

inside

20

the lebrón-wiggins-pran
CULTURAL CENTER
***** as a *****
SOURCE for CHANGE



La Fuerza



The Literary Magazine of Bates
Fall 1992

Hampden
Amherst, Mass.



*They plucked our fruit
They cut our branches
They burned our trunk
But they could not kill our roots*



er to the
People





Naming the Lebrón-Wiggins-Pran Cultural Center

On October 26, 1989, SOURCE officially announced the name of the Lebrón-Wiggins-Pran Cultural Center. The center was named after Lolita Lebrón, Ronald Wiggins, and Dith Pran because of their contributions to the struggles of Latino/Latina American, African/African American, and Asian/Asian American communities.

Lolita Lebrón was an important figure in the Puerto Rican Nationalist Movement. In 1954, the movement made its final attempt to free Puerto Rico from U.S. colonialism through militaristic tactics. Lebrón and her compadres proclaimed "Free Puerto Rico Now," as they injured five U.S. Congressman. She was arrested for this action and spent twenty-five years in the United States as a political prisoner.

Roland Wiggins was a music professor at Hampshire College and a pioneer in the area of education for Black children.

Dith Pran was a survivor of war-torn Cambodia. He was the subject of the highly praised film *The Killing Fields*. Pran, with his unique perspective on the Far East and America, was a spokesman for Cambodian refugees around the world.

Melissa Scheid Frantz
Director, Multicultural & International
Student Services



Letter from the director

Often when I walk through the Cultural Center I imagine how many students over the years have walked through this space, how many students have held SOURCE (Students of Under-Represented Cultures & Ethnicities) group meetings...have planned campus events...have met to orchestrate a takeover...have sought a home away from home. The Lebrón-Wiggins-Pran Cultural Center opened its doors twenty years ago on October 26, 1989. For the last seven years, I have been the director of the Cultural Center and have been honored to be part of the history of this unique and complex place.

The gray building nestled in the trees behind the Cole Science Building was originally a faculty house. In the last nine years, significant physical changes have occurred – “new” carpet (yes, the blue carpet), “new” colorful couches (thanks COCD), a path that cuts through the woods to the paved sidewalk that leads into Prescott, and colorfully painted walls (when I arrived all the walls were white – boring!).

Looking through old SOURCE and Cultural Center newsletters and event posters, Dakin and Cole Sciencetakeover documents, Action Awareness Week documents, student videos, and talking with alumni, staff and faculty, I feel that one other thing has remained the same all of these years – a relatively small racial/ethnic minority population that has shared concerns related to academic and student life. The center has historically served as the keeper...the hands that have held the joy and strife associated with race at Hampshire. Targeted too often as the scapegoat for campus racial dissension; name-called with distaste as “segregating,” “white-bashing,” “exclusive”; misinterpreted, and generalized to unfortunate stereotypes, the Cultural Center’s spirit has always held strong because of students. It’s really just a building; however, these walls hold tears, secrets, frustrations, and truths of hundreds of students – of color, international, white/ American. It has been the students who have wiped off the dust of discouragement and outcast and then exerted their hopes, passion, commitment to social justice and community to each other and to the campus at large.

Sometimes I imagine what Hampshire would be like if the Cultural Center did not exist for all of these years. How would the discourse on race be like? How would multicultural students create community for themselves or how would the college foster community instead for these students? How would the overall student experience be different for multicultural students?

Over Hampshire’s 40 years, multicultural students have had shared and different experiences with race/ethnicity at Hampshire and with the Cultural Center. At the same time, the larger campus community (staff, faculty, administration, white/American students) have also had a range of opinions and experiences with race/ethnicity at Hampshire and with the Cultural Center. I am most certain that the Cultural Center has been a significant influence in how many students over the years have experienced race/ethnicity and in how the college has “moved forward” in its vision of creating a campus that fosters multiculturalism and social justice.

On a more personal note, my experience working at the Cultural Center has been incredibly invaluable. Everyone should feel like they can bring their whole self to work. Because of the students I work with, they’ve made this possible. I feel extremely fortunate that my daily work involves fostering community and social change. At the same time that it’s tiring and frustrating, it’s rewarding and fulfilling.

Happy birthday Lebrón-Wiggins-Pran Cultural Center. Thank you to all the past generations of students, staff, and faculty who have shared their hearts and souls for creating and maintaining such a unique and complex place.

Melissa Scheid Frantz



From the Editor

It is another year for the Lebrón-Wiggins-Pran Cultural Center and this semester, the first issue celebrating its anniversary has been published. It is the 20th anniversary and staff members, the director of the Cultural Center, current students and even alumni have shared their

experiences, concerns and appreciations to this space.

Like every semester, since 2008, an issue is published with a focus on a particular theme that complicates topics of identity, culture, politics, etc. This semester's issue speaks not only about the experiences students have had throughout the years at the Cultural Center or elsewhere, but similarly important, about certain accounts that have brought great concerns to the SOURCE community of Hampshire. As Joyce mentions in her letter to the

former President of the institution, "we consider ourselves the foremost allies of the students, faculty, and staff who remain at the College, particularly those who remain radical, progressive, and critical of power." Others, describe the struggles of getting funds for SOURCE groups. And of course this issue has a rich collection of stories and essays.

The Cultural Center wants to thank the students and alumni who have shared their experiences and thoughts with us and everyone else in this issue. I, as the editor for this semester's issue, am fortunate to be able to listen to the many voices in this magazine and undoubtedly content to be part of such, like Melissa points out, a complex place.

It is my hope that you all enjoy listening to these voices as I have, make you reflect and take action for what you believe is correct and just. The Cultural Center and its members have began the year with more motivation and desire to expand its name and its mission. Let us all come together to celebrate this space, full of life, culture and love.

Luis J. Vargas [08F]

Editor Luis J. Vargas | **Designer** Prateek Rajbhandari | **20th Anniversary button by** Parimal Satyal | **Cover collage by** Prateek Rajbhandari

Civil Liberties and Public Policy celebrates the Lebrón-Wiggins-Pran Cultural Center for 20 years of fostering community & social change

SAVE THE DATE!

From Abortion Rights to Social Justice: Building the Movement for Reproductive Freedom

24th Annual Conference for Student and Community Activists
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CLPP's annual conference connects young people to reproductive rights organizations and campaigns locally, nationally and internationally, and provides them with information, analysis, and "how-to" organizing to bring back to their own campuses and communities. The conference presents a broad view of the issues, linking reproductive justice to civil liberties, LGBT rights, environmental justice, peace and security, youth liberation, disability rights, access to health care and child care, and freedom from violence and abuse.

APRIL 9-11, 2010



A project of the Civil Liberties and Public Policy Program and the Population and Development Program



Cultural Trauma

Elora Pindell [08F]

My first Hampshire experiences were at the Cultural Center. I received an invite to the Cultural Center by way of ALANA overnight and honestly cannot remember anything that happened before I got there. What I do remember is letting out a deep breath upon my arrival. I did not feel that the people who were closer to my complexion finally surrounded me. Caucasians never made me

The atmosphere in the building was far friendlier than that of the people who were outside of it, smoking cigarettes. We all seemed to have the common goal of wanting to get to know each other and to gather information about what we all knew about the school. The atmosphere was friendlier and I felt comfortable for this first time in several hours. I felt like I could speak freely without an



feel uncomfortable, even though they had always before outnumbered me. However, people I did not know were surrounding what was disconcerting. My hosts were very sweet, but they were all older than I was and it was too soon for me to know them very well. Upon my arrival at the Cultural Center, I found myself looking at prospective students who were in the same position as I was.

awkward response. After some time, I went outside, where people were talking and smoking. Once out there, I met a girl who would later become my best friend. That afternoon at the Cultural Center only encouraged my desire to attend Hampshire College, so I sent in the money to hold my spot for the fall semester the next day.

My first experience made it seem as though

EXPERIENCES

the Cultural Center was a haven that could shield all the people of color on campus from the ignorance that can sometimes seem rampant on our campus. We utilize the Cultural Center as a place of tolerance. We go there when we want to be surrounded by friendly faces and people who we think have some form of our own struggle and can therefore understand us a little better than our whiter-skinned counterparts can. There is nothing wrong with wanting to be around people who you feel you know a little better than others do. I completely understand the need to be around people of color when you are a person of color. However, we should not think that because we are around more people who look like us, we are around people who completely understand our experiences. One of my most vivid memories of the Cultural Center proves that notion very wrong.

One night last year, a discussion about race took place at the Cultural Center. For reasons I cannot recall, I did not go. Once the discussion began, the subject of what it means to be an “authentic” member of one’s race came up. Apparently, someone thought it appropriate to use me as an example. I do not know who said it, or how this person felt that they were justified in what they were saying. According to this person, I was “not a real Black person” and one of the reasons presented to support this argument was because I had white friends. Upon hearing the news, I was both confused and somewhat hurt, considering the fact that the person who said it must have been someone I knew. I was far from being a student who was notorious for not showering or never graduating. This person knew my name, so they knew me personally. Moreover, what confused me the most was the fact that it happened at the Cultural Center. How could that have happened in the Cultural Center? I had always attributed it to a place of tolerance and comfort, and to meet with this rude confrontation was a stark opposite of my experiences of the Cultural Center up to that point. I walked around debating whether I should do something. The problem was there was nothing I could do about it. Because I did not know who

did it, I could not very well confront the person. Even if I did know who it was, what would I say to them? Was I supposed to walk up to this person and present proof that I was in fact an African-American? How the hell was I supposed to do that?

I realized that given the circumstances, all I could do was to get over it. What happened was no one’s fault. In reality, that there was nothing anyone could do to change the mind of the speaker. Once I put the event (somewhat) behind me, I found myself questioning why I was so shocked that it happened at the Cultural Center. The Cultural Center did not hold up a sign that guaranteed that all opinions would match while in the midst of discussion. The Cultural Center cannot protect me from the words of others.

I recognize that the Cultural Center is a building – no more, no less. Anything could happen in there, and there is no way to know who is harboring specific thoughts (ignorant or not). The only place that I could escape the negative thoughts of others was through my own self-security. I found that the only way to curb the feelings of anger and frustration would be to make amends with myself. I learned to be content with the fact that I know who I am, and that no one has the power to take away how I feel about myself.

I still love going to the Cultural Center, and I think that small incident only helped me to become conscious of my own abilities to keep myself sane, despite the unapologetic ignorance of others. I doubt that what happened will be the last time that something of that nature happens. I no longer attach my personal securities to the Cultural Center, but to my own abilities to cope. Once again, if the Cultural Center is your personal safe haven, there is nothing wrong with that. I simply found that it was a lot easier to find that refuge within myself.

20 Reasons to come to the Cultural Center

- SOURCE community
- Networking
- Comfort
- Safety
- Dialogue
- New L.W.B. CC Bench
- Study Nights
- Art Gallery
- Painting
- The Library
- Movies
- Historical Info about the CC
- Board Games
- Food
- CC Staff
- Meet and greets
- Events (PMP, Guest Speakers, we have events all the time!)
- SOURCE meetings
- Academic Support
- Fun

Career Options Resource Center

- * Internships
- * Jobs
- * Grad School
- * Fellowships and Grants
- * Career Counseling

All This and More!!!

Johnson Library, 3rd Floor * corc.hampshire.edu * x5445

LETTERS

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY HEALTH & WELLNESS

Dear Cultural Center,

Happy 20th birthday!!

Over my 4 years at Hampshire, I have had many occasions to bear witness to the importance and value of the Cultural Center's role in this community.

I have seen the Cultural Center as a place that welcomes, builds connections with, and supports students of color and international students, thereby creating an anchor or home away from home for these students. I have seen



the Cultural Center as a place that encourages and celebrates the achievements of students of color and international students. I have seen the Cultural Center as a place that provides a safe space for students to express rage, disappointment and frustration about their experiences of race and ethnicity on this campus. I have seen the Cultural Center as a place that speaks up against injustices, promotes dialogue and advocates for change.

It is my hope that the Cultural Center will continue these efforts over the next 20 years, joined and supported by the Hampshire community as a whole. I believe that a small step in this direction is the formation of the Community Advocacy Group, which is an alliance between the Cultural Center, Spiritual Life, the Center For Feminisms, the QCA and Community Health. I feel hopeful that this renewed collaboration will help us all to broaden our vision yet focus our efforts on our shared goal of promoting a healthy, vibrant, oppression-free community. Here's to an excellent 20th birthday year ahead!

Sincerely,
Jessica Gifford
Director of Community Health and Wellness

P.S. If you get bogged down and could use some rejuvenation, come and get a free chair massage at Community Health, or call a CA for support at x6998!

LETTER FROM FRANCISCO MENDOZA, CULTURAL CENTER INTERN

September 28, 2009

The day began normally at work in the Cultural Center.

During the day, the Cultural Center was very active. There were many students coming, going, and utilizing our resources at the center. From about 2pm-5pm, I was all by myself.

Around 4pm, I was feeling tired and needed some coffee. I decided not to go to the Hampstore and stayed at the Cultural Center, since I figured I was leaving in an hour. Then around 4:40pm, something unimaginable happened at the Cultural Center.

As I was sitting at my desk, I looked outside the window and saw a person video-recording part of the Cultural Center. My initial reaction was that someone was working on their DIV III project as previous students have done here at the Cultural Center. Then I heard a voice of a gentle man who was being filmed outside the Cultural Center. A couple of minutes went by and they both entered the center. They did not talk much and I could tell they were looking at everything we had inside the center: our space, the art murals, etc.

As I glanced down from my desk, I asked them if they needed help. At first, they said no, that they were just looking around. Then they asked me if I was a Hampshire student and I replied no. I said I was the Cultural Center Intern here but also that I was a graduate student at UMASS doing my doctorate in higher education administration. They

asked me for my name and I asked them too, and he said, "My last name is Wiggins, does it ring any bells?" I immediately put a big smile on my face and I answered that of course it rings many bells. He asked me why was I smiling and I just did not have the words to describe my happiness.

College.

I mentioned that he was the only one missing in our mural. He said that he kept forgetting to send Melissa a picture and I suggested taking pictures right away. Now it will be up to someone in the SOURCE community who loves art to draw him on



Francisco with Roland Wiggins at the Cultural Center

It was Roland Wiggins! He was stopping by the Cultural Center because he is working on a documentary of his own. He told me that it has been years since he last visited Hampshire, and that he was very amazed with the Cultural Center. He said that it felt great to come to a place where a building was named after him. He really liked the building, so I immediately showed him everything inside. I explained to him what SOURCE was, our Peer Mentorship Program, our murals, our winter clothes closet, our computer labs, our ASK conference, our programming calendar, the take over of Dakin and the importance of having this space. He was very proud and excited to hear everything we have done and continue to do for our community at Hampshire

our mural.

That was my typical day at work at the Cultural Center. You just never know when something like this can happen any day at any time. That is what makes the center so unique and I love it.

Sincerely,
Francisco E. Mendoza, Cultural Center Intern

Consider the world your campus

Did you know...

**...more than 1/3 of Hampshire students
study abroad?**

*Why do they go? Where do they go?
What kinds of things do they do?*

**...Hampshire Exchange programs span
six continents & over 40 countries?**

*What about Field Study? How do I find the right program for me?
When should I go? What's the best way to approach faculty to
discuss study abroad? How do I plan, research, and prepare?*

**...a semester studying off-campus can cost
similar to a semester spent
studying on campus?**

*How do the finances work? Where do I find additional
scholarship opportunities?*

Find the answer to these questions and more!

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**Come to one of GEO's weekly info sessions:
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An Open Letter to President Hexter

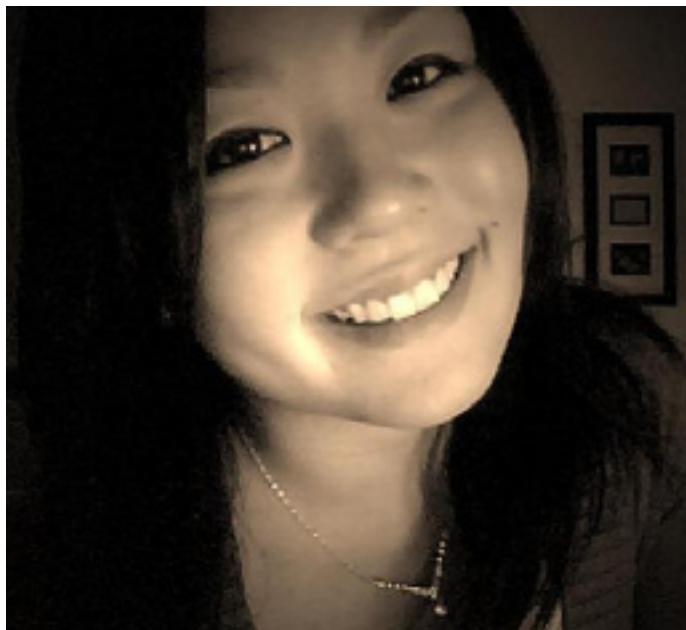
Joyce Choi Won Li [05F]

Yesterday, I received a call from the Hampshire Fund. A student worker, whom I know closely, was making cold calls to last spring's graduates to obtain pledges. In that moment, I realized that I was truly no longer a student, and was reminded of my most peculiar, though common, position.

I am someone who cares deeply about Hampshire, and the opportunities, spaces, and community it provided for me. I was sad to leave, and am nostalgic upon return. While in school, I strove to be a passionate student and community participant. Now that I have left, I wish to be involved still. Last night, I pledged a tiny bit of money to the College. However, I am not established enough, monetarily or otherwise, and am therefore unable to establish a more meaningful support relationship to the place I called home for four years.

As you may know, this has never stopped me before. In addition, as we are both well aware, those who are most passionate and vocal about the fate of Hampshire, who do not count themselves amongst your salaried staff or faculty, nor your students, are recent alumni. One could say that Hampshire's blessing and curse is that many, if not ALL of our alumni are "recent." However, alumni who have graduated in the past five years, find themselves in that same peculiar position, one of not-yet-fully-realized adult success, and no longer community members on your campus.

Do not forget about us, President Hexter. We are the ones who remember Action Awareness Week, the aftermath of the Dakin and Cole Science



takeovers, the graffiti on an administrator's door. We remember the hope and glee of anticipating an openly-gay President, and the existential anger of said President's "pebble" comment. We remember and continue to witness the derision and erasure of radical politics on our former campus, from the flurried accommodationist rhetoric surrounding the occupation of Palestine, to the mainstreaming of our queerness, social awareness, and academic curriculum.

Yet we lay dormant, unsure of our own relationship to this school, even as current machinations squander the legacy of our mentors' work. We stand by and witness the restructuring of the College's very Admissions office, and possibly admissions process, the persistent denial of funds to the student groups represented in this room, and the gradual elimination of transparency from the majority of the school's functioning.

LETTERS

I have cried many times over at Hampshire, sometimes over the condition of policy, or the state of being that awaits a student, who is constantly outnumbered or overtalked in her classes, whose safety is never guaranteed, and whose work goes unrecognized by people who have nothing to gain from befriending the brown folk. I forget those times, though. What I do remember, is when administrators cry, when administrators cry the foul conduct of students whose radicalism is unbecoming of our college's new trajectory.

I was among that group that threw on blazers to converse with you. We wasted our finals time, argued with our friends, family, professors, asked others to cook meals for us, so that we could balance our time in your office, to tap out measures and quell our anger.

And I watch, from many counties and state lines away, as those measures crumble, one after another. Interest wanes, and institutional memory follows. I challenge you, on your own time, to revisit those demands from so long and so recent ago, and count the ones that remain, in effect, "met."

In my peculiar position, I learn something new. I am no longer a direct member of the Hampshire campus community, yet I have pledged to be connected for life. I care about the fate of its students, current and future, of the work and well-being of its faculty, and of the schedules and benefits of its staff. I choose to remember my passion, now changed not disappeared, because I attempt to practice what the school has taught me. In my bank account, no millions for buildings, and outside my window, no dorms or mods, but I remember Hampshire vividly, and choose to keep it vivid in my head. And I am not alone.

The school would do itself a disservice to ignore the input and wishes of alumni, especially those who may not yet bear any financial gain for the institution itself. We were taught, by the best, to be passionate and critical, and will remain as such even when the place at which we were taught, exemplifies those things no longer. We know, by

grassroots means, and by real-world means, how to get involved, stay involved, and bring the world up or down. Most importantly, we consider ourselves the foremost allies of the students, faculty, and staff who remain at the College, particularly those who remain radical, progressive, and critical of power.

I would challenge you to remember where you are sitting, a house won through struggle, painted and lived in, and note for yourself, how rapidly the community that inhabits it has grown. SOURCE outgrows the Cultural Center even as it fills it with more and more love, so that the space is bursting beyond it. I would challenge you to ask every student in this room the activities and groups they are involved in, whether they are overbooked from the pressure, and conceptualize the thematic broadness and depth of their intellectual and organizing capacity.

Perhaps if you were to re-discover your respect for the Hampshire student as we know, love, and nurture, you would be better prepared for a conversation regarding this school's present and future.

Sincerely,
Joyce Choi Won Li
Fall 2005

My Experience at the Cultural Center

Chris Williams [03F]



Chris Williams [left] with Melissa Scheid Frantz at the Cultural Center

The Cultural Center was almost literally my home. I worked there as an Source Group Coordinator (SGC), a Peer Mentor(ship Coordinator), and a signer. When I wasn't working on things for classes or the CC, one could usually find me sitting on the couches, watching TV, leading discussion, or just hanging out at the CC. The CC is a place where I could go anytime. I always knew that the doors would be open and I could feel safe. What the Cultural Center did for me is provide structure to the structure-less system of Hampshire College. I was part of murals, activism, open dialogue,

meetings, parties, more activism, more open dialogue, collaboration, and a community that was small in number but big in voice. This was my Hub. This was my home. This was where I started the process of finding out who I was. I will always be indebted to the CC and its staff (past and present). Always remember: 'The people, united, will never be defeated.'

Experience

Hira Nabi [06F]

This is my last year at Hampshire (inshallah) and my last year of working at the Cultural Center. I have been working here as part of staff since I came to Hampshire, which was Fall '07. In many ways, as I look back, I think it was a different time and space. Which is both obviously understandable and alarming at once. Of course it was a different time, and the space was made up of different people, all with different energies, personalities, goals and modes of working. But is that space and that time so irrecoverable and unimaginable now?

I can remember those days and feel a palpable difference between now and then. But to someone who has no memory of what I am making references to, there is only the present, the now as it is being defined, and in ways dictated. College is a time of constant growth and change, and my body and my mind have borne witness to that. I have grown and developed as surely as I have lived and loved and dreaded the winter and anticipated the spring. But the changes being instituted at this college now in a rapid blitz of policy and un-voted-upon, un-checked action are threatening to my memory of this institution that I invest so much pride in.

My time at the CC has been filled with organizing and programming and creating and maintaining intentional safe spaces and trying to build an analysis of intersections of race, ethnicity/culture, gender, sexuality, oppression, occupation, and work towards addressing that. Along with being a super charged environment, it is also a deeply personal and relaxing distressing environment for me, where I have been part of many wonderful



conversations and heard lots of intimate stories and listen to people share their experiences.

I know that this community is rare and precious and is hard to find and that makes me grateful to be here and to be a part of it. I do hope that other people can find that space and expand it and grow with it. It is only possible if we preserve these spaces and value the community they have fostered and will continue to foster. It is easy to take for granted what one has never fought for or had to defend, but the lessons of our past shows us that those days of struggle were not so long ago and continue to manifest themselves in new forms every now and then. We just need to be ready to take them on.

Experience

*Liza M. Neal [91F]
Director of Spiritual Life*

My first experience with the Cultural Center was as a prospective student. I stayed with a current student who was also from California. She was a signer for the SOURCE group Raices. That night we went to a coffeehouse of music, poetry, and food (of course) in the Tavern. The next morning we had breakfast at SAGA and talked about the kinds of birth control we used. I felt very adult! For those few days, I experienced Hampshire as a diverse progressive place.

Through junior and high school, I went to a public arts school that was formed in order to create integration in the educational system. Socially the school was more integrated and more successful than any other magnet school in the city. However, institutionally it did very little if anything to address the inherent racism of society and how it played out in the school, or to educate the students on the issues of race and class that we were dealing with every day in every interaction. We talked about this individually as students, and addressed teachers individually. We did not take it to that next step of addressing the administration and the institution as a whole demanding large scale change. Some believed that nothing would change. Others felt powerless, as if we had no voice.

When I became a student at Hampshire, I slowly learned that I did have a voice and that I could use it to work for change. One of the things that helped me learn this was the takeover of Cole Science that happened while I was at Hampshire. Students of color demanded support and concrete steps to combat racism on campus. Obviously



there have been more protests and more steps taken since then. But for me, that was the first moment that I saw a young person stand up for what they believe in and create change, even if it was just a beginning. It was awesome and inspiring.

Now I am a staff member at Hampshire College. Since the time I have worked here there have been painful and dramatic events on campus demonstrating the continued work that must be done here. There have also been powerful workshops, demonstrations, and risks taken by

EXPERIENCES

students, staff, and faculty. As a campus we do not always communicate well when we try to talk about issues of oppression. Still we continue to engage in the conversation. Despite the times we fail miserably, we refuse to give up. Last year at the ASK Conference I did a workshop on feeding our spirit so that we do not become exhausted, overwhelmed, and demoralized. Sometimes I think we underestimate the spirit of courage and resistance, the commitment to justice, change, and possibility that feeds our ability to begin anew after each failure and each success.

Melissa and I have done programs together, and I look forward to many future programs. Even more than just the programs we've done together, we have formed a committed group with the Center for Feminisms and the Community Health Collaborative to work together in our efforts for

social justice and community advocacy on this campus and in the world. It is a time of fear in our culture and to some extent on our campus because so much seems threatened and is changing. I have been told that the Chinese symbol for crisis includes the characters for danger and opportunity. This is a time of change, but it does not have to be a time of fear. It is also an opportunity, a time for new possibilities and new transformations.

Campus Leadership & Activities

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- Fill out paper work
- Apply for funding
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...& More!



Come Visit!

Our office is located on the first floor of Dakin by the Pavillion.

Questions? Call!

(413) 559-6005

The CLA office is a resource center for students and student groups.

To learn more come by or visit:
leadership.hampshire.edu

Check out up coming events:
www.hampshire.edu/studentlife/572.htm

Tyranny of the Majority

Anonymous

I learned a new phrase today “tyranny of the majority.” It was applied to the concept of community involvement in decisions of the college. If you permit, I would like to apply it to the Cultural Center, SOURCE, and the concept of funding.

Stress—the one word that came to me when I thought about being involved in general at Hampshire College. However, being involved in the Cultural Center as member of SOURCE brings a level of stress that cannot be explained, but I will try. We are made up of a community of such different backgrounds, from so many places of knowledge, dialects and languages from different places, and a wide array of cultures; many of us just entering into a place that sees us as a minority and looks at us as foreign. Yet all these differences are what brings us closer together in this small two-story house. The stress that one feels in the Cultural Center as a member of SOURCE however come not from the differences that we have, but rather common stress that we feel from administrative pressures of the Hampshire community.

The thing about being a member of the SOURCE community is that you are expected to be the point person for members of the larger community, to answer the often-silly questions of self-authority and directed privilege –and this expectation oftentimes creates a stronger divisiveness on campus. To keep this community going I can name the few that are constantly associated with working in the Cultural Center putting in their time and effort for its groups, its activities and members of SOURCE. It is this group of people, the same people, who have the strength to deal with the low staff, short funds and constant

administrative pressures to be involved in efforts of changing the culture of diversity, multiculturalism, privilege and racism and their effect on the campus. Like a rubber band, we are in stress because we are pulled in many directions. I don’t think it’s understood among students of the larger population what the purpose of SOURCE is. I don’t think they understand how this small population is truly affected by the decisions they make. I say this because they don’t understand why we are so stressed and why we stand together in our major differences supporting each other socially, academically, and personally.

The most stressful part about being a group of SOURCE is that you are never certain about your funding. One would have to agree that the Cultural Center was born out of struggle, but can we all remain in agreement that in its 20 years it resided in struggle? I attribute this to the lack of funds that the bodies of governance are willing to relegate. It seems like every semester the funds of SOURCE and groups are questioned. Why do we need to fund closed groups? Why can’t I get involved in this group? Why should we be giving special privileges to Source? These are questions that I have heard many times, and have tried to answer in many ways, but my answers are never good enough. If we review the history of the Dakin Take Over through SOURCE involvement, we realize how stressful the lack of support through funds is. Of the 12 demands, made in 1988, 5 of them directly address a lack of funds to support the SOURCE community. Fast-forward some 20 plus years and the demands that were addressed still harbor a stress that are due to lack of funds. The questions of why have a safe space and why should we fund groups, I am certain came up then, but how

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does one answer these questions today?

Therefore, I will try to address the questions, but cannot answer them. If every semester a group's validity is questioned, who drives the purpose of the group? If the group's purpose is to support members of its community, develop ways to cope with a sterile environment, offer educational opportunities for those that are not a part of the larger community... their purpose can easily change from following their mission to protecting the group from the tyranny of the majority. Although the term is new to me, the concept is quite familiar when I find that there is always a question of why an organization (born out of struggle) exists and for what purpose? The stress of being involved in a SOURCE group comes from knowing that at anytime someone can deem your group unnecessary and that you will always be in a constant struggle for funding. With my own two eyes, I have seen members of SOURCE go from meetings to meetings, from office to office, and take on the burdens of social involvement the responsibility of the "community" and forget the responsibility of self (schoolwork, family, and sleep). It seems to me that the stress of being involved in a community like SOURCE comes from the attack on your validity is always in question and bodies that hold some authority over you dangle the possibility that you will lose your funding. If our groups would

be funded automatically, then they could serve a greater purpose. A lot of meetings within SOURCES address this issue. Now I am not saying that other groups don't deal with funding issues, but what I am saying is that no other groups (but identity groups) deal every year with the possibility that a well established group could be deemed unnecessary and that these well established groups could be left with no funding because their purpose is not seen as necessary.

I can't address this issue any clearer. I don't think that this could be said enough and yet many people will not understand what I am saying. Writing this article may trigger a series of dialogues (for the greater community which only members of SOURCE will attend) that drain the power of an individual even more and seen as a "valid" way of addressing an issue. I don't wish to argue whether or not SOURCE is "being held to a lower standard," rather I wish to address the issue of intrusion in the safe space process. An intrusion that rejects the role of self thought, releases an authority that hurts those that try to survive in this environment. I find it hard to conclude this article because it started over twenty some years ago. Not by a person who wrote, but an idea of protecting students from the stress that comes from the tyranny of the majority.

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CONTACT US!

Help publicize or flyer the campus-Melanie Kates (mdk09@hamp.edu)

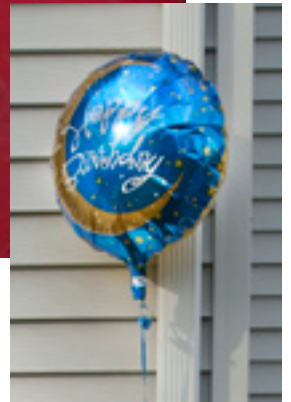
contribute ideas for Recruitment Events-Monika Martinez (mnm08@hamp.edu)

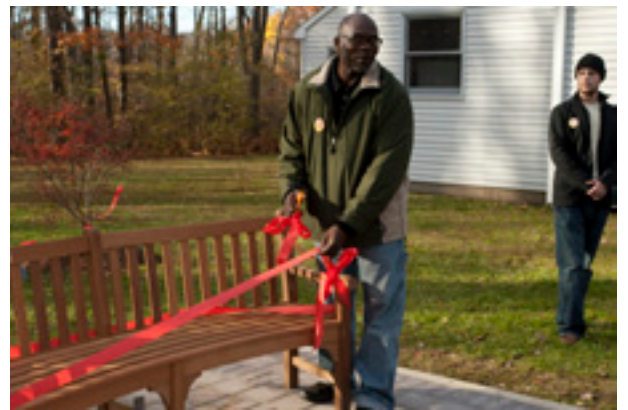
Sign up to host-Isabel Amador (ifa06@hamp.edu)

Diana Alvarez, Assistant Director of Admission & Coordinator of Multicultural Recruitment, dalvarez@hampshire.edu

PICTURES

Pictures from the 20th Anniversary Celebration of the Cultural Center







Celebrating

forty years 1970-2010

JUNE 11-13, 2010



anniversary.hampshire.edu

Alumni Experiences

GABRIEL CERIOTTI

***Entering Year at Hampshire
2003***

What role / position(s) did you hold while working at the Cultural Center?

Poster Designer, Archivist, Grocery Driver

How would you describe the climate on campus / at the Cultural Center during your time as a student?

During some semesters, things would get pretty tough at the Cultural Center as a lot of polemic sprouted on campus around issues of underrepresentation. In such cases, there would usually be an incident that would start the polemic. For example, a student would be sanctioned for repeatedly using racial slurs and directing racist comments at members of the SOURCE community, or a thread containing several racist comments would appear on one of the Hampshire forums, or someone would write an article questioning the use of the Cultural Center and/or SOURCE groups, or etc. In all such cases, it was always the Cultural Center's staff responsibility to respond to those who justified the more oppressive view on the issue, and provide those who were feeling the attack with a pillar of strength. During those times, working at the Cultural Center could feel pretty draining and even lonely. Lots of us would feel that it was just us having to fight off one crowd, pick up the pieces of the other and feel nothing but indifference from everyone else. However, in all honesty, these types of situations would arise periodically, but not often.



Being the ones to act and help on these situations was for me, one of the many things that validated the role of the Cultural Center on campus, and made me feel the most proud of what I was doing.

What were you most proud of in the work you did and/or the Cultural Center staff did while you were working at the Cultural Center?

Besides what I mentioned in the previous entry, I felt very proud of almost every project I undertook while working at the Cultural Center. All of them allowed me to challenge myself, get in contact with those around me, and help the campus become a better place. The project I am the most proud of was my investigation of the Cultural Center's history, the history of underrepresented groups on campus and identity based housing. In the process of this project, I got to learn a lot about Hampshire's history, U.S. history and social power dynamics among other things. As a result of this project, I

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gave presentations about our history to the CC and SOURCE communities, I wrote a booklet (which really started as a pamphlet) about identity based housing, and I got to discuss many important issues with members of the administration and of the SOURCE community. Smaller projects are a source of pride as well. For example, the study night with science tutoring that I started at the Cultural Center during my later years was surprisingly rewarding for such a small project. I got to talk one on one with a lot of people about very important issues, and I got to bring a lot of folk from the Hampshire community into the Cultural Center.

Looking back at your time at the Cultural Center / Hampshire, what do you wish would have been different for the center / students / campus?

My big wish for that intersection between center, students and campus is and has always been to have a more aware population at Hampshire. However, that is and has always been a work in progress.

How was / is the Cultural Center a part of your Hampshire experience? (e.g., how did it contribute to your student life and/or academic experiences, identity development, student organizing, etc.)

The short answer would be "free lunch", but the more elaborate answer (the one that won't get me killed by Melissa) is that.. I went to a lot of meetings at the C.C. during my first few semesters at Hampshire. Since I was the typical starving college student I would be attracted to any meeting where they would serve free food. I have to admit, if it offered free food, I would some times go to the meeting even if I didn't care for the topic. And that was just perfect. I had hit a winning recipe without even knowing it. I never thought I would care about some of the topics we discussed in those meetings, but as I sat through them and began to understand more about the subjects at hand my perceptions broadened. It wasn't long until I started to become more involved in all kinds of organizations (Cultural Center included) and all kinds of causes. In my case,

a bit of free food was all that I required to make me come out of my comfort zone and internalize some new lessons. That small push made me realize that my comfort zone was not the place where I needed to be, and with that lesson in mind, I achieved and still achieve a lot of growth. In the end, (as tongue in cheek as it might seem) that free lunch catalyzed a profound and enriching development in my way of being. (And it fed me.) Thus, my answer is "free lunch."

How would you describe your Hampshire experience as a student of color / international student?

A lot of times I felt like being an international student at Hampshire consumed a lot of extra time. When the necessity for a Cultural Center or for Identity Based Housing would be questioned, it was me and my fellow SOURCE students who were burdened with the labor of proving the value and worth of our spaces or lose them. During those times, I felt that being a SOURCE student at Hampshire was really unfair. It felt that I was being forced to handle so much more on top of my already challenging studies. On the other hand, being part of the SOURCE community was very valuable. My experience at Hampshire would have been much harder and less enriching without the camaraderie and support of my fellow SOURCE community members.

Please share one memory that stands out for you when thinking back on the Cultural Center.

I remember the Cultural Center's ghost. What? You didn't know the CC was haunted? The truth is: it isn't, but I loved to tell the new hires that it was. What happens is that the center is made completely out of wood, so it starts to creak and squeek a lot when when the humidity changes or when it starts to get cooler in the night, and the general feeling of the place changes too. Thus, the center gets a bit eerie, but there is really no ghost. Just some folks get really freaked out by the picture of that dead girl that we have (or used to have) on the shelves in front of the fireplace. I mean, it is true that the eyes on the picture will follow you around as you walk by. It is true that the picture is a left over from an old

Day of the Dead (Dia de los Muertos) celebration. It is true, that as per the celebration, the picture was used as part of a ceremony in which the spirit of a dead relative or friend is guided into the house where the picture is at. And, it is true that we once had a staff member who left the CC running and screaming because she felt a ghostly presence who grabbed her shoulder and whispered her name. Nevertheless, I just don't believe in ghosts. I never had a paranormal experience while working or hanging at the center. Then, again, maybe I was never attacked by the ghost because I never forgot to clean after my own mess... Think about that.

What message do you wish to share with the Hampshire community today about the Cultural Center and/or advice to share with current students of color and international students?

When engaging on discussion about racial and/or social issues, don't fall in the trap of the argumentum ad hominem. In such discussions we should take care to expose a wrong perception for what it, but without attacking the person who holds that perception. We should aim to share the truth with those who don't know it, show them the error of their ways, and make allies out of our opponents. I know this can some times be hard to do, specially after the stress from all the different pressures and hackling start to accumulate. On that note... Remember to give yourself the time and the chance to relax. Don't try to carry the weight of the world on your shoulders. Help others, and don't forget you are surrounded by people who can help you too. Take care of yourself.

If you are an alum, what are you doing now and where are you living now?

I am currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Chemistry (or more specifically Nanotechnology) at Rice University in Houston, TX. After I become an expert on my field I hope to return to Montevideo (my home town in Uruguay) and start a business doing what I love, helping my community in the process.

TASHAL BROWN

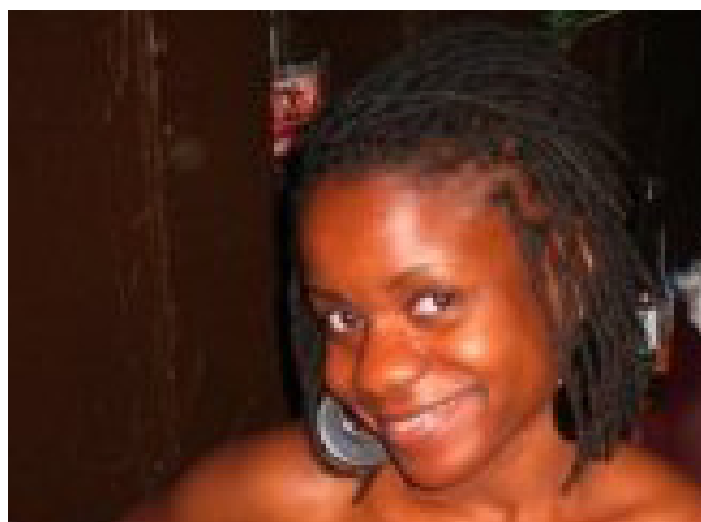
***Entering Year at Hampshire
Fall 2003***

What role / position(s) did you hold while working at the Cultural Center?

SOURCE Coordinator

How would you describe the climate on campus / at the Cultural Center during your time as a student?

At times there was a lot of racial tension. During my time at Hampshire two students wrote an article



regarding the Cultural Center and race relations at Hampshire. Many of the statements made by students in the article were controversial or outright discriminatory. The SOURCE community and the Cultural Center were put under tremendous scrutiny after this article became public. The Cultural Center has always been a topic of debate on campus. Many students are resentful towards its existence because they think it's a space that is exclusively for students of color and international students and unwelcoming to White students. On top the resentment towards the Cultural Center there were also several racist incidents that occurred on campus.

What were you most proud of in the work you did and/or the Cultural Center staff did while you were working at the Cultural Center?

I was most proud of the work I did helping to organize Black History Month events on campus. When I first

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came to Hampshire I was very disappointed with the quality and quantity of events that took place during Black History Month. February 2006 was by far the most dynamic and event filled Black History Month I've witnessed during my time as a student at Hampshire. The month opened up with a stained glass art exhibit and demonstration by artist Joanne Alexander. The following event was a screening of the documentary of Untold Story of Emmett Till and a talk back with the director Keith Beauchamp. The screening was emotional and it brought quite a few people to tears, including myself. With the help of students, faculty and staff, the Black History Month was a success. The culmination of events helped to bring new life to the celebration of Black History Month at Hampshire.

Looking back at your time at the Cultural Center / Hampshire, what do you wish would have been different for the center / students / campus?

Looking back I wish the Cultural Center would have been more instrumental in making sure that student groups actively worked to keep documentation of their history. I think continuity is important and at times I found that with the change of signers or with students graduating a lot of important information and history was often lost.

How was / is the Cultural Center a part of your Hampshire experience?

The Cultural Center and the SOURCE community helped me find strength to continue with my educational career despite the setbacks and emotional breakdowns I experienced attending a predominately White school. My Hampshire experience was enriched by the knowledge, love and support I received from this community.

How would you describe your Hampshire experience as a student of color / international student?

I was initially worried that I wouldn't be able to adjust and do well at a predominately white school but overall I did end up having a very rich experience at Hampshire and I think that is mostly due to the fact that I had a great support system.

Please share one memory that stands out for you when thinking back on the Cultural Center.

I remember participating in the Iron Chef challenge during the SOURCE end of the year event at the Cultural Center and I had a blast. I always had a great appreciation for community building events and activities at the Cultural Center, we always had fantastic food and endless amounts of fun.

What message do you wish to share with the Hampshire community today about the Cultural Center and/or advice to share with current students of color and international students?

I would say that everyone should keep in mind that racism still exists and as a community it is important to work together to combat it. I think that the Cultural Center is a great space to help to facilitate understanding and appreciate different cultures and the Hampshire community should embrace its existence. I would also say that students of color and international students should really utilize the space as well as SOURCE student groups to help meet their needs. If you want to see something happen, make it happen and always remember that you can use the Cultural Center as a resource.

If you are an alum, what are you doing now and where are you living now?

I'm currently in the process of getting a Masters Degree in Africana Studies at the University at Albany.

TOM VASQUEZ

Entering Year at Hampshire F87

How was the Cultural Center a part of your Hampshire experience?

The Cultural Center's history goes back to the Dakin takeover in 1988, which happened during my first year. I wasn't involved with the takeover and didn't understand the reasons for the takeover at the time. (I stress the words "at the time.") It was like



Tom Vasquez at Hampshire, 1990

a bolt of lightning out of a clear blue sky - without warning, and seemingly without explanation. I knew something wasn't right on campus, but I didn't quite get all the reasons. The more I stayed at Hampshire, though, the more I realized what the word "under-represented" meant. We were a tiny minority of the campus. There was a handful of professors of color. Something needed to change. When the Cultural Center was opened, I remember feeling excited and thinking that this was a place for me. I went there often - for events, meetings, and often just to hang out. I don't have very solid memories of actual events there, but I just remember being there. I remember long conversations with Kuji (hah! I can only remember her as Kuji - can't remember her "real" name because everybody called her that) about everything - about my studies, about identity, about life on campus. I remember little things like watching tv there with the other students who just

congregated there. It was someplace where I always felt welcome and I always felt at home.

How would you describe your Hampshire experience as a student of color/international student? (if applicable)

I felt like an outsider at Hampshire, but I wasn't sure at first if it was because of being a student of color, a working-class student, a graduate of a public high school, or all of the above. I eventually decided that the answer was all of the above, and a few other reasons besides. I used my time at Hampshire to grapple with my own identity. I studied Latin-American history and literature and Spanish (for the first time in my life). Thankfully, I had Norman Holland as a professor, who helped me realize how complex the issue of identity can be. He had the audacity, for example, to include such "non-canon" things as the movie *La Bamba* and lesbian latina biographies in his Chicano Autobiography class. His challenging, playful approach to culture helped inform my own sense of who I was. At the same time, I became deeply involved in a group of low-income students that Susan Tracy led. The Class Issues Group (as it became known) was a place where we could feel some solidarity with people of a similar background, vent about cultural clashes with the affluent students on campus, and talk to professors or other members of the community about class issues. It was as large a part of my life as the Cultural Center. In 1990, I think, I became part of a theatre project that became known as the Multi-Cultural Theatre Collective, or MCTC. Many of us had complex relationships to our racial or ethnic identity, and the pieces we produced were full of questioning, struggle, anger, and longing. It was one of the defining experiences of my time at Hampshire. I wrote a fifteen-minute piece that helped me resolve many of the conflicted feelings I had about the takeover and gave me the chance to air questions about race, class, identity, and conflict. I was grateful that so many people agreed to be part of the piece and I gained many friends through MCTC.

Please share one memory that stands out for you when thinking back about the Cultural

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Tom Vasquez [left] with son Oliver

Center.

I was part of the latino cultural group, Raices, when it was getting started. Two memories about this. One: All my life, I had grown up in places where Mexican restaurants could be found anywhere, and one of the great disappointments of western Massachusetts was that they didn't know what Mexican food was! They had a somewhat upscale Southwest fusion restaurant called La Cazuela, which I couldn't afford, but they didn't have a standard Mexican joint that sold cheap, classic Mexican food. And then one opened in Northampton. And I was thrilled. A few months later, we had a cultural celebration with food and music from different latino cultures. We ordered food from my favorite Mexican restaurant, and they provided, essentially, the makings for traditional tacos and tostadas - tortillas, rice, beans, salsa, etc. Humble food. One of the other students asked me, "was it really worth spending all this money for just this?" - pointing to the seemingly plain and simple food. My immediate response, through a mouthful of tostada: "Yes!!" The second memory is not so

pleasant, but it stays with me. In the early days of Raices, we were trying to define the terms of who we would be. Would we be hispanic or latino? What would we call the group? And who would be a part of the group? I had two good friends, Melissa Daponte and Flavia Vidal, who wanted to be part of Raices. Melissa came from the rich Portuguese community in New Bedford, MA, and Flavia was Brazilian. We had a long discussion about whether latino/latina meant all of South America, or whether it only referred to the Spanish-speaking world. In the end, the group decided (I cast a strong dissenting vote) that we would include people descended from the Spanish-speaking countries. And my friends Melissa and Flavia were cast out. It was an ugly decision, and it left many of us feeling uneasy. It was such a slap in the face to two people who considered themselves part of the latino/latina community on campus.

What message do you wish to share with the Hampshire community today about the Cultural Center and/or advice to share with current students of color and international students?

Identity is as individual as fingerprints. Don't let anyone define who you are or who you aren't. Define yourself by your own terms and don't let anyone else do it for you. I often felt conflicted about whether I was a "true" person of color because of my mixed-race identity. How could I be a latino if I didn't speak Spanish? How could I be a Mexican-American and know so little about Mexican-American/chicano culture? But no one draws a straight line to the identity they claim. History is messy, racial purity is a myth, and there are no easy answers. Find out for yourself who you are, and don't be afraid to be complicated.

What are you doing now?

I am the grants coordinator for a non-profit organization in Burien, Washington (just south of Seattle.) The organization, New Futures, works with low-income students- mostly immigrants and refugees - to help them succeed in school and in life.



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