

Nov. 1, 2007

Dear Mount Holyoke Community:

A few weeks ago four articles in the Mount Holyoke News were catalysts for new dialogues about race and racism on our campus and in the world.

The first week's responses included the planning and facilitation of separate caucuses for students of color, white students, and multi-racial students that brought out more than 300 members of our student body. Because of strong requests from each of these caucuses, last week an all-student forum was held in Chapin Auditorium to continue the dialogue. More than 200 students attended this forum and made it clear that more in-depth discussion and education in a variety of venues is both needed and desired.

While some might view the events of the past two weeks as cause for concern, we view them as springboards for growth in our long-term and continued efforts to eradicate institutional racism and all of its vestiges at Mount Holyoke. Indeed, as the Presidential Commission on Diverse Community Report acknowledged two years ago:

*Despite impressive efforts and achievements, many ALANA students feel alienated and under supported. In this context, the cyclical re-emergence of similar concerns made clear to the [Diverse Community] Commission that dusting off familiar responses would not sufficiently address the issues that students have raised. Particularly because it is painfully aware of the oppression and racism that characterize our society, the Commission aspires to break the grip of those structures on our own shared aspirations and sense of community. In order to bring about the long-range effects that we aspire to, we need to create fundamental change. The fact that we are working from a position of strength – the strength of our historical efforts and achievements – and not in a climate of crisis suggests that we can afford to seek solutions that address underlying causes and not just their symptoms. To this purpose the Commission returned to the College's fundamental mission of educating "a diverse community of women at the highest level of academic excellence.*

We believe we are working from a position of strength here at Mount Holyoke, but also know that we still have much work to do. To that end, we are committed to developing both short-term and long-term plans for how we will continue to address issues of institutional oppression, including racism and white privilege, with the goal of eventually becoming an anti-oppression institution.

Below is a list of resources for all who are eager to enter the conversation. This is just a beginning list. We encourage your ideas and participation. Please know that the Inclusiveness Fund, administered by the MCCL, invites and funds projects submitted by students, staff, and faculty that help to forward the goals we have set for ourselves as a diverse community. Invitations for the next cycle of proposals will be distributed next week, and you can find out more at <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/offices/dcoll/mccl/Inclusiveness.shtml>

We're all in this together and we look forward to our individual and collective growth.

Sincerely,

Joanne V. Creighton, President

Gladys G. Moore, Director of Diversity and Inclusion