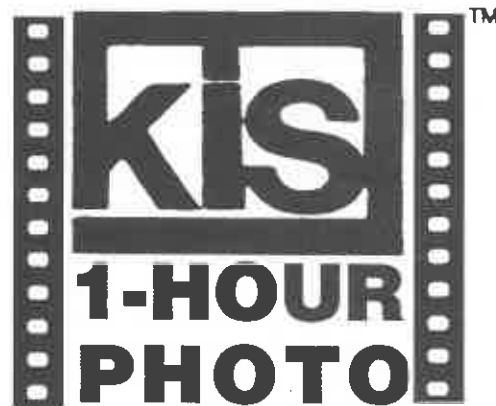
Many students, not just the friends of those suspended, felt betrayed, and justifiably so, by the president and the Dean for subverting the normal means of disciplinary procedure and proffering

two different accounts of the process that led to the dismissal of the three students. The Honor System, which the White Book describes in its simplest form, is "in essence [a system] of mutual trust—trust among students, faculty, administrator, and townspeople that persons attending Washington and Lee will not lie, cheat, or steal." The Honor System is perhaps the most crucial aspect of the university community and accordingly "mutual trust and respect form the bedrock of relationships within the community." Further, the Honor System stipulates that "no violation of this trust is too small to be ignored, for we understand that honor is not measured by degree." Even President Wilson reminded us in his speech at the forum concerning the suspension of the three students that we are "all accountable—faculty, president, students, student leaders to comport ourselves in the style and in the manner [that complies with the honor system]. On this matter, President Wilson, unfortunately, failed to match rhetoric with actions.

The Honor Code required Lee's strong leadership and example in its establishment, and it requires strong leadership and examples in its maintenance. While Lee's example still provides this needed leadership, much of the existing leadership needs to reaffirm its commitment to the Honor Code, not in hollow rhetoric, but in action.

Works Consulted  
Freeman, Douglas. *R.E. Lee, Volume IV*. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York:1955.

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## Hoops '92

**T**he W&L Generals entered Warner Center for their opening Tipoff Tournament with many unanswered questions. That the Generals are placed next to last in ODAC preseason predictions in fact may be a "blessing in disguise" since the Generals will carry no huge expectations when they step on the court. Junior guard Bryon Watkins describes it, "This



year we will be playing to win rather than trying not to lose." And it appears that the 1991-92 campaign will require that grit and hard work substitute for height combined with the loss of seven seniors.

Coach Verne Canfield, who is entering his 28th season at W&L, has never lacked hard working, feisty ball clubs. His coaching philosophy has placed Canfield eleventh on the all-time Division III win list. And this

**Robbie MacNaughton** is a sophomore from Greenville, South Carolina.

by *Robbie MacNaughton*

year, Canfield has new help in first year assistant Coach John Herndon, a W&L alumnus. Coach Herndon, known for his intensity, should help the Generals prepare for the fierce ODAC.

Through the years the ODAC has always epitomized hard-nosed Division III basketball, and this year looks to prove no exception. In fact, this year's conference may be better than ever. W&L will face giants at every turn this year. Three teams are expected to make runs for the top twenty poll, and Bridgewater College just received a much discussed Division I transfer. Leading the pack this year will be Hampden-Sydney. Returning from last year's defeat of Division I stalwart William & Mary, the Tigers are a top eight national pick. Additionally, the loaded teams of Randolph Macon and Emory & Henry will contribute to a season in which the Generals will have their work cut out for them.

Despite these challenges, the Generals definitely should be an exciting team to watch this year. Due to their lack of size, the Generals should play a fast-paced game led by their guards, including Watkins, junior Bryan Brading and sophomore Paul Baker. Look for the Generals to fire up many a three point attempt this year. Watkins says, "I'm ready to fire it up baby." The Generals traditionally rely upon their strong and sometimes rough inside game. This year's group of bruisers include defensive standouts Courtney Penn and captain Mark Melton. While the Generals will definitely miss Ed Hart, Craig Hatfield, and Chris Jacobs in their efforts to dominate the paint, this year's core seems ready for the challenge. Sophomore Bryant Pless and his 6-7 frame may be the Generals' answer at center.

Though the Generals will be hard pressed to dominate the ODAC, the players already have handled the always tough pre-season workouts like title contenders. So look for the Warner Center often to be filled with hundreds of avid supporters as the Generals surpass the expectations of the early season ratings.

## ACC PREDICTIONS

Throughout the eighties the ACC remained the perennial basketball conference in America. Now as the 1991-92 season begins, attention once again centers on the ACC—the hotbed of college basketball action. In the last decade the ACC has produced three National Champions, and any team surviving the tough in-conference slate that awaits them this year will no doubt be a contender for another championship. In fact, many national polls have picked both Duke and North Carolina to return to the Final Four. Also, this year Florida State quietly joins the ACC. With the help of full-time hoops maniac and part-time Professor of Economics, Art Goldsmith, we present the *Spectator's* own ACC picks:

**1. NORTH CAROLINA:** Even with the loss of three important seniors, America's most consistent program returns with a vengeance. Like most forecasters, Prof. Goldsmith picked UNC second, but I disagree. People tend to forget that although Duke was the National Champion last year, North Carolina was the ACC Champions (defeating Duke by 22 points). Led by the likes of Hubert Davis and George Lynch the Tarheels will again surprise the Dukies.

**2. DUKE:** This does not mean that Duke will not be strong. The Blue Devils return their top three players from last year, complemented by a strong recruiting class. With All-American forward Christian Laettner, guard Bobby Hurley and Cameron Indoor Stadium all on their side, Duke will return to the Final Four. Professor Goldsmith picks the Devils first.

**3. VIRGINIA:** The home town favorite Cavaliers, under second year Coach Jeff Jones, should head the "second group." The Wahoos did lose their senior catalyst, John Crotty, whose talents will be sorely missed; however, they return with "Mr. Everything" Bryant Stith as well as a fine group of freshmen.

**4. WAKE FOREST:** The Demon Deacons this close to the top of this list? Absolutely. In fact,



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expect to see them here for years to come. Last year's Coach of the Year, David Odom, has the Deacs fired up. Wake is playing exciting basketball led by Freshmen of the Year, Rodney Rogers, and their *winning* basketball as well.

**5. GEORGIA TECH:** The Ramblin' Wreck no longer has the services of Kenny Anderson, but with Rick Barry's son, Jon, at point and big Malcolm Mackey at center do not count them out.

**6. FLORIDA STATE:** Perennial football powerhouse Florida State will have to move up a notch in the hoops department in order to compete in this league. Nevertheless Prof. Goldsmith and I both agree the Seminoles have the stuff to fall somewhere in the middle of the pack this year.

**7. MARYLAND:** The Terps head up the group of "have nots" this year. If Walt Williams stays in school the Terps will not lack in the flash department, but returning to the upper half of the division will elude Maryland for a few more years.

**8. CLEMSON:** The Tigers athletic program has had trouble keeping its nose clean in the past, and this year will prove no exception. Even so, the athletic ability of the Tigers will keep them from occupying the cellar.

**9. NORTH CAROLINA STATE:** This year's cellar dweller will be the Wolfpack of Raleigh, North Carolina. The loss of coach Jim Valvano from two years ago still hurts, and, believe it or not from a school that tended not to graduate its athletes, graduation took its toll on the Wolfpack. NCSU will find it difficult to compete so shorthanded.

## The Honor System and the Lewis Hall Vandalism

by Cameron Humphries

How ironic it is that even at Washington and Lee we are told that honor is not enough...

Following the conclusion of the Civil War, Robert E. Lee attended a church service in Richmond. During Communion, a freed slave approached the altar to receive the sacrament. The congregation fell silent, not knowing how to react. After a few minutes, Lee stepped to the altar and knelt beside the man. Together they received the Body and Blood of Christ, and the remainder of the congregation followed Lee's example. Over a century later, Lee's steadfast adherence to honor and his belief that all men are equal in the eyes of God provides the only "rules" or "regulations" necessary for race relations.

But how ironic it is that even at Washington and Lee we are told that it is not enough.

For the past four years, W&L has lived under the auspices of the Confidential Review Committee, a committee founded on the principle that honor, at least in the late twentieth century sense of the word, is an insufficient standard to adjudicate cases of racial tension. And now, in the wake of racist vandalism in Lewis Hall, minority groups are clamoring for widespread institutional changes, including "mandatory seminars on multi-culturalism, especially for the undergraduate community's awareness." Since the November 14, 1991 letter in the *Ring-tum Phi* is addressed to the same dean who claimed, "I think diversity is just as important a part of the preparation for practicing law as learning substantive law," only the most naive observers will conclude that no action will be taken to accommodate the demands in that *Phi* letter. All of which, combined with the colonization of Alpha Phi Alpha, will serve to accelerate and accentuate racial tensions.

In a broader scope, the Lewis Hall vandalism and the subsequent request for widespread institutional change follows a well documented pattern of other similar racial outbreaks on campuses across the nation.

Dinesh D'Souza, in *Illiberal Education*, describes how one outbreak of racial conflict led to drastic institutional change. In February 1987, a University of Michigan student, while hosting a radio talk show, asked listeners to phone in their favorite racist joke. Justified campuswide outrage followed. The student issued a public apology and resigned, pledging to contribute in the fight against racism. Consideration of the incident should have stopped there.

It didn't.

In the weeks and months that followed, minority activists placed increased pressure on the administration to take broader action. Racial tensions increased along with the minority activism. Further, but isolated, outbreaks of racist activity occurred. Maintaining that "institutional racism" could not be contained without a strong minority presence within the faculty, a black activist group demanded that all minority faculty be granted immediate tenure. They also demanded increased funding for their minority student association, and a broad array of "sensitivity raising" courses in multiculturalism. Although the university's president stated that he could not afford to extend tenure to all minority members of the faculty (never mind the question of merit), he pledged \$27 million to a broad array of demands, including minority recruitment, minority faculty salaries, a minority student center, and "campus awareness" programs. Perhaps the nation's most infamous collegiate speech code also followed; it prohibited "any behavior, verbal or physical, that stigmatizes or victimizes an individual on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, creed, ancestry, age, marital status, handicap, or Vietnam-era veteran status." This speech code's tenure was brief. In the spring of 1989, U.S. District Judge Avern Cohn ruled it unconstitutional on the grounds that "persons of common intelligence just guess at its meaning."

Cameron Humphries is a junior from Dallas, Texas.

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D'Souza provides numerous other examples of similar racial outbreaks on other college campuses. They follow a similar pattern: an isolated incident is followed by widespread institutional change which, ironically, heighten and strain racial tensions.

Even more surprising to many than the failure of sensitivity programs and affirmative action to reduce racial tensions, is that the overwhelming majority of these racial outbreaks occur on traditionally "liberal" campuses in the Northeast. According to Thomas Sowell, in 1988 only seven percent of the reported collegiate racial outbreaks occurred on Southern campuses. D'Souza concludes that this is because the South has come to terms with the realities of the Civil Rights Movement, and that its long relationship with blacks enables it more easily to accept them. But at a more fundamental level, for all the South's provinciality and isolation, it has maintained its value system far more successfully than the rest of the nation. Though this too is in decline, the South still adheres to what is described the "traditional moral code." And it is only through adherence to and recognition of the traditional moral code that issues of human relations can be successfully resolved. After all, this is the purpose for which it was designed.

But the traditional moral code has been driven out of nearly every aspect of American public life. The schools no longer teach it. The national media and the arts mock and debunk it. And the federal government, allegedly empowered to "make no law respecting an establishment of religion," currently funds a myriad of programs and organizations which effort tirelessly to subvert it.

From the embarrassment of the Clarence Thomas hearings, to the proliferation of the AIDS crisis, the result of the new amorality is self-evident to all but the most obstinate and blind: societal

fragmentation and dissolution. College administrators' and public leaders' fear of the consequences of the sexual revolution is surpassed only by their fear of telling a generation of young adults 'no.' And so they distribute condoms, preach 'safe sex,' and pray that their neighborhood or campus is not the next victim to the AIDS disease. As Edmund Burke writes, "the concessions of the weak are the concessions of fear."

In a similar vein, feminists too loathe to admit that the traditional morality protects them, demand that lawmakers 'cut and paste' a new morality of sexual harassment, complete with a codified list of rules and regulations designed to protect women, but what inevitably isolates them in the workplace and otherwise. The old University of Michigan speech code is a poignant case in point. In the effort to protect every minority group and leave no loopholes through which some racist, sexist, or homophobic, etc. might offend another student, the university revealed the hypocrisy inherent in the New Morality—it protects no one; it victimizes everyone.

Without the weight of the moral code and fibre behind it, speech codes are empty promises. They do not teach those living under them that there is anything inherently wrong with racism, sexism, or any of the fashionable other "isms;" they instill fear of punishment. When those students graduate, that fear of punishment is gone, and unless they retain some "higher" reason for not practicing bigotry, they will continue to do so, unfettered by some college dean or president's misdirected intentions—"Claiming to be wise, they became fools."

Currently at Washington and Lee, where one rule once sufficed, "Comport yourself in a manner befitting a gentleman," we currently endure a complex system comprised of rules, committees, and hearings. That W&L is comparatively free of such institutional codification speaks far less to its own credit than it does to the increasingly litigious nature of American society. In fact, the nation's declining recognition of the moral law probably matches proportionally, if not exponentially, the increase in legal activity. One law has been merely supplanted by another.

Lord Acton writes that liberty consists not so much in the ability to do as one wants, as it does in the right to act as one ought. And yet, inherent in the reality of free will is the ability to do wrong: to make racist statements, to defile personal property, to lie, cheat, or steal. Such actions which denigrate are as necessarily a part of freedom as acts which uplift, for only from experiencing evil can we truly appreciate virtue. For this reason, news of the Lewis Hall vandalism constitutes a far more powerful lesson in the realities of racism than a mandatory semester long course in cultural awareness—as General Lee's action in a Richmond chapel provided a far more compelling call to harmony than the presence of a Union soldier.

The demands listed in the *Phi* letter, if imple-

mented, could earn Washington and Lee designation among the Politically Correct, but in the long run would serve to undermine the values of this institution by creating a "Really Honorable Code" over and above our existing system of honor.

Mandatory sensitivity courses and speech codes will only contribute to racism and resentment in those already so inclined, and will only breed fear in the hearts and minds of the well intentioned majority who might otherwise seek to address issues of race and ethnicity. Blanket practices of affirmative action, whether in faculty hiring or student recruitment will serve only to institutionalize prejudice, as members of the "majority" necessarily view the beneficiaries as suspect, and as the minorities themselves at some point question whether or not they themselves can stand on their own merit or if the color of their skin constitutes their most important qualification.

Finally, the University must also address the question of diversity. The authors of the letter to Bezanson argue that Washington and Lee must "develop;" that it must change with the times. They ask that W&L embrace diversity. It is ironic that an institution which does not maintain requirements in Western Civilization or even in American History, would consider instituting course requirements in cultural studies outside of its own culture, or in "folk" sub-cultures within its own. All of which stems from a fundamental misunderstanding of what the four brief years an undergraduate spends in college is intended to accomplish. No undergraduate can thoroughly pursue even one culture's thought, contributions, and history, much less do so for multiple cultures. The purpose of an undergraduate education is to develop the mind so that it can absorb a variety of thoughts and ideas and then logically accept what is true and reject what is false. In short, the liberal arts education purports to develop a liberal (or free) mind. This can be accomplished in a variety of studies, not simply multiculturalism. In fact, because multicultural curriculums are presently so politicized, they may very well constitute the worst means of developing the liberal mind. And considering that Western thought still maintains the strongest tradition of plurality and openness, it alone may very well be sufficient to instill the foundations of the liberal mind.

As the letter acknowledges, the University must make a choice in addressing the Lewis Hall vandalism: Do we hold true to Lee's legacy which maintains that honor and duty are sufficient values to address questions of human relations? Or do we purport to create a new standard, one full of stipulations and caveats, on the basis that we know better than Lee, or than what Burke describes "the wisdom of our ancestors?" Whatever the result, two things are certain. One, the New Morality will undoubtedly be more complex and more complicated than the old. Two, if and where the New Morality succeeds, it will be where it most closely resembles the old, if not in letter, then in spirit.



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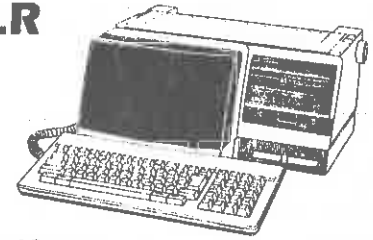
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