

RacEd

The Myth of Post-Racialism



Issue 1: Spring 2012

The aim of this publication is to empower readers and equip them with reliable knowledge to discuss issues of race on and off campus and to reinforce the academic legitimacy of the study of race within the Tufts community. We hope to do so by connecting the Tufts environment to the larger world; bursting the Tufts “bubble” by exposing the link between lived experiences here at Tufts and the academic theory and scholarly work that we have studied. We aim to stimulate informed conversation on campus by providing a base of knowledge and vocabulary that is accessible to all people on campus. We intend to serve as a forum for discussion that acknowledges the presence of race throughout every aspect of one’s identity and one’s life.

This debut issue of RacEd is sponsored by the *Voices Literary Magazine* through the Asian American Alliance, a political student organization. *Voices* is an annual publication that aims to capture the experiences and creative expressions of Asian American students at Tufts. Through collecting and distributing these creative pieces, *Voices* empowers and reaffirms the reality of Asian Americans everywhere. RacEd features key selected pieces from the 2011 - 2012 submissions to *Voices*.

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2012 Voices Literary Magazine

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Current Events

Overlapping Castles

The Controversy of Senate Bill 661

By Lura Long

In the 1700s, Sir Edwin Coke, an English politician established a man's right to his house and property as his "castle" free from outside influence and dangers. He thus birthed the Castle Doctrine, a principle guiding many U.S. state laws including Florida's controversial Stand Your Ground bill, rumored to be a key concept in George Zimmerman's defense. Though the principle does nothing to address domestic conflict, it sustains men's, and in recent times women's, right to protect what's theirs by any "reasonable" means necessary, including deadly force.

Since Sir Edwin Coke, the Castle Doctrine has broadened to envelop not only places of residence but also automobiles, businesses and most recently, public spaces. In 2011, Massachusetts's senator, Stephen M. Brewer, presented an addition to the state's castle doctrine on behalf of the Gun Owner's Action League entitled An Act Relative to the Common Defense or Senate Bill 661. The proposal is not one of a kind but represents a national Stand Your Ground effort. According to Senator Brewer, "quite honestly, we're American and we ought to be able to stand our ground. We stood our ground in Concord and Lexington and we seem to be losing that". Despite the fact that the Massachusetts's senate voted against similar bills the past four years, members are scheduled to have a decision on Senate Bill 661 by April 27th.

Under part IV, title II, chapter 278, section 8A, Massachusetts law already stipulates the rights of indi-

viduals to protect themselves within their "dwelling" against intruders as long as they "acted in the reasonable belief that the person unlawfully in said dwelling was about to inflict great bodily injury or death upon said occupant" or upon another individual lawfully present. It also removes the duty of "a person to retreat from such person unlawfully in said dwelling". Senate Bill 661, though similar in wording, presents a couple key additions. First, it extends the realm of protection to anywhere a person has a "right to be" located within including streets and parks. Second, the bill demands that said justified acts protect individuals from arrest, liability and loss of gun licenses.

Critics argue that the bill's wording abets disastrous public safety issues and leaves judgment in the hands of biased, subjective decision makers. Many commonwealth communities have risen up in opposition to Senate Bill 661. Most recently, state representative Gloria Fox joined forces with activists in a rally April 12th on Boston Common. They affirmed that An Act Relative to the Common Defense would disproportionately target people of color. According to Sam Sommers, Professor of Psychology at Tufts University, whether conscious or unconscious, biases cloud our judgment and race skews our "mental calculus". With bias thrown into the equation, most individuals, including law enforcement, will vary in their interpretation of threats.

Specifically, "respondents in a

study who first see a Black face are more likely than those who first see a White face to mistakenly think an ambiguous object subsequently presented is a gun. And participants completing a video game-like police simulation perform similarly, becoming more likely to mistakenly push the "shoot" button when an unarmed suspect is Black than when he's White." Therefore what may appear as a threat to one person may simply be a bottle of ice tea or a bag of skittles. Do individuals hold too many biases to be universally pardoned on the grounds of self-defense?

Proponents of the bill, comprised of bipartisan members of the senate, house, and some community activists, say no. The National Rifle Association urges citizens to vote for the Act Relative to the Common Defense and assures that "In short, [senate bill 661] restores rights to law-abiding people and forces judges and prosecutors to focus on protecting victims." Without the proposed senate bill, many argue that people will hesitate to defend themselves or others out of fear of frivolous lawsuits and legal liability.

Both sides of the debate are faced with difficult questions: Is there always only one victim to a crime? What happens to victims of racial profiling deemed threatening by socially conditioned individuals? If we are all entitled to protection within our "castles" and if they now include public spaces, who determines their parameters? Most importantly, what happens when our castles overlap?

Current Events

Are We Really All Trayvon Martin?

Good Intentions, Harmful Implications

By Kayla Hogan

Yes, we should be outraged over the killing of Trayvon Martin. Yes, we should be demanding justice for this senseless act. Yes, we should be taking a good, hard look at the racist society that bred George Zimmerman, the society in which we all live. But should we be chanting that we are all Trayvon Martin? No.

All around the country, people are putting on their hoodies and holding up their signs. These signs call upon the public to stand up for Trayvon and, more broadly, to stand up for justice. But what about the signs that read, “We Are All Trayvon Martin”? While I can bet that everyone holding these signs does so in solidarity, claiming that we are all Trayvon implies a very untrue sentiment: what happened to him could have happened to anyone.

Trayvon Martin was not killed because he was wearing a hoodie. He was killed because he was a Black male wearing a hoodie. If I, as a White female, insist that I am Trayvon Martin, I am ignoring the true reason behind his murder. I am ignoring the harsh realities of race relations in the U.S., and the turbulent and dangerous environment it creates for people of color specifically. George Zimmerman wouldn't have given me a second look if I had walked past him in a hoodie. And I wouldn't have expected him to. That's what being White in a White-dominated society means: not having to fear that what you wear or where you walk might get you killed. The same

cannot be said for people of color. This is the very real, very sad double standard in America today.

Acknowledging that Trayvon's murder was a racist hate-crime while simultaneously declaring that we are all Trayvon Martin is contradictory and unhelpful. Saying that we are all Trayvon implies that his Black skin played no part in his murder, which is clearly not true and does a grand disservice to the Black community and to all who strive for racial equality.

You see, we strive for racial equality because we know it doesn't yet exist. Each person who passed Zimmerman that day did not have an equal chance of being shot, a truth which disproves the notion that we live in a post-racial society. If our society were post-racial, if race truly did not matter, then Trayvon would not have been in more danger than anyone else that day. But Trayvon was in danger, because we do not live in a post-racial society. We all have some sort of racial bias, if for no other reason than by virtue of being socialized in America. Our parents, our law enforcement and the media all tell us whom we should fear on a daily basis. This information contributes to how we approach other races. And whether or not we agree that Zimmerman's actions were knowingly racially motivated, the racial bias was certainly present in him, as it is in all of us.

Of course it is important for White allies to stand up for Trayvon Martin. It is more important, how-

ever, that we realize that Trayvon was racially profiled in a way that we never would have been. No matter who we are, our White skin makes us non-threatening to the George Zimmermans of the world. And no matter who Trayvon Martin was, his Black skin made him threatening to Zimmerman and therefore a clear target for violence.

Saying that Trayvon looked threatening allowed Zimmerman, like so many others, to plead the “better safe than sorry” argument after killing him. But would he have pulled the trigger had Trayvon been White? Probably not.

At Tufts last year, a similar, yet less severe, incident occurred when a Black man carrying a wrench was reported to officials as a suspect individual carrying a gun. Concerned students put up posters around campus in the following days expressing how this was an example of racial prejudice. These posters made students ask themselves: would this “Wrenchgate” man have been reported had he been White? Probably not.

This “better safe than sorry” outlook may keep White people safe, but it actually makes people of color extremely unsafe. White allies need to recognize that they live in a much safer world than do people of color and are not in danger of meeting the same fate as Trayvon. We are not all Trayvon Martin. He did not receive equal judgment and treatment and that is precisely why we need to stand in solidarity.

Current Events

Justice For Some

Talib Kweli, *The Proud, Quality*

“August 4, 2001

A drunken police officer mows down an entire family in Brooklyn
The judge lets him go with no bail
It reminds us, of just how worthless our lives are to the justice system
I struggle, to explain the situation to my son, it's hard”

By Sophia Wright

Howell, Perry, & Vile: 2004

“Research has demonstrated that African Americans and whites have different experiences with the police. Blacks are more likely than whites to report having experienced involuntary, uncivil, or adversarial contacts with the police; to be stopped, questioned, and/or searched without cause or due process; and to experience verbal or physical abuse personally (Browning, Cullen, Cao, Kopache, and Stevenson, 1994; Flanagan and Vaughn, 1996; Harris, 1997).”¹

In a study of the sources of urban fear within gated communities in New York City and San Antonio, Setha M. Low states, “Whether it is kidnapping or bike snatching, Mexican laborers or ‘ethnic changes,’ the message is the same: residents are using the walls, entry gates, and guards in an effort to keep the perceived dangers outside of their homes, neighborhoods, and social world. The physical distance between them and the ‘others’ is so close that contact incites fear and concern, and in response they are constructing exclusive, private, residential developments where they can keep other people out with guards and gates. The walls are making visible the systems of exclusion that are already there, now constructed in concrete.”²

1. Howell, Susan E, Huey L Perry and Matthew Vile. “Black Cities/White Cities: Evaluating the Police.” *Political Behavior* 26.1 (2004): 45-68.

2. Low, Setha M. “The Edge and the Center: Gated Communities and the Discourse of Urban Fear.” *American Anthropologist*, New Series 103.1

November 19, 2011: Early on a brisk November morning in White Plains, New York, Kenneth Chamberlain, an elderly African American male, accidentally sets off his medical alert pendant. As is procedure, an alert goes out, and a police patrol arrives at Mr. Chamberlain’s front door to insure his safety. One hour later Mr. Chamberlain has been shot dead by one of the responding police officers.

After the police patrol had arrived at Mr. Chamberlain’s home and had confirmed his safety, after they had been told their services were not needed, after it had become clear Mr. Chamberlain was in no danger and was neither a risk to himself nor his neighbors, after all of these events and more confirmed that police presence was unnecessary, Mr. Chamberlain’s door was knocked down by the police patrol. Mr. Chamberlain, a 68-year-old marine veteran with a heart condition, was tasered and then shot dead.

Almost six months have passed and New York’s local CBS station reports that the family’s lawyer, Randolph McLaughlin, is still seeking “an indictment against White Plains Officer Steven Hart, who allegedly shouted the “N-word” before Chamberlain was shot and killed,” and against Officer Anthony Carelli, who fired the shot that killed Mr. Cham-
(2001): 45-58.

berlain.³ They also report that both officers “have civil cases pending against them over prior incidents.”

February 8, 2012: Ramarley Graham, an African American male age 18, is shot and killed in the Bronx, NY after being chased into his parent’s apartment by narcotics detectives. Though unarmed, Ramarley had been in possession of marijuana, and was attempting to flush some down the toilet at the time of his death.

According to reports from the New York Times, both Officer Haste, who fired the shot, and his sergeant Scott Morris, who also illegally entered the apartment without a warrant, have been stripped of their guns and badges and placed on modified duty.⁴ Ramarley’s family is fighting for more substantive action CBS reports, “they will hold rallies and marches every Thursday for 18 weeks to demand justice.”⁵

3. Metaxas, John. Lawyer For Family Of Kenneth Chamberlain ID’s Cop Who Allegedly Shouted Racial Slur Before Shooting. 20 April 2012. 27 April 2012 <<http://newyork.cbslocal.com/2012/04/20/lawyer-for-family-of-kenneth-chamberlain-ids-cop-who-allegedly-shouted-racial-slur-before-shooting/>>.

4. Goldstein, Joseph. “Police Unit Faces Scrutiny After Fatal Shooting in the Bronx.” 22 February 2012. The New York Times. 26 April 2012 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/23/nyregion/police-unit-faces-scrutiny-after-ramarley-grahams-death-in-the-bronx.html?pagewanted=all>>.

5. Mathias, Christopher. “Family Of Ramarley Graham, Unarmed Black Teen Killed By NYPD,

Current Events

Justice for Some *continued...*

In an article published to the Huffington Post website on March 23rd, Ramarley's sister, Leona Virgo, is quoted saying, "This is not just about Ramarley. This is about all young black men."⁶

February 26, 2012: Trayvon Martin, an African American male, age 17, is shot and killed by a neighborhood watch volunteer, while walking through a Florida gated community. As is often noted, Trayvon was unarmed and had been carrying a can of Sweet Tea and a bag of Skittles.

In sum, Trayvon Martin's case was not the first such incident recently, however it was the first to be afforded the type of national attention that decries injustice and demands swift action be taken against the perpetrator, George Zimmerman. But even so, it is only because Trayvon Martin's family has advocated for him that his story has made na-

tional headlines. If not for his family's persistence it is questionable as to whether the police department would have launched a serious investigation, especially considering that it took 44 days⁷ and nationwide scrutiny to eventually detain Zimmerman.

Similarly, the families of both Ramarley Graham and Kenneth Chamberlain have had to apply significant amounts of pressure on the justice system in order to ensure an investigation be made into the deaths of their loved ones.

In the name of public safety, three lives were lost over the course of the past six months.

In a homologous case back in 2006, Sean Bell, an unarmed African American male from Jamaica, Queens, was shot and killed by police outside a strip club on the night before his wedding. On April 5th the New York Daily News reported, "The fiancée of Sean Bell...has penned an

open letter to the grieving parents of slain Florida teen Trayvon Martin... Bell wrote that it has been 'a living nightmare to see another innocent young man's life senselessly taken away over his demeanor.'⁸

The deaths of Sean Bell, Ramarley Graham, Kenneth Chamberlain and Trayvon Martin are all symptoms of the social prejudice that has plagued our country since its creation. When it comes to justice for black men, it appears the justice system is sorely lacking. In law, the United States espouses sentiments of justice and fairness across race, but in action, racism continues to determine both to whom justice is given, and the price of procuring it. So the question becomes; can the United States continue to justify the lives that are lost due to unwarranted fears amongst both civilians and police?

Written in memory of those whose lives have been mishandled by the justice system.

Rallies For Justice In The Bronx." 23 March 2012. Huff Post New York. 26 April 2012 <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/03/23/family-of-ramarley-graham-killed-nypd-rallies-bronx-photos_n_1375281.html>. 6. v. 5

7. Associated Press. "Defense worried about Zimmerman's safety in Florida." 21 April 2012. USA Today News. Ed. Brent Jones. 26 April 2012 <<http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/story/2012-04-21/george-zimmerman-safety/54456272/1>>.

8. Caulfield, Philip. "Sean Bell's fiancée pens open letter to Trayvon Martin's parents." 5 April 2012. NYDailyNews. 26 April 2012 <http://articles.nydailynews.com/2012-04-05/news/31296407_1_nicole-paultre-bell-club-kalua-sean-bell>.

Talib Kweli, The Proud, Quality

"I already know the deal but what the fuck do I tell my son?
I want him livin right, livin good, respect the rules
He's five years old and he still thinkin cops is cool
How do I break the news that when he gets some size
He'll be percieved as a threat or see the fear in they eyes
It's in they job description to terminate the threat
So 41 shots to the body is what he can expect
The precedent is set, don't matter if he follow the law
I know I'll give my son pride and make him swallow it all (damn!)"

Racism 101

Post-Racialism

Post-racialism is the idea that society has made so much progress towards racial equality that race-based decision-making is no longer necessary, whether in law or in the social sector.

This ideology masks the important role race still plays in society and also aims to redeem whiteness from the past and current wrongs committed against other races.

Post-racialism leads to the full restoration of the power of whiteness because it allows racial gaps to widen without limitation. This view also leads to a reframing of racial inequity as failure on the part of oppressed groups, which obscures the systemic racism engrained in American society. This allows negative racial stereotypes, subordination, profiling, and more to continue.

There are four key features of post-racialism: racial progress and transcendence, race-neutral universalism, moral equivalence, and distancing move. Here are some examples of each...

Racial Progress and Transcendence

“We’ve come so far that race is no longer necessary to talk about”

This statement asserts that race no longer matters in society, but we can see that it does, even by looking only at articles in this publication.

Race-Neutral Universalism

“White people are a race too, they need protection as well”

Race neutrality, like the previous example, ignores the unequal power dynamic between white people and people of color and also discounts centuries of oppression.

Moral Equivalence

“Using race in any way is negative, whether to enforce Jim Crow laws or to uphold affirmative action”

Categorizing people by race to lift oppression is not the same as oppressing based on racial categorization. Under America’s racialized systems, it makes sense that we must use race-based policies to lift oppression. Colorblind laws and policies will only perpetuate the economic gaps between races.

Distancing Move

“We are in a post-racial society, so I don’t bother listening to activists and race theorists since their ideas are so outdated”

This is an attempt to create an air of intellectual validity around post-racialism, but it only serves to distance post-racialists from the large body of theorists, academics, and activists who discuss the widespread effects of race.

Colorblindness and Post-Racialism: There’s a difference

Colorblindness is aspirational in nature. Those who adhere to the ideology of colorblindness try not to see color so race will eventually go away. However, this merely masks the current systemic issues and allows them to persist. Post-racialism, on the other hand, is not aspiration. Rather, it revolves around the view that race no longer exists so there’s no point in discussing it.

Can't You See The Rain?

Enduring Racism and Waning Acknowledgment

By Kayla Hogan

When we say that we live in a post-racial society, we imply that race no longer matters. And if race no longer matters, then that means that racism no longer exists. So in this post-racial society that we're supposedly living in, there is no racism.

It is difficult to make such a definitive statement like that, but it becomes easier and easier as people start seeing fewer examples of racism than they once did. But just because you do not see racism – or more likely, do not interpret a racist act as so – doesn't mean that it's not there. And just because you are not the target of racism doesn't mean that there are no targets.

On the subject of race in America, a very wise professor once told me, "It's raining outside. You may have an umbrella and you may not be getting wet, but it's still raining outside." Using this metaphor, the people who insist that we live in a post-racial society must be carrying umbrellas. And let me be clear: this article does not serve as an attack on any umbrella-carrying individuals out there. Sometimes it's nice to be under an umbrella. Sometimes it's nice to just look down at your dry feet as you walk, pretending that the rain isn't there. This is the ignorance-is-bliss umbrella-carrier. He is actively choosing to ignore the rain around

him because it makes him feel better. (Please note that this article is written under the assumption that everyone hates rain.)

But there are other umbrella-carriers, ones who did not choose their umbrellas but who were forced by an outside source to carry them. "It's raining, Timmy! Take your umbrella so you don't get all wet!" That's your mother. She only wants the best for you, which does not include soggy feet. She also only wants the best for her house, which does not include a sopping wet child. So she makes you carry that umbrella "for your own good."

She is mainstream White society. She is mass media and some elected officials. She is the 1% and Eurocentric school curriculums. She knows that it would take too much tarp to protect the whole town from the rain, so she'll settle for protecting just you. But now you've grown up so sheltered from the storm that you've forgotten that others don't have umbrellas. The rain is pouring down on them, and there you are. There you are, denying that it's raining.

Targets of racism are getting drenched every day, but people continue to insist that it's not raining. They don't have umbrellas and they're being told that they don't even need them. Can you see how this discrepancy between what White society insists and what peo-

ple of color experience first-hand can begin to take a toll? Targets of racism begin to blame themselves. Or worse, they learn to ignore the rain.

When we say that we live in a post-racial society, we imply that race no longer matters. And if race no longer matters, then people of color are doing worse in school simply because they're not as smart. And they're living in worse neighborhoods simply because they didn't try hard enough. And they're working in lower-paying, unstable jobs simply because they're not qualified for anything more. But we all know that that's not true, don't we?

Today's inequalities are so clearly patterned that we can safely rule out pure coincidence. We can safely rule out the possibility that every person of color coincidentally has the same private troubles. Racism is not a private trouble, but very much a public issue that needs to be considered as such. It will be impossible to tend to the inequalities that stem from racism if we insist that they actually stem from an individual's failing and not from racism at all. Our first step needs to be admitting that race still matters. It is raining outside. It is everyone's fault and it is no one's fault, but it is raining. If you can't see it, it might be time to put down your umbrella.

Voices

A Mechanism of Color Change

The common chameleon turns white
in the absence of environment,
it doesn't understand
natural existence.

Why survive in this identity-
lost terrain? All dust and dangerous
empathy, that's what.
It mustn't spill into the cycle.

Does it gather green hues?
Sad, when all of humankind is
sad. There is
no integrity.

By Yun-Hee Kim

Media Analysis

More Fair Than Black

Race and Innocence in Entertainment Media

By Ellen Mayer

In Shakespeare's *Othello*, the titular protagonist is the well-respected general of the Venetian armies. He also happens to be black, a Christian Moore. Throughout the play, Shakespeare uses blackness as a symbol for evil and loss of virtue. So when one of Othello's colleagues wishes to defend the general's virtue he says, "Your son in law is far more fair than black." Later, when Othello comes to believe that his young wife is unfaithful he rages, "Her name... is now begrimed and black as mine own face." The equation of black skin with villainy did not begin with Shakespeare and it certainly did not end with him. There is a long and illustrious history in Western entertainment media, of casting people of color as villains.

Consider the recent scandal surrounding M. Night Shyamalan's film adaptation of the popular Nickelodeon TV show "Avatar: The Last Airbender." In the anime-inspired cartoon all the characters are Asian. In the live-action film, however, Asian actors were only cast to play the villains. This sort of blatantly racist imagery seems dated, like something out of a Cold War era comic book spreading propaganda about communist China. It seems, however, that American children still grow up with the notion that people of color should automatically be seen as enemies.

Enter "The Hunger Games," an extremely popular young adult novel by Suzanne Collins. The book depicts a futuristic society in which 24 children must fight to the death in an annual competition that is televised for the citizens' entertainment. Collins depicts Rue and Thresh, two of these 24 children, as dark skinned. So naturally,

the makers of the "The Hunger Games" movie cast black actors to play those parts. Some fans of the book, however, don't seem to be reading as closely as the film's casting directors.

After seeing the movie, one young man tweeted, "Kk call me racist but when I found out Rue was black her death wasn't as sad #ihatemyself." Another tweeted at his friend, "EWW rue is black?? I'm not watching." Though many are far more offensive, the most telling tweet is this one: "Awkward moment when Rue is some black girl and not the little innocent blonde girl you picture." Shakespeare put it more eloquently, but four centuries later the implication is the same: a black character cannot be innocent.

Sweet, trusting, and clever, Rue is one of the book's most beloved characters. Her eventual death during the bloody competition is the book's most tragic and affecting scene. It should be equally tragic in the movie but for some Twitter users it wasn't, simply because of the actor's skin color. Though they may not be forced to fight to the death for national television, children like Rue and Thresh die from gunfire every day in the United States.

Colorlines.com reports that in 2008 and 2009, 3,892 children and teens died from gunfire in the United States. A disproportionate number of those children, 2,320, were black. If readers of "The Hunger Games" were thinking statistically, then, it would be far more natural to picture Rue and Thresh as black children. Far fewer "innocent little blonde girls" are at risk to suffer that kind of tragic death in real life. There has been tremendous backlash against the Twitter users who openly admitted they care less about

Rue's death knowing that she is Black. Is it really so shocking though, when there is so little concern in American society over the disproportionately high number of black children who die every year?

Today the United States is making sense of another black teenager's death by gunfire. Trayvon Martin's death, however, shouldn't come as much of a surprise. If American readers of young adult fiction cannot accept the innocence of a black character in a movie, why should we assume that American police officers, jurors, or judges can accept the innocence of real people of color on the street or in the courthouse. When a community watchman spots a black teenager walking through his mostly white community in Sanford, Florida, it is only natural that he would put in a call to 911. Of course Trayvon Martin looked suspicious. He was black.

The central issue here is not whether this community watchman, George Zimmerman, is a terrible racist, nor whether Martin was actually violent or threatening as Zimmerman claims. The issue is that American children still grow up believing that people of color are not innocent. So long as this notion persists, there will be more Trayvon Martins.

In a recent press conference President Obama addressed the Trayvon Martin case saying, "I think all of us have to do some soul-searching to figure out how does something like this happen." Obama might have suggested that we monitor our children's television, movies, and twitter feeds instead, to see how the next generation of community watchmen are being conditioned to view their neighbors.

On-Campus Report

Asian American Studies Teach-In

By Erica Satin-Hernandez

Despite decades of struggle on behalf of racial and ethnic studies at Tufts in the form of departments for Africana Studies, Asian American Studies, Latino/a Studies, Native American Studies, and other such programs, demands for educational equity and representation at Tufts remain unmet. In protest of this continued need, the Asian American Alliance (AAA), the only political group representing Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders at Tufts, held the first Asian-American Studies Teach-In on Sunday, March 11th.

The teach-in was an interactive learning experience to teach students what Asian-American Studies departments look like at comparable universities and the importance of creating a comprehensive Asian-American Studies curriculum at Tufts. The goals of the teach-in, Lorryne Shen (AS'12) stated, were to raise awareness of the need for Asian-American Studies and demonstrate student demand, to "start an informed and continued conversation about Asian-American Studies and Asian America", and create a "generational commitment to robust Asian-American Studies, Africana Studies, and other race / ethnic studies programs".

"We're learning as much from you guys as you're learning from us", leader Alex Chan (E'13) said to the dozens of students of all races in attendance.

Asian-American Studies, as

discussed by the leaders of the meeting, is not the same as Asian Studies. Asian Studies focuses on the continent itself, while the field of Asian-American Studies has a diasporic focus, encompassing studies of the descendants of Asian populations and the current issues they face including immigration experiences and societal power dynamics within the context of the United States as the country experiences structural changes (or, just as importantly, the lack thereof).

The necessity of this program and the inclusion of Asian-American identity and experience in Tufts curriculum is clear, as between 15% and 20% of the university's student body is made up of Asian-Americans (not to mention international students who identify as Asian), yet the Fall 2010 TCU Senate Survey revealed that almost a quarter of all students feel that their racial and/or ethnic identity is not represented in the academics at Tufts. Appealing to the administration, the leaders of the teach-in noted that it is also necessary to keep Tufts competitive with comparable universities who all have such varied ethnic and racial studies departments.

It also became abundantly clear throughout the discussion that the individual benefits of programs like Asian-American Studies, such as an improved understanding of racialized power dynamics, extend to students of all races and are in no way exclusive to one group or

another.

The teach-in also delved into the history of Asian-American Studies in the US and at Tufts specifically. The first Ethnic Studies Department arose from three months of student striking at UC Berkeley, and student hunger strikes later protected the department from being cut in 1999. Here on the East coast, few know that Tufts created the Asian-American Center after a bias incident in 1982 perpetrated by fraternity leaders and members. There have been dedicated task forces at Tufts calling for and planning Asian-American Studies programs since 1997, but the failure of the University to follow through with this commitment to create Asian-American Studies is "not in the mainstream conversation at Tufts", said Diana Wang (AS'14).

It is not only the lack of student conversation but also the lack of the necessary programs discussed above that further post-racial views at Tufts. Without education on race and the issues that surround it, no conversations can begin and no social change can occur. Post-racial views turn a blind eye to the deeply-engrained and ever-significant systems of racial oppression in the United States, but perhaps the introduction of racial and ethnic studies programs at Tufts University would improve both student and faculty understandings of race and the oppression that continues today.

Voices



By: May Woo

The World Unknown

For Leslie Chang's Factory Girls

By Jacqueline Ngo

She looks just like me.
Simple little features,
Pale, delicate skin.
But behind those eyes is a world unknown.
Not America, but the foreign land.
The land of poverty, pain, and power.
Her hands, thin yet solid as stone,
Labored over and over again under the factory owners.
Incessantly sealing shoe soles hours on end.
Those lungs, small yet tolerable overtime,
Trapped in a condensed state,
Directly inhaling the infectious air of the industrial city.
That heart,
Betrayed by artificial affection,
But sealed shut by the motivations entailed by her expectations.
She lives by the second,
Working days and nights making barely enough.
Only to send her profit back home,
Where her family is waiting—expecting,
Relying on her service.
She lives in a world of seclusion,
Where she has nobody to turn to.
She forces herself to learn from her mistakes,
And has the mindset of moving on from the past,
Because she dreams of a flawless future.
This child,
So full of passion and soul,
Handles what I struggle to face so effortlessly.
She looks just like me,
But behind those eyes is a dynamic soul.
The way she lives her life so fully,
Without the support that my life depends on,
Is the reason why,
We are two worlds apart.
Hers, mine,
A world unknown but felt.

Experiential

Why I Am Racist

By Kearney Coghlan

I'm not going to lie and say that I'm not. Racism is much subtler than we give it credit for and isn't reserved for skinheads and the Klan; it's also found in progressive White girls from San Francisco.

Do I want to be racist? No.

Do I know myself well enough to see my own racist thoughts and actions? Yes.

For all the White people who don't use the "N-word" and think that all people should be treated the same, I'm going to level with you: if we keep pretending that racism is no longer an issue and that we have no part in it, we will always be racist. That is why I am going to tell you how I am racist and maybe you'll see some of this in yourself. Only then can we do something about it.

Here it goes.

I am racist because I assume that race is an issue for people of color, not Whites.

Because race doesn't even cross my mind until a person of color shows up.

Because I figure that I won't end up on the right side of the curve when there are Asian-Americans in my class.

Because when I think I'm being followed and I turn around to see a White man, I am relieved.

Because approaching a person of color is harder for me than approaching a White person.

Because I'm impressed by interracial couples.

Because I thought a rap group was less "legit" for being all-White.

Because I dressed up as an "Indian" for Halloween a few years ago, which involved feathers, moccasins, and a sexy leather fringe dress.

Because I would never assume that there is a "White perspective," but it seems reasonable to ask for the "Latino perspective."

Because I never imagine my husband being anything but White.

Because I laugh at jokes that are based on years of racist stereotypes and the subjugation of people of color.

We can stop pretending that we're in a "post-racial society" because it's just not true. Race still informs all aspects of our lives. The problem is how to recognize race, but change racist practices. This is going to mean catching myself when I have these thoughts, the obviously racist ones and the more subtle, and standing up against the racism that I encounter. But it's going to be a lot easier if we talk about it, not in the confiding tones between White people when people of color aren't around, but openly and with a willingness to look at ourselves.

Hello, I'm Kearney. I am White. I grew up in a community that loved to talk about diversity without having much of it. I know all sorts of stereotypes about people of color, and sometimes these are the first things that come into my head. I am learning to see the patterns and the history that have made these stereotypes.

I'm still racist, but I'm working on it.

Meeting My Great Aunt

By Jenny Hu

The summer right before my fifteenth birthday, my dad and I took a trip to China. My dad wanted to see some old college friends and I hadn't been since I was two years old. He wanted to show me the parts of China he'd grown up in addition to many other famous Chinese landmarks, but more importantly was re-introducing me to my family whom I had not seen since I was a baby. I was not excited, and expected every introduction to be uncomfortable, as though I was meeting strangers to whom I should feel an innate connection.

Truthfully, I was pretty upset that I was getting dragged away from my friends. I felt like I would be missing big events, parties and trips. I was worried that all my friends would grow closer and that when I returned everything would be an inside joke I couldn't understand. At the age of fourteen, I was desperately seeking the approval of my peers and more or less ignored my family. It's not that I didn't love or care about my family, it's just that I didn't feel the need to spend time with them or bond with them in any way. It's funny how you can grow up and spend your whole life without truly

getting to know your parents as people. A child knows his or her mom and dad as a parent better than anyone else; what makes them mad or happy or disappointed is an open book. But I had never stopped to ask about the things that make my mom and dad happy as people, the dreams they gave up or never fulfilled, the disappointments and achievements they'd experienced in their career or otherwise. These were the things I had never bothered to find out. So I didn't really care about going to meet more of my family, but my dad was adamant. He said that it would be an important trip to take.

And so we went, leaving my mother and sister behind, to start an adventure. The first couple of weeks were mainly for travelling around the country. We visited the Terra Cotta Army in Xi'an and climbed the Great Wall. We stayed in the village where my dad had spent two years of his childhood. We went hiking in the mountains around that village and saw the most beautiful butterflies; some in colors I had never found in my crayon box with wings that trailed a body length behind them. If I could take this trip now, it would be

a tremendous gift and privilege. But at that time, I didn't appreciate any of it. I was more focused on how hot and humid the weather was, how dirty I was, and how unsanitary the bathrooms were. I felt as though I was sweating inwards because it was so humid outside; that my pores were plugged with sweat, but then how could my hair be sticking to me everywhere? I think that my dad knew how uncomfortable I was because he decided to cut the trip short and we went back to Beijing.

Our second day back in the city, we arranged our first family meeting. We were supposed to go to my great aunt's house for tea. I was anticipating the meeting being uncomfortable and boring, kind of like my dad's work luncheons. I wished that my dad would've made reservations at a restaurant so at least I'd have something to be doing other than sitting silently while they talked. Her home was the 15th floor of a big grey building that seemed to stretch never-ending into the sky. Most people owned a floor or half a floor that had 2 or 3 bedrooms and a bathroom each and called that their home. As we rode the elevator up, I could tell my dad was re-

Meeting My Great Aunt *continued...*

ally excited, not just for himself but for me to meet her. He kept asking me what I was going to ask her and what I wanted to talk about. This took me off guard because I really wasn't planning on saying anything. I wasn't all that interested in meeting a great aunt. She was a stranger to me.

When we got to the door and knocked, it opened almost immediately. My great aunt stood there beaming at us. She was a short woman with wispy white hair that seemed to offer no protection to the freckled scalp beneath. Her face had soft wrinkles around the eyes and mouth that only deepened the wider she smiled. Her eyes travelled slowly over my dad, whom she had not seen in 20 years, and came to rest on me. She smiled wider and looked at me as though I was a long lost child. She wore the expression a mother might have when reunited with a child she gave away in infancy. It was startling. I stared at the floor,

"hello nainai. How are you?" I shyly mumbled.

"Ah, xiaoxiao. It is so good that you are here." She said, sighing and pulled me into a hug. She smelled like flour and tea leaves. Chinese people are not known for being affection-

ate; most Chinese people I knew had a very large personal space bubble and rarely ever hugged people. She completely shocked me, but at the same time it was a wonderful feeling.

We went inside her apartment and sat down while she brought us tea. It was a tiny little place. It was one big room that served as the living room, kitchen, and dining room all at once with 2 doors that I assumed led to the bedroom and bathroom. I stared around the room, still reeling from the hug I received, trying to make sense of it all. The walls were white covered with paintings of mountains and calligraphy. There was an intricately designed bamboo paper screen that obscured the television from the dining table, but it was the photographs that caught my attention. There were photographs everywhere, all containing people. She had black and white photos of her in her youth standing outside a schoolyard with an armful of books - though they were more like grey and white photos because the ink had faded so much. She had photos of her and her husband on their wedding day, posed with the rest of their family, and one taken at their daughter's wedding. In all these photos, she is wearing that

same beaming unashamed smile she had given me five minutes ago. It was at the point that I realized someone I had never met before, someone who had no idea what kind of person I was, loved me. Loved me simply because I was a part of her family.

I had grown up in a world where people give you things because of what you give them. Everything is a trade. Not all in a material way either. If you were kind and trustworthy then someone would be your friend. If you helped someone, they would pay you back when you needed the help. Nothing was free. My great aunt showed me the purest kind of love-something I had only been given from my parents. It was during this trip, at this moment, that I began to fully appreciate my family. In the later years of my life, I put in much more effort in getting to know not only my parents but my aunts and uncles and cousins and grandparents. I spent time talking and learning from my grandparents and spent time listening to my cousins talk about their lives. And when I needed help, or was feeling bad, I was always comforted knowing I had people who would support me no matter what.

Want to get involved?

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By: May Woo