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Diversity Center

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at the center



Universal Human Rights Month

By Mimi Gerstbauer

On December 10, 1948, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of

Human Rights (UDHR). In celebration, December 10 has been named Human Rights Day worldwide. The UDHR is rather like a “Bill of Rights” to the charter of the United Nations, since the charter itself, like the U.S. constitution, does not list rights.

The declaration passed by a vote of 48 to 0, uniting very politically diverse regimes. This in itself is a strong argument in favor of the universalism of these rights—that all people and cultures agree on them and value them. In fact, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has been awarded the Guinness World Record for “Most Translated Document”!

At the same time, the achievement of the human rights itemized in the document is still more of an aspiration than a reality, and the declaration itself has no enforcement power. Even the U.S., which enjoys many freedoms, does not uphold all of these rights. Article 5 notes that “No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment.” Article 23 says that there is a right to equal pay for equal work, and Article 24 promotes the idea of periodic holidays with pay. The United States is also in rather poor company with the likes of Sudan and Iran in failing to join in some other major international human rights treaties, such as the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Some argue that the law is meaningless unless people follow it or unless it is enforced. So, is the universal declaration just a piece of paper to be ignored? Raphael Lemkin, a Polish lawyer who single-handedly campaigned for the creation of a category of crime called “genocide,” has argued that you must BUILD the law. The first conviction for a crime of genocide came 50 years after it was outlawed. A piece of paper, even with worldwide support, doesn’t stop anyone from abuse, but it is the first step. And a remarkable one at that.

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Higher Ground

diversity center newsletter

organizational focus

Zeta Chi Phi Multicultural Sorority, Incorporated

Have you ever notice a confident lady walking around campus with a baby blue and black jacket? Or hear a high pitched call-and response-sound? Well, if so, chances are you've crossed paths with a few lovely ladies better known as Zetas—Zeta Chi Phi Multicultural Sorority, Incorporated. Zeta Chi Phi was founded on January 30, 2003. This women's sorority is determined to promote cultural awareness, support our sisters, and educate our communities about diversity. We stand for multiculturalism, education, democracy, integrity, community service, and loveliness.

As one of the smaller sororities on campus, we embrace all sisters while forming close bonds with our community. These bonds eventually carry over into lifelong friendships. Many of the women in this organization thought they would never be in a sorority, but recognized that Zeta Chi Phi was unique in its history, past struggles, and ability to combat challenges head on. Zetas firmly uphold to a zero-tolerance policy toward hazing. We believe that all people should be treated with respect and dignity. We embrace women of all backgrounds and combine the heritage of traditionally white and black sororities with new traditions. Each year the Zetas add lovely ladies willing to challenge themselves, strive for excellence, and commit to developing the organization to its full potential. We do not rely on the number of ladies that join our organization, but rather the quality of the person for who they are and what they can bring to the sisterhood.

As a sisterhood we have grown and developed significantly since the fall of 2004 when Zeta Chi Phi Multicultural Sorority was first recognized in the Gustavus Greek community. Nevertheless, we work hard to earn the letters ZXΦ worn across our chest as a sign that we have persevered toward success. Today, Zetas recognize that when we walk around campus we not only represent our sorority with pride, but also the College and the core values it was founded upon. This year, Zetas successfully finished the pledge process and are working on expanding the national organization by starting interest groups, colonies, and new chapters. So next time you see baby blue and black jackets, wave and say hi to the lovely women of Zeta Chi Phi.

department focus

Counseling Center: Mindfulness Meditation

By Stacey Gerken

If we were to stop and observe our minds, we would notice that our thoughts are very busy, always shifting, never static, and often focused in the past and on the future. In fact, our minds are often so busy that we become unaware of the present, what is happening here and now. Have you ever sat down to study only to have your mind wander to thinking about a future assignment or an argument you had with a friend? Have you ever walked or driven somewhere and don't remember how you got there? We live life on automatic pilot, missing the moments that make up our lives. The busyness of our minds contributes to stress, anxiety, depression, burn-out and discontent.

Mindfulness is being aware of living the moments of our lives. It is paying attention to what we are doing and with whom we are doing it. Being mindful is a way to quiet the inner busyness of our minds to find calm, peace, and self-acceptance. We can learn to observe what our minds are up to without getting caught up in it.

Mindfulness can be cultivated through different practices of meditation. An informal meditation might be bringing intentional awareness and presence to a task we do mindlessly every day—for example, as we walk across campus, allowing ourselves to be aware of the sights, the sounds, the smells, and the people around us rather than thinking about our destination or what else we have to do that day. More formal meditation practices include breath meditation, walking meditation, body scan, and guided imagery meditation. Mindfulness practice has been shown to help manage chronic and acute pain and emotions, decrease anxiety and depression, improve sleep quality and eating habits, manage stress, and decrease fatigue.

The Counseling Center offers a mindfulness seminar every semester. The seminar runs 4–5 weeks presenting information on the different meditation practices with opportunities for practice and discussion. All students are welcome. Look for posters and announcements in the spring semester.

For more information on the Mindfulness seminar, contact Stacey Gerken in the Counseling Center, Johnson Student Union, Room 204, at 507-933-7027.



student profile



“Always keep an open mind and a compassionate heart.”

Phil Jackson

Hamada Omar

I am a business management major with a minor in geography. Outside of the classroom, I am involved with the Gustavus football team, Pan Afrikan Student Organization (PASO; president), and Tau Psi Omega (Reds) and have participated in many other community service opportunities. Gustavus Adolphus College is a place I can call home. My experiences in college have provided me with a lifetime of infinite memories. I believe that this school has turned me into a well-rounded person. I am from Minneapolis and attended Washburn High school, where there are different types of people and different personalities from many cultures; Gustavus has similar traits, but not as many.

This year, I room with six other roommates and they are all white. Each person has shared some traits about themselves that have affected my experience here at Gustavus. I am a person who interacts with others and learns from all of them, and Gustavus is a perfect place for me to develop some unique qualities. I believe that everyone should take advantage of the variety of things offered to them at Gustavus because it will help them in their future. I enjoy being involved in leadership roles and getting others involved with me. I will continue to try to affect everyone's lives in a positive way, and I expect the same from others.

Diversity means a lot to me, and working for the Diversity Center allows me to share and educate others about the Center and diversity issues on campus. You will usually find me working late at night, but I am always in the Diversity Center talking to people and playing UNO with students. If you're around, please don't hesitate to come in, say "hi," and introduce yourself. I enjoy being in the Diversity Center and I am glad I work there.

Diversity Events

Tutoring in the D Center

Writing Center Hours

Monday 7–9 p.m.

Tuesday 7–9 p.m.

Thursday 5–7 p.m.

Tutoring Hours

Monday 7–9 p.m. | Physics

Tuesday 7–9 p.m. | Chemistry

Wednesday 7–9 p.m. | Biology

Thursday 7–9 p.m. | Calculus

Faculty Office Hours in the D Center

Monday 12:30–1:30 p.m. | Lisa Heldke

2:00–3:00 p.m. | Martin Lang

Tuesday 12:30–1:30 p.m. | Brandy Russell

Wednesday 10:00–11:00 a.m. | Deirdre Rosenfeld

11:00 a.m.–Noon | Henry MacCarthy

Thursday 3:30–4:30 p.m. | Peg O'Connor

Friday Noon–1:00 p.m. | Thia Cooper

Mix It Up

Thursday, December 16 | 7–8 p.m. | Linner Lounge

Join us for snacks, games, and a few laughs!

“Mentoring for Student Success” Program

Monday, December 14 | 4:30–6 p.m. | St. Peter Dining Room

If you are a first-year student participating in the Diversity Center’s “Mentoring for Student Success” program (MSS), join your faculty/staff mentor for an excellent opportunity to get an insider’s perspective on study abroad.

Upcoming Zeta Events

Watch for advertisements about these events in the spring on Facebook and around campus. They will be events you won’t want to miss. Come out and show your support for the ZETAS!

Zeta Cafes — This is an open discussion to the public about a particular topic. In the past we have done topics like Privilege, Interactional Dating, and Sexual Violence Awareness. This event is generally held in the Courtyard Café once a month.

Zeta Step Show — This is a show filled with steps, songs, skits, strolls, and more reflecting the interests of the ladies and the history of Zeta Chi Phi. Last year’s theme was ‘80s hip hop and there was a wonderful turnout. We hope to make the Zeta Step Show 2010 just as successful.

Recruitment Events — Every year the Zetas make it a priority to recruit new additions to our sisterhood. We host recruitment events like bonfires and ice cream socials. Students can come and get to know the ladies of ZΧΦ and how the organization functions.

College Calendar

December 1, 8, & 15 | 7–8 p.m. | Linner Lounge

Meditation with Bhante Sathi

December 4–6 | Christmas in Christ Chapel

December 8 | 7–8:30 p.m. | Heritage Dining Room

Making Whiteness Visible

December 9 | 5–7:30 p.m. | Heritage Dining Room

Kwanzaa Celebration

December 16 | 7–8 p.m. | Linner Lounge

Mix It Up: Game Night

December 22–January 3 | Christmas Recess

spotlight on

World Watch and **Cultural Connections** are brought to you by the Crossroads Program. Through their shared interest in world cultures, languages, and contemporary global issues, members work to develop a broader understanding of the world in which they live and contribute to the education of the College community as a whole. Think Globally, Act Locally—The Crossroads Program.

World Watch

Honduras: President Won’t Recognize Vote — Ousted Honduran President Manuel Zelaya insisted he will not accept any deal to restore him to office if it means he must recognize elections later this month. This announcement was in response to the introduction of a U.S.-brokered pact signed by both sides that calls for a unity government and for Congress to vote on whether to restore Zelaya to the presidency.

Vatican City: Pope Pressures World Leaders — Pope Benedict XVI described the steadily worsening tragedy of world hunger on Monday after a global summit rebuffed a U.N. call to commit billions of dollars a year for a new strategy to help poor countries feed themselves. The meeting at the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization did unite nearly 200 countries behind a pledge to increase aid to farmers in poor countries.

China, United States — Obama calls freedoms ‘Universal Rights.’ Pressing for freedoms on China’s own turf, President Barack Obama said that individual expression is not an American ideal but a universal right that should be available to all. In his first presidential trip to Asia, Obama lauded cooperative relations with China but sought to send a clear message to this tightly controlled host country.

Afghanistan: Anti-Corruption Squad — Afghan officials have launched a new anti-corruption unit and major crime fighting force amid international pressure to clean up the government following the fraud-tainted presidential election. The Afghan government has been dogged by corruption for years and this is the third formal launch of a unit promising to rein in rampant graft and bribery.

Cultural Connection

December 12 — Constitution Day (Russia): A celebration of the adoption of the constitution of the Russian Federation by referendum on December 12, 1993, after the historic collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990.

December 12 — Saint Lucia (Scandinavia, USA): Named after a Sicilian saint, the Swedish Lucia legend tells of a famine in medieval days when Saint Lucia, as a glowing figure dressed in white, came across a lake in the province of Värmland, Sweden. She brought gifts of food to feed the starving people. Saint Lucia is not an official holiday in Sweden.

December 16–24 — Las Posada (Mexico, USA): Spanish for “the inn,” the festival re-enacts Joseph’s search for room at the inn in advance of the birth of the Christ Child.

December 23 — Martyrs’ Day (Maldives, Asia): Known as “shaheedhunge dhuvas,” locally the holiday commemorates the death of Sultan Ali VI as he fought the Portuguese with little support from the rest of the people. He died on the battlefield in 1558 and is today considered a national hero and a martyr.