Expanding a First
social issues and critical thought

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As the current MultiCultural Center
(MCC) staff attempts to build upon the
work of our predecessors, and at the same
time adapt to new needs and challenges,
we felt it necessary to engage
more students than simply
the 40 or so each year that
self-select to participate in the Bridges
orientation program. Instead, we will
engage all incoming students by col-
laboring with the other EphVenture
orientation programs. In fact, without
the commitment and willingness of
these other orientation programs to
collaborate, this would be an impos-
sible endeavor. Thanks to them, we are
able to begin conversations about so-
cialization, identity and diversity with
all incoming students beginning this
fall. It is our belief that this collabora-

A newsletter dedicated to
social issues and critical thought

The need for an Asian American studies program

By ALLEN LUM '12
Contributing Writer

Earlier this year, a group of students
met up with each other and discussed
the reasons why Williams College did
not have an academic concentration
for Asian American studies. The field
had started in the 1960s, in the height
of the Civil Rights movement, in which
the movement for ethnic studies gained
traction at universities and colleges, es-
pecially at the country's most prestigious
institutions. The perennial question for
us, then, was why there was no such pro-
gram here, when our peer institutions
had established theirs years ago. Stanford,
the University of California system, Y ale,
Northwestern all have some incarnation
of Asian American Studies, be it a minor
or concentration. What about Williams?
If Williams claimed that it was dedi-
cated to issues of diversity and was
invested in the development of ethnic
studies, why did it not demonstrate the
same level of commitment to establish-
ing Asian American Studies? It took
student activism to bring to campus
two professors whose work focused
in the field: Dorothy Wang and Scott
Wong. Aside from the courses that they
teach, however, the discipline endures
an untenable existence at the College.

For one, students wishing to craft a "con-
tract major" cannot go beyond the cours-
es that both professors teach, as there are
barely enough classes to fulfill the criteria
for a concentration, let alone a major. The
nearest schools that offer more substanc-
tial classes related to the field require an
hour or two commute, which for many
students, is unsustainable and unproduc-
tive. Secondly, any one of the two current
Asian American studies professors can
take a sabbatical, which leaves the other
shouldering the burden of classes. What's
worse, both professors may take a leave of
absence simultaneously, leaving students
no classes in the topic to enroll in.

To give this burgeoning discipline
more structural footing, students band-
ed together and mustered a coalition
(aptly titled the Campaign for Asian
American Studies) to establish an aca-
demic concentration so that Williams
can expand its curriculum and reaf-
rm its mission to the liberal arts. In
the process, however, students encountered
resistance from members of the student
body, faculty and administration alike.
Some responded that Asian Ameri-
can Studies is a separatist field of study
and further contended that the College
should not create a new major or aca-
demic program only because students
are passionate about that field of study.

Others argued that the discipline
was antithetical to the Williams model
of education, but as an opinion piece
in the Williams Record rebutted, Asian
American Studies "does not take away
from our broader understanding of the
American experience, but rather adds a
richness and complexity that is often
missed, as the history of Asian Ameri-
cans is continually marginalized." (Not
so narrow after all," March 14, 2012).

The history and experiences of
Asian Americans has often been ign-
nored by U.S. politics, as if they did
not exist among the national main-
stream. This is a primary reason why
the Campaign for Asian American
Studies has been fighting, to rectify
the political and historical injustices
of stigmatization. By meeting with the
deans and faculty, we hope that a
committee for designing this program
can materialize by the end of the year,
or at least the beginning of next fall.

In the process, we want to empha-
size that Asian American studies is
not an outlet for Asian Americans to
vent their frustrations, but an educa-
tional opportunity for others to un-
derstand a different kind of American
narrative than what they are accus-
tioned to. This is the banner under
which students are appealing to the
College administration. The College
should be responsible for infusing the
curriculum with wider breadth of ac-
demic inquiry. It owes this to the stu-
dents, and its students have the right
to intellectual pursuit. To deny them
this would run counter to everything
Williams claims to stand for.
Desiree Daring recently attended the Clinton Global Initiative Conference at George Washington University in Washington, D.C., where she and other undergrads from around the country took time to brainstorm ideas for social change and network with those who are already realizing their ability to change the world.

What is your personal connection to this conference?

I wanted to attend the conference because I have ideas about how I am going to change the world. I submitted my proposal to implement a course in schools nationwide, maybe even worldwide, focusing on looking at everyone's superficial differences. I am going to change the world. The conference was for young people who are going to accomplish that goal. There, I was right at home.

What social/global issues were discussed and in what context? How were these issues framed in a way that college-aged students and young individuals are able and encouraged to affect change?

The first day I was there, I was checked in and attended a meet-and-greet with other young people who had similar interests. We all submitted our proposals, called Commitments-To-Action, in one of five categories: Education, Peace and Human Rights, Environment and Climate Change, Poverty Alleviation, and Public Health. From the mixer on Friday evening to the community service project many of us participated in on Sunday, there was time to mingle and get to know how other people are bettering the world around them. During the panel discussions, we would hear the stances of four people accomplished in a particular topic. Then we would have the opportunity to ask questions and even mingle with the people in the panel: people who ranged from famous actresses to dignified professors.

The meetings were more intimate – a group of 20 young adults met with a dignified guest in any of one of the five areas for a question-and-answer session. These panels and meetings allowed young adults to find out how those sitting before them got started in their current endeavors, what obstacles they faced and continue to face, and generally how awesome it is that there are young people like us who understand that the world needs to be rectified.

What is your personal connection to this conference? Describe your interest in the subject matter?

Never give up on something you feel is important, always be able to ask for help, use others’ mistakes to dodge your own, network with those who have accomplished what you are aiming for, continue to express the importance of bettering the world to your surrounding communities – at home, at school, at work.

What global issue do you believe the Williams community needs to better understand?

The importance of food. At Williams, we have a number of community service opportunities for people to become easily involved in saving a life by saving food. For example, we have WRAPS, which delivers leftover food from dining halls so it doesn’t go to waste. Something as simple as that could save a life, or allow a child to go to bed with a decent dinner. So many Ephs don’t know about these chances to give back, or they are too bogged down with work. I believe if every Eph cared just a little more about others and saw community service as a chance to better others rather than a chore that needed to be done, our surrounding community would be a better place.

What prompted you to attend this conference? Describe your interest in the subject matter?

I attended the East Coast Chicano Student Forum conference a couple of weeks before, and I met a lot of wonderful people there. There were some people at the conference that were of other Latino descent, and I figured that as a Mexican-American trying to build solidarity with other Latinos on campus, I would check out the conference and learn more about Dominican culture and identity.

I understand that the conference covered a wide array of social issues, including politics. What specifically was discussed?

“No one needs to justify their identity. Now is not the time to push each other away, but to become closer and create solidarity.”

I was just elected Events Coordinator for VISTA, the Latina/o and allies organization on campus, and I hope to help bring to light the differences and similarities between ethnic groups within the Latino community and other minority communities. I really want to coordinate with other MinCo subgroups, because while we all have our different histories and identities, there is a lot of overlap and I think it would honestly be a beautiful thing to see so much more collaboration.
What makes up a Williams education? The entry system, tutorials, Mountain Day? More formally, Williams requires all Ephs to complete 9 divisional requirements, two writing intensive classes, one quantitative course and one class designated as part of the Exploring Diversity initiative, or EDI. The EDI requires all students to take at least one class during their four years at Williams which specifically promotes a self-conscious and critical engagement with diversity.

While many students complain about fulfilling these requirements, they recognize the importance of each to a liberal arts education, except for EDI. Ever since replacing the People’s and Cultures requirement in 2008, the exploring diversity initiative, has garnered much criticism and many students have called for its removal from the curriculum.

Removing the EDI requirement would not only weaken the Williams education but also demonstrate that, as an institution, Williams does not value the complex issues surrounding diversity. Almost all of Williams’ peer institutions, such as Harvard, Yale, Middlebury, Pomona, Dartmouth, and Princeton feature a diversity requirement.

As a white woman from the suburbs – you might wonder who am I to talk about diversity? I rarely consider how my accent or skin color or religion influences how other people view me. I have never felt marginalized or disempowered due to my identity. But overall this ignorance detracts from my education and that of my peers. To succeed in the increasingly diverse workforce and globalized world, we all need to be able to engage with diverse cultures. To benefit from a liberal arts education we must be able to comprehend perspectives different from our own.

What do I know about diversity? Very little. That is why we have the Exploring Diversity Initiative.

Still though, many students insist that they don’t learn anything about diversity in their EDI course while others argue that EDI detracts from the main subject of the class. Students critique the restrictive nature of EDI and insist that it be dissolved.

But even these valid concerns focus on structural issues with EDI, not its overall goal. The solution to these challenges is not to remove EDI but to fix it.

In light of the hate crime in November and the homophobic slur recently etched on a Brooks dorm room door, it is especially important that Williams demonstrate its institutional commitment to diversity.

With students hailing from 59 different countries all 50 states, experts on subjects ranging from Dou Donggo Law to nanosphere lithography and an annual operating budget of $207 million, Williams has the resources to revamp EDI.

What do I know about diversity? Very little. That is why the Exploring Diversity Initiative should remain a part of the Williams education.
“Words of advice to seniors: Amidst the stress of preparing to graduate and make it in ‘the real world,’ don’t forget to cultivate the friendships that will sustain you in your tough final year and last far beyond Williams.”

- Oriana McGee ’12

“Don’t assume anything about anyone. You never know who will turn out to have the biggest influences on your life (for better or for worse)”

- Kimmy Sanders ’12

“Words of advice to seniors: Amidst the stress of preparing to graduate and make it in ‘the real world,’ don’t forget to cultivate the friendships that will sustain you in your tough final year and last far beyond Williams.”

- Oriana McGee ’12

“Coming from a school on a Navajo reservation I’ve never been surrounded by such highly motivated, inspiring, and hopeful people.

Take advantage of every opportunity you have to learn. The students here are amazing resources for knowledge. Advice for incoming freshmen? No matter how hard it gets, just keep going. You are not an imposter. You deserve to be here just as much as anyone else and you have something to teach the rest of us.

Shout out to Liliana Rodriguez. You make this campus a better place and all the years of advice you have given me have helped me learn more about myself and this place than probably any classroom or person has so far. Thank You!”

- Jeanette Rivera ’12

“What I appreciate most about coming to Williams is meeting amazing people and friends who I know will be around for life! Other than that, it has been a serious waste of time. Advice for next year’s seniors: join a bunch of new extracurriculars! I joined the Gospel Choir and the Telos. Shout out to both!”

- Sydney Pitts-Adeyinka ’12

François Hollande was elected president of France on Sunday, winning over incumbent conservative Nicolas Sarkozy and becoming the first socialist to take the presidency in 17 years.

Hollande beat Sarkozy with 51.7 percent of the vote in a highly contested election that was largely marked by citizen anger over economic crisis that has been affecting almost a dozen other European leaders since 2009.

The new French president is expected to encourage economic growth and major tax reform.

Outside Williams

By BRIAN THOMAS ’12
Contributing Writer

In the wake of yet another hateful event that has taken place at my school, I have felt the need to add my two cents. Someone thought it was appropriate to scratch the word “fag” into the door of a fellow Eph. This time I was not the direct target of this act, as I do not identify as queer. I must admit that my heart hurts much less than it did in November. At first I was dismayed and I was trying to figure out why I did not feel so sorrowful. Was it because I can’t completely relate to what happened? Was it because it actually doesn’t matter to me? No, I now realize that my heart hurts less because when I was brought down to the lowest of low, I was saved by the love, affection, and displays of support of my Williams College community.

I feel that I need to repeat that: My Williams College community. I, personally, am sick and tired of questioning my right to be a Williams student. I am tired of questioning my existence. I am tired of having to be a spokesperson for minorities. I am tired of having to explain to people why I am passionate about the Black Student Union. I am tired of having to explain to people that I am a member of the Black Student Union and happy at Williams, as if the two were such foreign concepts. And lastly, I am sick and tired of watching people who have given of their time and themselves to create a beautiful Williams College community, some through extra effort and some through their mere presence alone, to have it all seemingly undone by the ignorance of one person.

So, as the names and faces of so many people pass by in my mind right now, of the many beautiful and truly wonderful people whom it has been my pleasure to meet as an Eph, I want you to know, we deserve to be here. This is our school, and the actions of one, two, twenty or two thousand ignorant people will not change that fact.

Senior reflects on this year’s hate crimes