

Neo-Nazi Tweets Roil Campus

Students and administrators grieve and seek answers

by Emma Pettit '20 and AJ Naddaff '19

Photos by Christopher Record

On Wednesday, November 7th, the Carolina Workers Collective's Twitter account doxxed two Davidson students with allegations of spreading neo-Nazi rhetoric online. This doxxing, defined as a search for and publication of private information about an individual through the internet, spread quickly throughout the Davidson community and gathered significant attention online. These allegations of neo-Nazi presence on campus came on the heels of the Pittsburgh synagogue shooting on October 27th and the discovery of "Hitler did nothing wrong" written on a whiteboard in Watson on October 30th.

also raised concerns about personal experiences with and previous safety reports about the accused students. Students told Campus Police that one student involved was removed from a Patterson Court Organization in November 2017 on the grounds that the student held racist ideologies that were unwelcome within that organization. Throughout that evening, students, alumni, and community members disseminated what they knew to others on campus, spoke over social media, and posted information and reactions to the Davidson College 2018-2019 Facebook page.

Following the attention that the doxxing received online and on campus, Davidson Col-

lege responded in a tweet at 9:15 PM saying, "Davidson College condemns bigotry and racism as antithetical to our values and our mission. We are aware of the information that has understandably raised concern, and the college is on it." At 9:22 PM, President Carol Quillen tweeted "@DavidsonCollege students, we are on it"; this tweet has since been deleted.

Later that evening, the Twitter account U.S. Army WTF! Moments retweeted the Carolina Workers Collective's original dox, condemning images and content from the first doxxed account. The official Army ROTC Twitter account responded to the U.S. Army WTF! Moment post at 4:08 AM with the message, "Thank you for bringing the tweets attributed to [the student] to our attention. We are currently looking into this and will take action as appropriate. These messages conveyed in the

tweets doesn't represent the values of Army ROTC or the US Army."

Between Wednesday evening and Thursday morning, as students, alumni, and the broader community followed the online conversations, Campus Police gathered information, located the students, and monitored their exit from campus.

Terry Zervos '19 is the Resident Advisor (RA) on one of the accused students' halls. Zervos was notified about the tweets between 8:30 PM and 9:00 PM from one of his residents. According to residents, the students were believed to be on the hall at the time. Zervos told residents that he notified his supervisors in the Residence Life Office (RLO), and they were coordinating with Campus Police to address the situation. Later that night, the students named in the doxxing spoke with Campus Police, returned to the hall to collect their belongings, and left campus.

The first email update to students came from the Student Government Association (SGA) at 12:24 AM and reported that "the responsible parties are not on campus."

Quillen offered her first update via email at 9:19 AM, writing: "Our community is understandably upset over social media postings that gained attention last evening. I want you to know that our campus is safe. There are no threats to campus, and our staff are addressing this situation. We have no greater priority than the safety and well-being of our community. Clearly racism, bigotry and anti-Semitism are antithetical to everything Davidson stands for and to the community we strive to be. Since we became aware of this, we (Campus Police, all of our student life and RLO staff, our communications staff, and many others) have been working on it. We will update you as we

can. For now, please know that we are a strong community and stand firm behind our values of dignity toward all."

Soon national news outlets began to pick up the story. The Hill ran an article at 10:05 AM with the headline "Army ROTC and Davidson College investigating after student's alleged pro-Nazi social media posts surface" in which the publication reprinted the tweets and named the students involved.

On campus, Dean of Students Byron McCrae and the SGA worked on compiling campus resources and disseminating pertinent information for the student body. In an 11:05 AM email, McCrae listed six links and gave eight contacts with hours of availability for students who desired to have conversations with them in the following days.

Later, in a 2:29 PM email a coalition of student leaders, including from SGA, Honor Council, Union Board, and PCC, wrote, "Davidson College is not always a bastion of the ideals it seeks to uphold. As student leaders, we feel the need to reiterate the importance of respect, integrity, and dignity towards all. But, that is not enough. Hiding under the veneer of acceptance and tolerance, there are people driven by hate and fear that seek to divide this community. Hate speech and bigotry have absolutely no place here, and they never will. Ever."

In the meantime, Major General John R. Evans, US Army Cadet Command, tweeted from a verified account at 3:54 PM: "In close coordination with local law enforcement @ArmyROTC investigated the tweets attributed to [the named student]. We determined these tweets are NOT from [the student] and the Twitter account WAS NOT [the student's]."

This response confused students and ad-

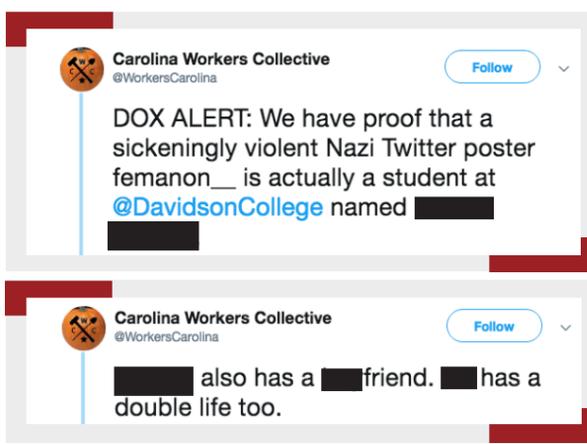
The Union's second floor, staircase, and café level balconies were full of students, faculty, and staff by the beginning of the protest.

The first tweet of the dox was posted at 4:40 PM, linking a Davidson student to an anonymous neo-Nazi Twitter account. The tweet compared photos and references from the student's personal social media accounts and the anonymous Twitter account. At 4:44 PM, a second post claimed that another student, and partner of the first, was linked to a separate anonymous, neo-Nazi Twitter account. On this second account, the author confessed to attending the Charlottesville "Unite the Right" rally, a white supremacist march in August 2017, shared white supremacist images and epithets, and retweeted content from the initial doxxed account.

In the immediate wake of the doxxing on Wednesday evening, students spoke extensively with Campus Police to address the information being shared on Twitter. Students

What we know:

Carolina Workers Collective (CWC) tweets accusing a Davidson student of owning and operating a neo-Nazi Twitter account. Screenshots from said account are included. CWC prefaces their thread with "DOX ALERT," referring to the practice of discovering and sharing personal information via the internet.



President Carol Quillen tweets, "@DavidsonCollege students, we are on it." The tweet has since been deleted.



4:40 PM

Wednesday

8:30-9:00 PM

9:22 PM

12:24 AM

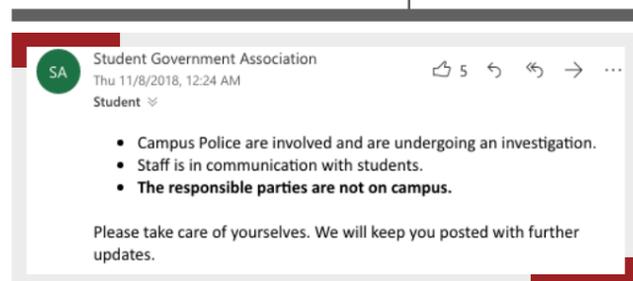
Thursday

Terry Zervos '19, a Residential Advisor, learns of CWC's tweets: one of the students named by CWC is a resident of Zervos' hall. Zervos soon alerts his supervisors; later that night, Zervos will stand outside the room—completely unaccompanied—while the two students collect their belongings.

"My friend who is an RA was alone there for half an hour and I feel like his life could have been at risk."
— Jose Olvera '19

"They were there for 30 to 45 minutes. Finally, they walked out carrying bags."
— Sawyer Levy '19

"That was a mistake and that should not have happened; the Honor Council asked me that too. I didn't know that happened; that's not an excuse. . . . We have apologized to the RA."
— Dean Byron McCrae



SGA President Itziri Gonzalez-Barcena '19 and Vice President Osama Syed '19 email the student body expressing concern and consolation. They stress that the students named in CWC's tweets "are not on campus."

ministrators alike. When asked about Evans's tweet, a spokesperson for ROTC shared that the investigation was ongoing and had not reached a conclusion. Evans's Twitter account biography includes the clause, "These are my opinions and no one else's."

Quillen continued to update students on Thursday in a 4:39 PM email dispelling rumors "about firearms, external demonstrations and other threats to campus." In text messages between students, a previous report of notes found on a library whiteboard including details regarding a school shooting was circulated. The Davidsonian spoke with multiple administrators and faculty members who reviewed the whiteboard and concluded that the notes appeared to be an academic outline, not a credible safety threat.

Soon national news outlets began to pick up the story.

The Charlotte Observer published an article that afternoon at 4:54 PM. The piece quoted emails from Quillen, reprinted Davidson College's tweets, and discussed plans for the open student meeting scheduled for 8:00 PM that evening. The Chronicle of Higher Education published a similar story on the same day, re-printing the doxxing tweets and quoting students.

Media outlets contacted students in an AT class taught by one of the students accused in the doxxing. Until Thursday, Davidson's website had publicly listed students in the AT taught by the student in question, as well as the time and place of the session. According to FERPA, a federal law that protects the privacy of students, students must "provide a signed and dated written consent before an educational agency or institution discloses personally identifiable information from the student's education records."

On Thursday evening in the Lilly Family Gallery, SGA President Itziri Gonzalez-Barcenas '19 and Vice President Osama Syed '19 provided a forum for students and community members to ask questions directly to Quillen and McCrae, who were both in attendance.

Students called for transparency, shared concerns that the college was prioritizing public relations over student wellbeing, and

inquired into plans for future action to mitigate the possibility of white nationalism on campus.

Jose Olvera '19 asked McCrae, "Why were the students allowed to go to one of their rooms together and leave their stuff alone unsupervised for half an hour? My friend who is an RA was alone there for half an hour and I feel like his life could have been at risk."

McCrae responded: "That was a mistake and that should not have happened; the Honor Council asked me that too. I didn't know that happened; that's not an excuse. Our job is never to put students in harm's way, so it will never happen again. The next time an incident like this happens, it would be a residence professional who is trained and Campus Police would be in the vicinity. We have apologized

to the RA."

By Friday morning, the alumni community had an official petition addressed to the administration authored by Evan Yi '18 and Vita Dadoo '18. Entitled "Demands for Clarity and Healing by Davidson Alumni," the petition called for more information about the situation and was later updated with a message explaining that the authors understood this would be limited by FERPA restrictions. Nonetheless, the petition still requests that the administration "acknowledge generations of marginalized students' fears and concerns about institutional safety that predate this particular incident."

Between Thursday and Friday, student leaders from Hillel, the Black Student Coalition (BSC), Muslim Student Association (MSA), the Organization of Latin American Students (OLAS) and others publicized a demonstration in the Union.

Quillen shared the details of the protest in an email to students on Friday at 11:06 AM. In this email, she also addressed the tweet from Major General John R. Evans, stating, "The national command of ROTC issued a tweet last night regarding one of our students, stating that the social media postings that prompted these events were not made by that student. Davidson College is conducting its own inqui-

ry, which is not complete."

The Union's second floor, staircase, and café level balconies were full of students, faculty, and staff by the beginning of the protest. The protest intended to adopt a "black radical framework," and students representing multiple organizations spoke from the Union stairs to an audience covering the Atrium floor and crowding the surrounding balconies.

Dahlia Krutkovich '21 was the first student to speak at the microphone from the platform: "Today, Hillel, the BSC, MSA, OLAS and other groups stand against Nazism and more broadly, white terror ... This semester, the Jewish community at Davidson has weathered hit after hit, starting with the shooting at Pittsburgh and leading us here. We feel beleaguered. We feel existentially threatened, but we also recognize that anti-Semitism acts as an existential threat to every person of color, every queer person, every non-normative person on this campus. We look to our peers, to our professors, to our community now to stand with us."

Student representatives from the BSC raised awareness about the historical Project 87: a series of demands, written in 1984-85, to improve representation, equality, and inclusivity on Davidson's campus for students, faculty, and academics. Fellow students spoke and shared feelings of fear, discomfort, anger, exhaustion and solidarity in the face of white supremacist rhetoric. The demonstration was followed by a meeting at the BSC in which updates to Project 87 were discussed.

On Monday, November 12th, Quillen emailed students to state that she would be accessible in the Union Café from 11:00 AM until 1:00 PM on Tuesday, November 13th, to speak with students about "thoughts or ideas or concerns."

Davidsonian Investigates

To supplement the information available to students and the Davidson community, The Davidsonian conducted interviews with students, faculty, staff, and Campus Police.

One key concern that many students expressed was the way in which the students

named in the doxxing left campus, particularly regarding the involvement of a single student RA. Olvera's question to McCrae (see above) at the Thursday meeting in the Lilly Gallery specifically addressed this issue.

Olvera said that he did not feel like it ever be an RA's job to oversee the removal of students from campus. "Most people I talked to had the consensus that it shouldn't have just been [Zervos] or any other RA."

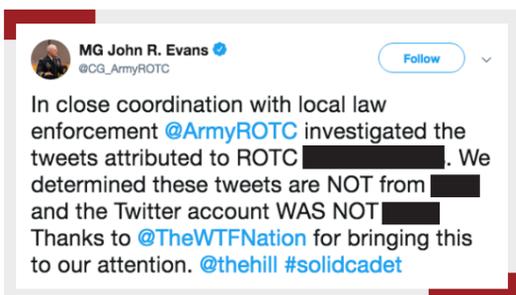
Sawyer Levy '19 said he knew the students in question were in the room because he heard them through the door. "They were there for 30 to 45 minutes. Finally, they walked out carrying bags," he said. "Yes, I was concerned for my safety, because I didn't know what they would come out with, but at the same time, I couldn't resist my temptation. I looked them in the eyes and told them, 'this campus is going to be an immediately better place as soon as you leave.' They didn't respond."

Assistant Dean of Students and Director of Residence Life Jason Shaffer was not able to comment on any specific situation. Procedurally, however, he explained that "in emergency situations, RLO looks to Campus Police for guidance."

Students had also expressed serious concerns about what justifies Campus Police's use of the term "non-credible threat." The Davidsonian met with Campus Police Chief Todd Sigler to discuss Davidson's Threat Assessment Policy.

According to Sigler, the Threat Assessment Policy evaluates "whether an individual is on a pathway to violence. Are they engaged in certain behaviors that would lend us to think that some sort of violence is imminent? What's their history of violence? Do they have history of being a substance abuser? Do they have access to weapons? Do they have a history of speaking about them? This is a relatively evolving [process] and it has been evolving for the last several years."

At Davidson, the Threat Assessment process is closely connected to the Student of Concern reports that are evaluated on a weekly basis, and Campus Police are able to contact local law enforcement should they deem that necessary during the process.



Major General John R. Evans tweets on behalf of ROTC announcing that the account first mentioned by CWC does not belong to the Davidson student alleged in that original tweet. His Twitter bio bears the caveat, "These are my opinions and no one else's," but he tags @ArmyROTC and claims they have investigated the tweets in question.

Masses of students gather in the Union atrium for a rally, which has been advertised on social media as a "protest" against "white terror," and which President Quillen has referred to, in an email Friday morning, as a "gathering." Representatives from Hillel, the BSC, Muslim Student Association (MSA), Organization of Latin American Students (OLAS), Davidson Young Democratic Socialists of America (YDSA), and other groups express solidarity with the groups targeted in the tweets exposed on Wednesday afternoon.

"I think Judaism in the United States doesn't do enough to support people of color. I want to change that. Judaism should be a push against inequality across the board. Jews while often targeted with hateful and violent epithets do benefit from white supremacy so its our responsibility to be able to leverage that white privilege and unite behind our commonality"



"We feel existentially threatened, but we also recognize that anti-Semitism acts as an existential threat to every person of color, every queer person, every non-normative person on this campus. We look to our peers, to our professors, to our community now to stand with us."
—Dahlia Krutkovich '21

"We are not just mad about some tweets. We are not just mad about a single isolated incident of white nationalism. We are mad that we've been erased, and we have been silenced, and we've been shouting in our communities, in our microcommunities, in our black and brown spaces, and haven't been heard."
— Bry Reed '20

Friday

3:54 PM

8:00-10:00 PM

12:15 PM

1:00PM

SGA holds a forum in the Lilly Gallery for students to address comments, questions and concerns to the Gonzalez-Barcena and Syed, President Quillen, and Dean McCrae. Members of the Black Student Coalition (BSC) read a provisional list of demands for institutional change based on a document from the mid-80's called "Project 87."

A call is raised for further action. After the rally, scores of students move to the BSC to share their feelings, address common needs, and discuss solutions to problems on campus.

