**Why Are All the Asian Kids Sitting Together in Biology Class?**

*by Tara Tran, ‘10*

Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum’s national bestseller *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* discusses “self-segregation” as it has been observed among racial groups in high school populations and onto the professional world. Her sociological and personal insights allow individuals to initiate and follow up on their own discussion of race.

As my book group and I went through Dr. Tatum’s book, I found myself going back to an experience I had never thought twice about in terms of race. I am a first generation Asian American - my father is Vietnamese and my mother is Cambodian. I had never been so aware of my racial identity until I had come to Westmont, and while discussing with my book group, I was led to ask myself if I had

Continued under Biology Class, page 2

---

**Westmont College’s Commitment to Diversity**

**Based on excerpts from the Long Range Plan**

It’s been ten years since Westmont’s current Long Range Plan was presented to and adopted by the Board of Trustees. One of the eight priorities included in the plan is “that the Westmont community be creatively and energetically responding to the significant issues related to diversity—including both ethnic and gender diversity.” But why? Here are relevant excerpts from the Long Range Plan.

The Educational Challenge

One’s view of the world, including one’s understanding of the Christian faith, is profoundly shaped and at times severely limited by one’s own particular history and culture. Because of this, an important dimension of self-understanding and self-criticism must include being a community informed and enriched by thoughtful and intentional study of and interaction with cultures other than our own.

Continued under Diversity, page 2

---

**College Welcomes Moving ‘Black Boy’ Play**

The difficult life of author Richard Wright was the subject of a one-man play, “Black Boy”, performed by Charles Holt at Westmont’s Porter Theatre on November 1. The actor also gave a lecture given on November 2, called “From Dream to Reality: From Play to Purpose.” It was a collaborative effort between the theatre arts department and intercultural programs to bring the play to campus. The play was underwritten by ICP so tickets were free; the Theatre Arts department provided technical support, marketing and access to students in classes. Every ticket was reserved by students, faculty, staff and community members. On the night of the play we had a near full-house. Students who attended the play mentioned how they appreciated learning more about the author and his life and how themes of poverty, racism, resilience, and the power of words were still salient for their generation.
unconsciously made decisions based on my racial identity. Like the black kids sitting in the cafeteria, was I sitting with the Asian kids? No. But I was sitting together with them in Biology class - literally.

Here’s an anecdote from my second semester as a freshman.

Students were making their way into Porter Hall for the first day of General Biology, but the room was completely dark. While someone came to get the lights turned on, we wandered through the rows of seats. I blindly found a chair. Soon later, the lights switched on, the professor came in, and the lecture began. During one of my mental breaks, my eyes strolled for a look around the room, and the first thing I thought was, “How?” I had ended up sitting in a row completely filled with Asian women. Remember that this happened in the dark, and I might also add that it happened again the next day - also in the dark.

At first it was amusing. Then, as I began to think about it, I grew shocked, bothered, and uncomfortable. I couldn’t help cringing in my seat because I had never felt so “Asian”. At the same time I felt ashamed of my embarrassment. Since then and after the book group, I have been asking two questions: Am I myself because of the way I have been racially socialized? or Am I myself because of an individual will I have control over?

In other words, to what extent does personality mean “race-ality”?

I am no longer a biology major or on the pre-med track, but neither do I belittle any of those students who are doing so. I simply put out the two questions as a means for people - especially college students - to examine the choices they make. After going through Tatum’s book, I believe that racial socialization has no long-term positive effect. Racial socialization may yield positive immediate consequences, but it interfered with my personal decision in what I wanted to study. I am fine with people going to medical school. Being a doctor is a worthy responsibility, but I’m not fine with the idea that Asian equals doctor. I’m not fine with the idea that we may stick together with our racial group identity because it is easy and makes us feel safe. I’m not fine that racial socialization could completely change how a person like me became a by-product of self-segregation. It is true that coming together with people of the same race is empowering and valuable, but doing so on the premise of being exclusive towards others makes no improvement in race relations. This is why intercultural clubs are not exclusive. If they were, then they wouldn’t be intercultural.

So why are kids - Black, Asian, and any other race - sitting together? Perhaps it is because it is comfortable for us to do so. I conformed to self-segregation because it was easy. However, comfort doesn’t usually equate to challenge, and if challenge is what college is supposed to be about, why are we sitting together like this?

---

**Program Standard On Diversity**

**Commitment, cont. from page 1**

**The Rationale for Greater Diversity**

As a Christian institution, we have special reasons for celebrating diversity as an aspect of God’s creation, and for striving to create community out of rich diversity as an aspect of building God’s Kingdom in the world.

As a liberal arts institution, diversity contributes to a more interesting and more stimulating intellectual environment. To the extent that diversity of gender, ethnicity, class, etc. among students, staff and faculty brings together a range of perspectives on the world, it is valuable for stimulating intellectual and personal growth.

As an institution that is committed to preparing students to live compassionate lives in the world, and to give leadership both within and outside of the evangelical world, our commitment to diversity is part of creating an environment where students can be helpfully apprenticed in the art of dealing with diversity in constructive ways.

**The Aims of a Westmont Education**

Our world has increasingly become interconnected and interdependent, despite deep divisions and antagonisms. To prepare people to function intelligently, effectively and for the good in a world of global politics, global economics, and global communications must be one of the aims of a Westmont education.

Such an education can play a significant role in transforming lives and putting students on a trajectory that will yield, over time, graduates who are characterized by a range of valuable knowledge, helpful skills and positive attitudes-graduates with:

- Knowledge about the world in which God has placed them.
- Interpersonal competence that enables them to participate in dialogue, work with a group to participate in dialogue, and valuable knowledge, helpful skills and positive attitudes.

**Ethnic/International Student Enrollment**

**Fall Semester**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Native American/Alaskan</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Resident Alien</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>323</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| College Enrollment   | 1330 | 1347 | 1376 | 1379 | 1337 | 1340 |
| % of Total Enrollment | 14.5%| 15.4%| 18.2%| 20.4%| 21.8%| 24.1%|
On September 28, a lecture sponsored by Westmont’s history and sociology/anthropology departments and intercultural programs centered on the social issues and implications surrounding the skin tone of Asians. Author, scholar and UCSB professor, Dr. Paul Spickard, spoke to a room near to overflowing as students, faculty, staff and community members listened to his lecture, “Is Lighter Better? Skin-Tone Discrimination Among Asian Americans.” With self-deprecating humor and honesty, he explained and interpreted the issue and its implications for Asian American women.

Although he focused his lecture on how color and facial features are issues that shape beauty and acceptance in Asian American communities, he exhorted all women to reconsider and refute society’s standards of beauty, which are unattainable and damaging. Later that evening, students enjoyed hearing from Dr. Spickard over a casual meal where conversation flowed from serious to facetious, allowing for an easy exchange of ideas, perspectives and laughter.

A SUMMARY OF RETENTION/GRADUATION RATES OF FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS CLASS COHORTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort Years Included</th>
<th>Entire First-Year Class</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>White/Non-Hispanic</th>
<th>Students of Color</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>After 1st Year</td>
<td>Retention</td>
<td>87.7%</td>
<td>90.5%</td>
<td>86.4%</td>
<td>87.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After 2nd Year</td>
<td>Retention</td>
<td>78.3%</td>
<td>82.0%</td>
<td>76.5%</td>
<td>77.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After 3rd Year</td>
<td>Graduated</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Continuing</td>
<td>69.1%</td>
<td>76.6%</td>
<td>67.1%</td>
<td>70.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Persistence</td>
<td>73.6%</td>
<td>78.2%</td>
<td>73.0%</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After 4th Year</td>
<td>Graduated</td>
<td>67.5%</td>
<td>68.7%</td>
<td>66.8%</td>
<td>69.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Continuing</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Persistence</td>
<td>69.0%</td>
<td>71.4%</td>
<td>68.3%</td>
<td>70.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After 5th Year</td>
<td>Graduated</td>
<td>70.3%</td>
<td>74.3%</td>
<td>68.1%</td>
<td>71.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Continuing</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Persistence</td>
<td>70.7%</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
<td>68.6%</td>
<td>71.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After 6th Year</td>
<td>Graduated</td>
<td>72.5%</td>
<td>75.8%</td>
<td>70.8%</td>
<td>73.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: 1. Persistence is the % of students that have received degrees + the % of students still enrolled.
2. The four-year average was selected since this is the federal standard established by the I.P.E.D.S Graduation Rate Survey.
DIVERSITY COMMITTEE
2007-2008
Randy VanderMey, Chair
Miguel Aguilar
Chris Call
Beth Cauwels
Mary Collier
Toya Cooper
Julissa Delgado
T.K. Erickson
Michelle Hardley

ON THE WEB!
Check out what you can access via Westmont’s Web page on diversity:
www.westmont.edu/_academics/pages/diversity/
- Current and past issues of Across Cultures
- Diversity-related excerpts from the Long Range Plan
- The Annual Report on Diversity
- Information about Intercultural Programs
- Links to diversity in higher education Web sites.

Bookmark the site and return to it periodically to see what’s new!

ERASMUS LECTURER GARCIA ADDRESSES RECENT RACISM
An audience of 40 students, faculty and staff gathered in early October to hear Professor Jorge L. A. Garcia, a professor of philosophy at Boston College, deliver an Erasmus Lecture entitled “Racism as Vice: The Current Philosophical Debate.” Dr. Garcia presented his influential philosophical analysis of racism as well as a digest of the discussion, positive and negative, that it has sparked in and around the academy.

According to Dr. Mark Nelson, Westmont Professor of Philosophy: “Garcia’s account is novel, because it understands racism in the context of a broadly Aristotelian account of moral psychology as opposed to, say, Kantian rational principles or utilitarian calculations. On such an account, we cannot give a complete account of moral life without talking about the habits of heart and mind that underlie our actions, which the ancients called ‘virtues’ and ‘vices’. According to Garcia, we must understand racist actions as flowing from the distinctively vicious attitudes of individuals -- and not purely in terms of institutional relations, power relations, historical relations and so on. Predictably, this return to ancient categories -- and to an insistence on understanding racism in personal and moral terms -- has been warmly received in some quarters and has provoked vigorous disagreement in others.”

Program Standard on Diversity
Commitment, cont. from page 3

function of one’s context—are influenced by social class, gender, ethnicity, culture, and historical moment.

Discussion and Analysis of Issues. Students demonstrate the ability to bring the dimensions of social class, gender, ethnicity, and culture to the discussion and analysis of issues within their disciplines, as well as to discussions of broader social, cultural and political issues.

Formulation of Knowledge. Students are able to recognize that, while knowledge is not solely a function of social construction, any formulation of knowledge may be affected in important ways by gender, social class, ethnicity, and culture.

Cross-Cultural Communication Skills. Students have gained increased cross-cultural communication and adaptation skills, empathy, self-awareness, flexibility, understanding of the influence of context, social roles, and culture on behavior, and the ability to locate and evaluate information about other cultures.

Process of Making Choices. Students understand the process of making ethical, Christian choices within multiple cultural contexts, avoiding premature judgments.

Essential Christianity v. Cultural Peculiarities. Students have an understanding of the Christian church cross-culturally, distinguishing between what is essential to Christianity and what is peculiar to a particular culture.

Foreign Language. Students will have an appreciation of the advantages and insights to be gained from the study of foreign languages and literature.

Blessing of the Advent Wreath
Father, all powerful Lord of Light, bless our wreath of evergreens with its candles. May our Advent be a time of preparation. Help us reflect on the power of light to dispel darkness in our world and in our lives. Touch our hearts with the warmth of your love. May the increasing light of these candles brighten our minds and hearts to be steadfast in faith, joyful in hope and untiring in love, so that we are ready, again to receive in true peace, Jesus, the Light of the World, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

Veritas Book of Blessing Prayers by Brian Magee. (c) 1989, Veritas Publications: Dublin.