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Diversity Center

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GUSTAVUS 
GUSTAVUS ADOLPHUS COLLEGE

Extraordinary People. Extraordinary Place.

at the center



with **Virgil Jones**

RACE: Are We So Different

Historian Robin D.G. Kelly says “[Racism] is not about how you look, it is about how people assign meaning to how you look.”

On April 14, 30 Gustavus students traveled to St. Paul and visited the Science Museum of Minnesota to tour the “RACE: Are We So Different” exhibit and view the IMAX movie “Hurricane on the Bayou.” And, they were treated to a special presentation after touring the exhibit. Through a joint venture with the Diversity Center and the Science Museum of Minnesota, the Gusties were treated to a session facilitated by members of the Penumbra Theatre Company, including T. Mychal Rambo, Sarah Bellamy, and Jim Craven. In this hands-on educational session, the students were invited to evaluate how they orbited social issues and explore their inner selves. This session included acting, sharing of stories, and conflict resolution role playing. It grabbed everyone’s attention and was the highlight of the event.

The entire excursion was rewarding and students came away from the event with a better understanding of race and racism in America. Several students were in awe of the scientific explanation of skin color and the genetic findings that confirm we are all more alike than we are different from one another. They also learned the impact that race has had on historical family wealth, property ownership, education, and other important factors in American history. ■

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diversity center newsletter

HIGHER Ground

“Defining myself, as opposed to being defined by others, is one of the most difficult challenges I face.”

– Carol Moseley-Braun



“Gustavus is not perfect, but it has taught me a lot. When I look at the person I was when I entered college and the person I am now, it only makes me more excited about my future.”

– Cece Sowemimo

Connect with the Larger Gustavus Network *coming events*

Gustavus has approximately 24,000 living alumni. These Gusties regularly connect with each other and the College. Many alumni are eager to assist current students in their career exploration. If you want to gain more information about different career paths, wonder what to do with a specific major, or know your career goals and want to meet someone in that field, consider contacting a Gustavus alum. To do this, first stop in the Career Center to access the Alumni Network—a

group of people who have already volunteered to help current Gusties. If you do not find a person that seems like a good match, contact the Diversity Center or the Office of Alumni Relations (x7511 or alumni@gustavus.edu) and the staff will explore other possible alumni contacts with you. These alumni really enjoy giving back to Gustavus in this way and students have enjoyed learning more about life after Gustavus and sharing Gustie stories. ■

Cece Sowemimo *student profile*

After four quick years, my graduation is finally here. It feels like only yesterday I stepped onto the campus, and then immediately began wishing that I could get off it as soon as possible and return to the South. I am from Georgia and I have lived there since I was two years old. I love the state because of its vibrant atmosphere and Southern hospitality. There is always something to do and that is why I shocked everyone when I came to Minnesota and selected Gustavus as my college of choice—since no one I knew had ever heard of the school. In fact, to this day, people still think I go to school somewhere in Montana or Idaho.

I remember arriving at Gustavus for the shock of my life. I lived in a very diverse area, and although there were more Caucasians in the area by percentage, it was not as apparent. In contrast my school had many white students in attendance, so I thought I was ready for Gustavus, but I was wrong. Though it was a rocky start, I have come to call Gustavus my home. Yes, I have experienced hardships on this campus, much of it related to race and the lack

of acceptance, but I have also experienced good times and I have grown as a person from my experience at this college.

I have always known that I had the potential to be a leader, but it was not until I had a chance to be part of groups such as the Pan African Student Organization, the Gustavus Cheer Team, Zeta Chi Phi Multicultural Sorority, Inc. and helped plan events like the Hip Hop Festival, Our Story Conference, and my sorority's national convention that I was able to blossom into the strong woman I am today and truly understand my purpose in society.

Gustavus is not perfect, but it has taught me a lot. When I look at the person I was when I entered college and the person I am now, it only makes me more excited about my future.

So what is next for me? Well, I will be working at Macy's North as a selling manager in one of its stores. After a year, I will be entering law school. Although I cannot predict what the future has in store for me, I do know that I will be an influential part of the future.

Watch out Oprah and make way for Cece!! ■

education department – part 2

The Education Department Goes Back to School

by Carolyn O’Grady & Deb Pitton

Another Reality, El Paso (Texas) and Ciudad Juarez (Mexico) form one huge metropolitan area separated by a “border” that is the thin trickle of the Rio Grande. We were housed in a simple store-front church. Our accommodations were modest (mattresses on the floor), and we were cooking for ourselves, but this gave us a spirit of solidarity that was important for our overall experience. In El Paso, our schedule included visits with community members who shared their stories of crossing the border and their desire for work and education for their families. We spoke with individuals at places like Annunciation House, where a safe haven is provided for undocumented individuals who have just crossed. We heard from legal agencies working to minimize the human trafficking that is rampant when national borders are tightened against immigration. We spent two days in Ciudad Juarez, visiting residents of *colonias* (poor squatter neighborhoods with minimal services), and learning about the devastating impact of *maquiladoras* (assembly plants) on the social and economic welfare of Mexicans. We learned about the mysterious murder or disappearance of almost 400 Juarez women since 1993, about the time American business interests exploded in the area. We met with religious workers and a doctor who are all working to provide solidarity and a better life for those living in Ciudad Juarez, and we talked with workers at an agency that advocates fair trade as a means of helping Mexicans make a living wage. Most importantly, we learned about the desperation of folks trying to get “to the

other side.” This lens provided us with “another reality” to contrast with our own daily lives. Much time was provided for reflection and dialogue about what we saw and heard, and we often talked into the night about our thoughts and reactions to each day’s events.

A New Filter. The final lens, “a new filter,” was added to our initial perspective. On our last day we spent time planning for what we will do individually and as a department in response to this experience. Our brainstorming resulted in three single-spaced pages of typed notes. Everyone who participated was profoundly moved by what we learned. Comments such as “It was life changing,” “How can I not respond to these issues in my classes?,” and “What can we do to make positive change happen?” were often heard as we de-briefed the experience.

Injustice in Mexico is a threat to the Gustavus core value of **justice** unless we help our students understand the “network of mutuality” that connects us. We have learned that our destiny this far north in Minnesota is deeply entwined with the destiny of our neighbors to the south. We have far greater understanding of why every day thousands cross the border—legally and illegally— and why many immigrant families find their way to Minnesota. We are reminded that most immigrants in our community are legal, and those who are not have stories we need to hear.

We are just beginning to unpack all the implications of our immersion. Currently we are

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“Now we know that if we buy a garment that says ‘Made in Mexico,’ it probably was made by a worker in a maquila who was paid almost nothing for her labor.”



Back row: Sandi Francis, Carolyn O’Grady, Deb Pitton, John Clementson, Sidonia Alenuma
Front row: Michele Koomen, Veronica Alba

OLAS

Orgullo Latino Association (OLAS) is a group made up of people who are interested in Latin American and Spanish cultures. The main purpose of this group is to provide students and members of the St. Peter community a way to learn about Latin American and Spanish countries through fun and educational activities and events. We kick off the school year in September with Hispanic Heritage month with activities during each week such as Loteria, a

organization focus

Mexican bingo-like game. We also bring dancers and performers in for seasonal events like Posadas in December, and Cinco de Mayo in May. This year for Cinco de Mayo we celebrated by having a group of comedians come to campus to entertain students. Mexican food and drinks were served as well. If you are interested in OLAS or have questions, e-mail Jennifer Tejada at jtejada@gustavus.edu or Isaac Regla-Breton at jreglabr@gustavus.edu. ■

Diversity Events

May 9
The Bhandavi Diaries

College Calendar

May 8
Big Partner Little Partner
Year-end Picnic

May 8
Meditation

May 8
Lindau Symposium, "Religion
in American Public Life"

May 9
Tempest begins

May 9
Internship Orientation

May 12
Pound Pals Car and Dog Wash

May 15
Meditation

May 16
Final Day of Classes

May 17
Book Buy Back

May 17
Reading Day

May 18
First day of Finals

May 27
Commencement

Student Organization Meeting Schedules

Diversity Leadership Council
MONDAY : 9:30 p.m. : Leadholm

Pan Afrikan Student Organization
TUESDAY : 6 p.m. : Board Room

Meditation with Buddhist Monk
TUESDAY : 7 p.m. : St. Peter Room

Crossroads Executive Board
THURSDAY : 8 p.m. : Carlson
International Center Lounge

Asian Cultures Club
WEDNESDAY : 5 p.m. : Walker House

Queers & Allies
WEDNESDAY : 9:15 p.m. : Womyn's
Awareness Center

Orgulla Lationo Association
THURSDAY : 7 p.m. : Office by the Dive

Womyn's Awareness
THURSDAY : 8 p.m. : Womyn's
Awareness Center

Indigenous Student Association
THURSDAY : 8:30 p.m. : Gustie Den

Students of Fostercare and Adoption
THURSDAY : 9:15 p.m. : Diversity Center

I Am We Are
THURSDAY : 10 p.m. : Black Box

Actions Supporting All People (ASAP)
SUNDAY : 8 p.m. : Diversity Center

World Watch and **Cultural Connections** are brought to you by the members of 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

Nigeria, Africa: Foreign Workers

Kidnapped—Six foreign oil workers were kidnapped and one Nigerian was killed by armed militants on an oil industry vessel off of the Nigerian coast last week. In the Niger delta, an increasing number of armed groups demanding jobs, benefits, or control of oil revenues have attacked industry facilities, kidnapped expatriate staff, and fought with security forces.

Cultural Connections

May—National Asian/Pacific Heritage

Month: Enacted Oct., 28, 1992. The purpose of the law was to honor the achievements of Asian/Pacific Americans and to recognize their contributions to the United States. May was chosen because during this month Japanese immigrants first arrived in the U.S. and the transcontinental railroad was completed.

May 23—Shavuot (Jewish): Shavuot celebrates the time when the Ten Commandments were given to Moses on Mount Sinai and is called the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost. It is celebrated on the 50th day at the end of Passover.

■
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in the process of establishing priorities and goals for the next few years. Because of our immersion experience, our department has renewed commitment to ensuring our pre-service teachers develop cultural awareness about immigrant issues and learn how to support non-native English speakers in their future classrooms. We stand with Dr. King as he asserts, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." ■