

# *Ethnic Diversity*



# *Newsletter*



## DEPARTMENT OF ETHNIC STUDIES

### VOLUME 7, ISSUE 2 – FALL 2007

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## Symposium on Race, Inclusion and Culture

*Heather Tracy*  
*Undergraduate Student of Ethnic Studies*

On Friday, April 20, the University of St. Thomas held a Symposium on Race, Inclusion, and Culture entitled “Natural, National, and International Disasters: Implications for Access and Inclusion in Higher Education.” The event was well-structured and provided multiple speakers, all varying in topic.

The event began with Lawrence T. Potter, the Executive Director of the office of Institutional Diversity at St. Thomas University, explaining the importance of diversity, not only in higher education but also locally and globally stating “Diversity is the heritage of this nation...the future of this nation.” He also added that the ways in which it has been addressed in the past, i.e. affirmative action and equal opportunity, are no longer as effective or enough to handle the current reality of immigration, racism, international students, etc. He made clear the necessity of reconstruction and restoration that must occur before we honestly bring positive light to the word “diversity,” instead of the idea of this term being an obstacle or constraint.



A group of Ethnic Studies students and faculty attended the symposium. Pictured here from left to right are: (Front Row) **Vang Xiong, Sang Yang, Heather Tracy and Malinda Dean and Emporess Dean**; (Second Row) **Dr. Kebba Darboe, Professor Hanh-Huy Phan, Wendy Zhao, Keyru Lolo and Susan Fohrenkamm.**

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## Faculty Accomplishments & Recognitions

**Bevacqua, Maria** will be serving the elected-two year position of chair of Ethnic, Equity, and Diversity for the National Women's Studies Association.

**DARBOE, KEBBA** (February 21, 2007) presented "Sub-Sahara Africa: Social, Political and Economic Challenges in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" at the 31<sup>st</sup> Pan-African Student Leadership Conference at Minnesota State University, Mankato (MSU).

**DARBOE, KEBBA** (February 22, 2007) presented "Conflicts in Maintaining Sub-Saharan Cultures and Traditions" at the 31<sup>st</sup> Pan-African Student Leadership Conference at MSU.

**DARBOE, KEBBA, HANH-HUY PHAN** and 10 students (April 20, 2007) attended the "Symposium on Race, Inclusion and Culture" at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, MN.

**DEMIRJYN, MARICELA, Trina Bolton** (Graduate Student, Ethnic Studies) and **Heather Tracy** (Undergraduate Student, Ethnic Studies) (March 29-April 1, 2007) presented "Academic Locations & Identities: Narrative In-Sites for Women of Color Courses" at the Pacific Sociological Association (PSA) Conference in Oakland, CA.

**DEMIRJYN, MARICELA** (April 4-7, 2007) presented at the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies in San Jose, CA. The focus of the annual conference was "Sociocultural and Ideological Shifts: Chicana/o Migratory Movements and Immigration Passages."

**DEMIRJYN, MARICELA** (April 12-13, 2007) conducted a talk on "The Historical Overview of Latinas in Higher Education" for the Chicano-Latino Conference at MSU. The theme of this year's conference was "La Nueva Latina: Guiding Generations to Multiple Destinations."

**DEMIRJYN, MARICELA** became a board member for LA MANO, a local Mankato non-profit organization.

**DEMIRJYN, MARICELA** and **Trina Bolton** (Graduate Student, Ethnic Studies) became members of the American Association of University Women (AAUW).

**LAWRENCE, ELDEN** (September 23, 2006) presented at the Wood Lake Battlefield Symposium in Granite Falls, MN.

**LAWRENCE, ELDEN** (October 14, 2006) participated in the Dakota County Historical Society's History Author Day in St. Paul, MN.

**LAWRENCE, ELDEN** (November 30 – December 1, 2006) spoke at the Native Nations Conference at MSU.

**LAWRENCE, ELDEN** (January 20, 2007) presented for the Blue Earth County Historical Society in Mankato, MN.

**LAWRENCE, ELDEN** (February 9, 2007) arranged and accompanied MSU President Davenport and a visiting party to the tribal college of Sisseton Wahpeton College in Sisseton, SD.

**LAWRENCE, ELDEN** (February 21, 2007) arranged and accompanied MSU President Davenport and a visiting party to the tribal college of Fond du Lac College in Cloquet, MN.

**LAWRENCE, ELDEN** (November 17, 2006) was presented the MSU Dean's Diversity Award.

**LAWRENCE, ELDEN** (March 23, 2007) participated in the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) American Indian Initiatives workshop at the Central Lakes College in Brainerd, MN.

**LAWRENCE, ELDEN** (April 20, 2007) presented on Dakota History: Traverse des Sioux for the Minnesota Historical Society at the Holiday Inn in Mankato, MN.

**LAWRENCE, ELDEN** (April 14, 2007) presented American Indian Story Telling at the International Festival at Mankato East High School in Mankato, MN.

**Kawabata, Eiji** (September 2006) published *The Dual State in Flux: Contemporary Government Reform in Japan*, Palgrave/McMillan.

**Kawabata, Eiji** (March 2007) presented "State Identity and Politics of Recognition in Northeast Asia" at the Annual Convention of the International Studies Association.

**Kawabata, Eiji** (March 2007) served as a discussant at the Great Plains Political Association Meeting.

**Kawabata, Eiji** (March 2007) served as a discussant at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian Studies.

*CAPITALS indicate Ethnic Studies Faculty  
Upper and Lower Case indicate Ethnic Studies Program Faculty  
Students are indicated as appropriate*

## *A Letter from the Chair*

***Luis Posas, Ph.D.***

***Chair of the Department of Ethnic Studies***

*In previous notes, I highlighted the support that our department receives from friends, alumni and administrators across our campus, community and the state. Today, I would like to reflect on some of the contributions that our department makes to our college and campus specifically; although the discussion can be easily extended to the community, and the state. The reflections will demonstrate that our faculty is very active beyond our central roles of teachers and advisors.*

*The faculty of the Ethnic Studies Department contributes to foster an environment in which multiculturalism is valued and appreciated. Professor Hanh Huy Phan, who has an extended history of support for student centered cultural activities, served as the keynote speaker during the Vietnamese New Year celebration in this spring semester. Professor Phan also advises, formally and informally, the Vietnamese, Hmong and other student organizations across campus. Dr. Wayne Allen delivered an insightful keynote address during the celebration of African Peoples and Cultures during African Night in the spring semester. American Indian students frequently consult Dr. Elden Lawrence, a recognized American Indian elder, on matters relating to American Indian communities. The American Indian Affairs office, our college and university also recognize this advisory role of Dr. Lawrence. Dr. Kebba Darboe and Dr. Maricela DeMirjyn participated in the activities of the Pan-African, and Chicano-Latino conferences respectively. It is a rather usual occurrence to find the entire faculty of the Ethnic Studies department participating in cultural events taking place in our campus, even if these events take place on Saturday nights.*

*Our faculty is present in various committees across our college and campus that deal with matters of multiculturalism and cultural diversity. As a member of the Curriculum Evaluation Committee charged with the design of guidelines for courses under the section of Cultural Diversity requirements for graduation, Dr. Luis Posas helped maintain the focus of the requirements on issues relating to diverse cultures. He also encourages hiring committees in our college to consider the contributions of their hires to issues of cultural diversity. Dr. DeMirjyn has led important efforts to promote an appropriate environment through her leadership in the College Diversity Task Force. Finally, as a member of the Research Committee, Dr. Darboe is an advocate of research techniques like ethnography, field research and other qualitative methods that produce highly important findings in our disciplines.*

*Finally, the Ethnic Studies faculty participates in efforts to promote cultural diversity at the highest levels in our university. This spring semester, Dr. Lawrence joined President Richard Davenport and Provost Scott Olson in a historic visit to the Sisseton-Wahpeton Indian College in South Dakota and the Fond du Lac College in Wisconsin. Professor Phan has served in President Davenport's Task Force on Diversity.*

*Thank you.*

## Changing the Face of Academia: Recruiting and Retaining Students of Color

*Jacqueline Lewis, Ph.D.*

*Associate Professor, of Counseling & Student Personnel*

*Wendy Firven-Smith*

*Longview Community College*

As the population of the United States becomes more racially and ethnically diverse, higher education continues to struggle to diversify the campus. Various reasons are advanced for the importance of a diverse campus including as Blimling (2001) noted in an editorial in the *Journal of College Student Development*, "Diversity makes you smarter." Such statements have interesting nuances. In an area such as higher education where equality and access are supposed to be guiding principles, what is the underlying message to students of color from institutions of higher education? Maybe the answer lies in the recent comments of Dr. Lori Pierce in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*.

In an article on April 2007, Dr. Pierce, an African American Professor of American Studies at DePaul University noted, "My presence in the academic world is an accident." Sadly, her statement appears to be true. Everything about academia supports her observation; from the limited number of faculty and the staff that reflect the faces of students of color, to the underrepresentation of students of color, to the content of the curriculum and finally, to the manner in which diversity initiatives are often implemented on campuses. These are clear and tangible messages to students of color that they do not belong in academia. Students of color receive an even more powerful message when some want to make their experience a positive one by noting that they are the "cream of the crop."

Institutions that are committed to recruiting a racially and ethnically diverse student population will go beyond traditional recruitment strategies and identify multiple ways to attract potential students of color. Some of these strategies include: establishing relationships with historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), Tribal Colleges and Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs), with multicultural or diversity offices nationally, with communities of color, partnering with K-12 so that students of color are prepared to apply to college, offer fellowships and departmental graduate assistantship, recruit and retain faculty of color, train current faculty so that they have the skills to respond to the needs of diverse students, and encourage faculty to participate in ethnic student campus organizations and community events.

In order for the presence of students of color to be more than a mere "accident," institutions must make a concerted effort to retain students of color. Some important retention strategies include: mentoring students, providing them with the information they need to negotiate the higher education maze, helping them to understand the culture of a predominantly white campus, getting them involved in scholarly activities and research presentations, identifying and connecting them with

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## Changing the Face of Academia (cont.)

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support systems on the campus and in the community, avoiding token recruitment (such as the only student in the program), hiring and retaining faculty of color, supporting faculty involvement with ethnic student organizations, and developing an understanding of the unique challenges of students of color.

Most importantly, higher education must recruit students of color for the right reasons. Not, for instance, to provide majority students with a diverse campus experience. They need to recruit students of color with the intention and commitment to help them succeed. It is not enough to provide resources to assist students of color. Higher education has an ethical responsibility to ensure that these resources work effectively to assist students of color in succeeding.

To determine the effectiveness of these recruitment and retention strategies, it is important to hear the perspectives of current students and alumni of color, as well as the faculty and staff of color, many of who are in the trenches. For these persons, the success of these students is more than an intellectual exercise, but rather a living reality. These persons are aware of the challenges faced by students of color and often have practical suggestions for change. Their feedback can identify the strategies that work and discard ineffective ones. However, none of these strategies can be effective unless those in leadership positions who have the power to initiate change are willing to hear and to follow through with these suggestions. This is a simple, but key strategy that is all too often ignored.

In the final analysis, the recruitment and retention of students of color requires commitment. It requires commitment from top campus leaders beginning with Presidents, Vice Presidents and Deans. It also requires a commitment from the faculty, staff and the institution as a whole. It demands an openness and interest in a diverse classroom and a more diverse faculty. It demands a willingness to accept that the status quo will never be the same again. Is higher education ready for this?

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### **Ethnic Studies Student Organization (ESSO)**

*Dan Wischer, President*  
*Amber Wischer, Secretary*  
*Trina Bolton, Treasurer*

Unfortunately, we were not able to get our organization up and running for the 2006-2007 school year. Although this year may be over, there are many opportunities for Ethnic Studies students to take a role in ESSO functions for the 2007-2008 school year. Many of the officer positions are open for re-election and the organization can always use new members with fresh ideas. If you would like to become involved, please contact our ESSO faculty advisor, Dr. Kebba Darboe at [kebba.darboe@mnsu.edu](mailto:kebba.darboe@mnsu.edu).



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## Symposium on Race, Inclusion & Culture (cont.)

Afterwards, Potter began to address the issue of why race matters. He began by stating, "All communities are not created equal," and then addressed the many disparities and divisions that have been socially constructed and reinforced in American culture. Although this is true, he also mentioned that race is not the only issue, but that class plays a major role in these inequalities as well. According to Potter, "Race is too blunt and too analytical...its meanings are too vague." During group dialogue, some of the issues discussed were: access to secondary and higher education, impact of class and race in regards to educational opportunities and success, political policy, gender issues, racism, and who is responsible for such issues and concerns. One of the main questions that arose was how we meet the students where they are at. Because the majority of those present were either educators or students, this issue was clearly important and both students and professors shared their struggles and concerns regarding this question. For example, the teachers that do reach out feel exhausted because of the many expectations at hand, and some students felt rejected by some of their fellow professors; that their needs and desire really did not matter to the staff and faculty at their particular campuses.

The keynote speaker was Dr. Steven J. Rosenstone, the dean of the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Minnesota. He spoke of national disaster, referring this to the access of higher education in Minnesota. He viewed the main problem as being directly attributed to class. He stated, "Class is a huge obstacle for higher education," while adding that it is 6.4 times more likely for a student from the top income quartile to get a college degree in comparison to the bottom income quartile. He also believes that the cause of this problem stems from the reduction of state support and the ever-increasing tuition rates. His plan for action in changing this problem is to reconstruct the financial aid and scholarship requirements and approval. He has found that many scholarships are merit only, instead of being based upon both merit and needs. According to Rosenstone, the amount of affluent students receiving scholarships now exceeds those who are in actual need of the financial support. So, the majority of resources are being given to middle class, instead of lower class students.

After the keynote, there were three fifty-minute presentations. The first was a group of St. Thomas students who went to New Orleans over spring break and assisted in both wealthy and impoverished areas, learning and experiencing how the division of class is blatant and also how that is depicting who is able or allotted to rebuild. The second topic addressed was by Margot Imdieke from the Minnesota State Council on Disability. She began by defining the word "disability," and addressed the importance of dependence, respect, and rights of disabled individuals, whether they are visible or non-visible. She also described how their needs and accommodations change, especially in situations of crisis and disaster. The last presenter was a professor in Musicology at St. Thomas University. Her presentation was entitled "Breaking Through Defense Mechanisms of Detachment" in which she described her current initiative of teaching students through a historical perspective of African American music.

Overall, the event was welcoming, educational, well-structured, and brought forth multiple perspectives. As with many conferences, it left one feeling quite tired after having obtained such large quantities of information, but as a student, I feel that I have benefited from what was shared and learned many things that pertain to me personally.

## Congratulations to Our Scholarship Winners!

The Department of Ethnic Studies provides many opportunities and recognition for the students in our department. Congratulations to the following Ethnic Studies scholarship winners for 2007.

**Trina Bolton** is the winner of the Ethnic Studies Academic Excellence Scholarship Award as the Ethnic Studies student with the highest GPA.

**Meredith Lemiso** is the winner of the Ethnic Studies Achievement Scholarship Award as an Ethnic Studies student who has overcome great difficulty and has continued to maintain a high GPA.

**Kim Johnson** is the winner of the Global and Ethnic Diversity Scholarship as an Ethnic Studies student who has maintained a high GPA and has brought their home country culture to the MSU, Mankato campus.

**Xeng Vue** and **Angela Ward** are the winners of the Timothy Price Scholarship as two outstanding students who are in great academic standing and who have also demonstrated excellent leadership skills and community experiences.

In order to continue providing our students with scholarships and interactive multi-cultural experiences, we need the continued support from our colleagues and friends. Please consider a contribution to the Department of Ethnic Studies' foundation account for scholarships (Account #: 335814). For more information, please contact Dr. Luis Posas by telephone at (507) 389-2257 or by email at [luis.posas@mnsu.edu](mailto:luis.posas@mnsu.edu). Thank you for your active support for our students and program.



**Heather Tracy, Dr. Maricela DeMirjyn, Trina Bolton** and **Kim Johnson** pictured during their downtime while presenting their work "Academic Locations & Identities: Narrative In-Sites for Women of Color Courses" at the Pacific Sociological Association Conference in Oakland, CA.

## Newsletter Editors

*Luis Posas, Chair*

*Wayne Allen, Associate Professor*

*Maricela DeMirjyn, Assistant Professor*

*Cindy Veldhuisen, Office Manager*

*Hanh-Huy Phan, Professor*

*Kebba Darboe, Assistant Professor*

*Elden Lawrence, Visiting Associate Professor*

*Amber Wischer, Design & Layout*

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### *Mission Statement*

*“The Department of Ethnic Studies, an interdisciplinary program, is academically committed to promoting multicultural and ethnic knowledge, skills and values both within and outside the United States and to preparing our students for effective participation in the culturally diverse global community.”*