[The OAR (Organized Against Racism) Report, The Issue of Racial Diversity at Sarah Lawrence College, July 1997]

Organized Against Racism, Sarah Lawrence College

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THE OAR REPORT

The Issue of Racial Diversity
at Sarah Lawrence College

O A R
Organized Against Racism
1997
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- Alumni Voices
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- Faculty Voices
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Introduction

OAR began during orientation week in September 1996, after a workshop I conducted on Writing and Race, when a multiracial group of students expressed a desire to do something about racism at Sarah Lawrence, beyond consciousness-raising. We made a list and began to meet and spent the following year assembling this report. Our aim was to discover whether racism exists here—and if so, how it works and how it might be changed. Many people contributed to the report's making; in addition to the OAR membership listed at the end, the people who agreed to be interviewed and several who spoke with OAR members but did not wish to be named made indispensable contributions.

We set out to make a portrait of racism at Sarah Lawrence, from the statistical to the anecdotal. The word racism is a powerful one, a painful one, whether the condition it describes is being asserted or denied. When we describe ourselves as Organized Against Racism, we are referring to all its manifestations, from direct verbal harassment to a racism that is largely unconscious.

In his new book, Race, Crime, and the Law, Randall Kennedy quotes Judge Clyde S. Cahill:

Racism goes beyond prejudicial discrimination and bigotry. It arises from outlooks, stereotypes, and fear of which we are vastly unaware. Our historical experience has made racism an integral part of our culture, even though society has more recently embraced an ideal that rejects racism as immoral...The root of unconscious racism can be found in the latent psyches of white Americans that were inundated for centuries with myths and fallacies of their superiority over the black race. So deeply embedded are these ideas, that their acceptance...from generation to generation [has] become a mere routine....A benign neglect for the harmful impact or fallout upon the black community that might ensue from decisions made by the white community for the 'greater good' of society has replaced intentional discrimination....Most Americans have grown beyond the evils of overt racial malice, but still have not completely shed the deeply rooted cultural bias that differentiates between 'them' and 'us.' (p. 367, emphasis mine)
Cahill was writing in response to a 100-1 sentencing disparity between those convicted of possession of crack cocaine (largely of color) and those convicted of possession of powder cocaine (largely white). It is unlikely that any judge involved in these sentencings would have admitted to harboring overt racism; but an examination of the statistical evidence clearly indicates that racism is at work, whether it is admitted to or not.

This report was prepared not in a spirit of defamation but one of determination and hope; it is an attempt to see clearly what is, in order to figure out how to make what will be. While it is not exhaustive or without contradictions or scientifically unassailable, it seems to me impossible to read it and not recognize that there are things wrong here that must be made right. In the course of my own work on the report, I found among colleagues a great deal of reluctance to discuss this subject publicly. Past conflict here involving the issue of race has caused in both the distant and recent past a great deal of pain. As a result, many people tend to speak of it as little as possible, or to speak of it only privately. But this ensures that no progress will be made. This report was prepared in the hope of initiating the open, respectful discussion of this conflict that is the only path to its resolution--and in the confidence that Sarah Lawrence is a place where this can happen, if we are willing to summon the required commitment and courage.

Whatever conversation we have about this issue must have a respected place within it for every voice, regardless of political differences. In his book Coming Apart: A Memoir of the Harvard Wars of 1969, Roger Rosenblatt talks about some of the divisions among the Harvard faculty over a different painful issue:

It is hard to say what the grounds were that divided the caucuses. Some few members of the conservative-moderates believed that the war in Vietnam was a moral crusade, but most did not. The main dividing line existed between those who had sympathy for the students as students and those who did not, between those who had approved of the bust and those who did not. (p. 122)

"To a large degree," Rosenblatt says elsewhere, "each group was made up of people who simply did not like some people in the other group." This report was prepared in the hope that we as a community can move beyond these personal animosities and divisions to a conversation
about race that can accommodate both passion and respect—in the hope that the current climate of fear and mutual misunderstanding can end, not through thought control or intellectual coercion, but through honest dialogue and self-examination and a willingness to listen and to change.

As Sarah Lawrence moves into a new era—a new president, a new century—it will be a test of the integrity of our educational mission whether or not we meet the challenge this report poses: the challenge of ending racism in our community, from its most systemic manifestations to its most personal. For those who are tempted to turn away from this challenge, I offer here two portraits, of two students, one of color and one white. The first student is telling a story about choosing courses based on which white professors interviewed did not make unwitting racist remarks, or about a slur behind her back in a campus hallway; she is half-smiling as she tells the story, but in her voice there is bitterness and despair. The second student is listening to the first and the expression on her face moves from disbelief to shame.

May our work let these students claim their educations without these impediments. May the next report on racism at Sarah Lawrence consist of blank pages.

July 1997
Students

The consideration of race in college admissions is the most important issue in higher education in our time. In Texas and California, this process has been made illegal, in Texas by Federal court ruling and in California by Regents' decision and voter referendum. At the moment, the United States Department of Education is investigating the situation at the University of California, to judge whether the university's dismantling of affirmative action has led to violations of Federal civil rights law.

In the spring of 1997, the Association of American Universities, a prestigious circle of sixty-two of the nation's leading universities, adopted a resolution supporting the right of colleges to use affirmative action in their admissions procedures. Neil L. Rudenstine, president of Harvard University, said, "The higher education community...had not said anything about our position. We though we should be on the record when things are still more fluid." (New York Times, April 1997) Part of the AAU statement read,

We believe that our students benefit significantly from education that takes place within a diverse setting. In the course of their university education, our students encounter and learn from others who have backgrounds and characteristics very different from their own. As we seek to prepare students for life in the twenty-first century, the educational value of such encounters will become more important, not less, than in the past. (New York Times, April 1997)

As the nationwide conflict over affirmative action has unfolded, Sarah Lawrence has faced fiscal crisis and has discontinued completely need-blind admissions. Administrators now describe the admissions process as "need-aware," as the complete ignoring of ability to pay has become financially impossible.

The national controversy and the college's financial exigencies make it all the more important to focus community attention on maintaining a commitment to racial diversity in the student body. Because of the nature of hiring and tenure, faculty and administration are groups whose characters change slowly; students come and go much more quickly, and diversity can revert to tokenism just as quickly, unless college priorities are organized to prevent this.

Since 1988, the total percentage of students of color has risen from 11.2% to 16.1%. If that number reflected national demographics, it would be 24%, as of 1990. The Admissions
Office states 17-21% as a goal; if that number reflected population statistics for 2010, only a
dozen years from now, it would be 32%. Clearly more progress can be made if the goals are not set too low.

In the incoming class for the fall of 1997, fifty are students of color, the lowest number since 1990; particularly worrisome is the fact that only seven are African-Americans, down from fifteen last year. The same number of offers of admission were made, but only seven African-American students accepted. It will be useful to see the results of research on why these students did not choose Sarah Lawrence, particularly if finances were not the only consideration. Although the college's retention rate for students of color is better than that for the general population (89% vs. 81%), the question bears asking: in terms of faculty, curriculum, social environment and support, what does Sarah Lawrence have to offer students of color? If the answer is Not enough, how might that change?
# Sarah Lawrence College

## Ethnic Enrollments

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Faculty

The issue of racial diversity among the faculty is even more important at Sarah Lawrence than at other institutions, because of the unique teaching philosophy here and the intensive personal contact between students and faculty. Sarah Lawrence is small; the administration and faculty work closely here to create the character of the college. Many important policy decisions are faculty-made, through the committees. Faculty have wide discretion in choosing what to teach, and hence play an important part in creating the curriculum as well.

An interesting study was done recently at Columbia Medical School; for the first time, a person of color was made part of the Admissions Committee. The enrollment of people of color in subsequent admitted classes rose substantially; but when researchers studied this in detail, they found that it was not the single man of color who had supported these incoming students, but the other white members of the committee. The presence of the man of color had caused the white faculty and administrators to make different decisions.

As will be clear from the numbers discussed below, Sarah Lawrence has made substantial progress in the hiring of faculty of color, particularly over the past ten years, and there is a spoken administrative commitment here to doing better still. But the danger of backsliding to tokenism is always present, as is the danger of a largely white faculty simply "forgetting" the importance of this issue, as happened in the preparation of the strategic plan. The cycle of benign neglect leading to student anger and painful divisions within the community can be broken; to make a faculty in which people of color are justly represented is an indispensable first step.

In 1987-88, there were 164 members of the Sarah Lawrence faculty; of these, 13 were people of color, 7.9%. Of these, seven were guests, 53.8%. Of the other eight on regular contracts, 2 had tenure.

In 1996-97, there were 161 faculty members; of these, 26 were people of color, 16.1%. Of these, 12 were guests, 46.2%. Of those with regular contracts, 8 have tenure.
Four of the eight guest faculty of color did not return for the 1997-98 academic year, for various reasons; three new guest faculty of color were hired, and one additional guest contract was changed to a regular contract.

The percentage of faculty of color has increased in the past ten years from 7.9% to 16.1%. In that time the percentage of faculty of color on guest contracts has decreased, from 53.8% to 46.2%. More faculty of color have been hired, and on more permanent terms.

Of senior faculty, here understood as those at Sarah Lawrence fifteen years or more, 2 of 47 are people of color: 4.26%.

To use another measure: of the 104 people listed as Regular Teaching Faculty, 1997-98, 15 are people of color: 14.4%.

In terms of regular faculty, the following departments include no person of color:

Anthropology  Art History  Dance  Economics  Languages  Philosophy  Poetry  Psychology

The following committees include no person of color:

Academic Freedom  Admissions  Advisory  Budget  Conditions of Teaching  Curriculum Development  Graduate Studies  Student Conduct Review Board
Notes Toward A History

At the orientation meeting when OAR began, in the fall of 1996, a discussion took place about the history of organizing around racial diversity issues at Sarah Lawrence, specifically about the sit-ins in 1969 and 1989 and the hunger strike in 1994. Different people offered different versions of what happened, and those in the room who had come to the college since 1994 knew nothing about any of it. Once OAR started to meet regularly, one of our first priorities was to set down a simple accounting of these events, for the benefit of newcomers to Sarah Lawrence and to learn from past mistakes and achievements.

This has proved easier to undertake than to accomplish. There seem to be as many different versions of these events as there are people who witnessed and participated in them; there is also a great deal of reluctance to discuss them for the public record, as they were and remain the occasions of much community conflict and pain. It would make a fine investigation for a conference project or thesis. It would make an interesting book. But a complete, thorough accounting of all the aspects of these upheavals has proved beyond the scope of this report.

In several interviews elsewhere in the report you will find opinions about these events, and maybe that is the truest way to learn about them, through the direct unreconciled testimonies of the people who were there. What follows are notes toward a history: a bare outline of events and some discussion of the common patterns that emerge from studying them.

The most recent conflict over the issue of racial diversity took place in the spring of 1997. In April, the college handed out a draft of a document called, "Sustaining Our Legacy; Creating Our Future: The Strategic Plan for Sarah Lawrence College." It had been prepared by six trustee/administration/faculty task forces during the 1996-97 school year. The Strategic Planning Committee asked itself: What is the strongest college that Sarah Lawrence can be in the next century? What must we do to get there? While goals and aspirations about coeducation, a sports center, improvement in faculty compensation and many other topics were mentioned, racial diversity as a college priority was mentioned only in the context of reducing financial aid: "Achieve enrollment goals for quality and diversity while controlling the growth of the financial aid budget. Reduce overall tuition discount rate to 26% over next five to six years." While
various Action Steps were listed to achieve the stated goals, no Action Step referred to a commitment to achieving full racial diversity at Sarah Lawrence.

On May 7 the Student Senate held its annual dinner at the President's house. As is the custom, the senators had set the agenda; this year, the topic was racial and socio-economic diversity. About thirty minutes into the meeting a group of sixty to seventy-five students marched into the President's living room and demanded that the following statement be signed by the top administrators present:

We demand that the administration formally recognize that fundamental to the future of the college is a commitment to race and class diversity. We feel that this recognition is absent in any significant way from the Strategic Plan, which is meant to articulate the college's structural and ideological vision for the future. We feel that this vision is inherently worthless if it fails to address these issues of diversity. A commitment to structural race and class diversity must take an active form; without action any commitment is rhetorical.

To this end, we demand that a student/faculty committee be established through nominations and elections to research and compose an official strategic plan for race and class diversity in faculty, student body, curriculum, and the ideology of Sarah Lawrence College. This committee would begin work in the fall of 1997 and its proposal would be treated in the same fashion, and adopted in the same capacity, as the current strategic plan. It is imperative that this committee embody the real diversity for which it will work.

A heated discussion then took place, with some present willing to sign the document and others condemning the demonstrating students' tactics, maintaining that the goals of everyone in the room were the same and urging some kind of compromise, which the demonstrators declined to make. In the end, the administrators refused to sign the demand, and almost all the students left.

The administrators, faculty and the few students who stayed behind then drafted their own statement, below, which the faculty and administrators signed and distributed the next day.

Members of the faculty and administration recognize that fundamental to the future of the college is a commitment to race and class diversity. This commitment is absent in any significant way from the Strategic Plan, which is meant to articulate the college's vision for the future. We recognize that true moral vision can only be accomplished by addressing these issues of diversity and that a commitment to racial and class diversity must take an active form.
Members of the Administration and of General, Curriculum and Advisory committees are committed to developing plans to implement diversity in each of their areas of responsibility.

To this end we commit ourselves to establishing a student/faculty committee, through nominations and elections, to research and develop strategies for expanding race and class diversity in the faculty, staff, student body, and curriculum of Sarah Lawrence College. These strategies will be incorporated into the Strategic Plan. This committee, which will itself embody the real diversity for which it is to work, will begin its task immediately.

We call on the entire community to help develop and implement our commitment to diversity.

The remaining weeks of the semester were filled with arguments and discussions about this "walk-in." Faculty praised or remonstrated with students and agreed or disagreed with each other, students disagreed with faculty and administrators and among themselves. Faculty and administrators published their version of the events, as did the demonstrators; several student senators published their own version and stated their disagreement with the students who had demonstrated. One professor wrote a letter to his donees who had demonstrated, to express his disappointment; professor [redacted] wrote an open letter to students saying, "What all of you decided to do is to convince the Administration and Faculty to live up to its words on these principles." Throughout the often painful exchanges, the issue of racial diversity was rarely discussed with any careful attention; most of the divisions were between those who disapproved of the demonstrating students' methods and those who supported them.

The walk-in took place in a context of unresolved conflicts at Sarah Lawrence over the issue of racial diversity. On May 5, [redacted] had written a letter to the General Committee, considering resignation from it. "Our last several committee discussions," he wrote, "have caused for me a crisis in confidence in the leadership of this committee on the crucial issues for every American institution in our time, racial integration and cultural diversity." He described "how humiliating it has been to be a person of African descent in the midst of several key discussions about racial diversity." "I call on each member to look into his or her conscience," he wrote, "to see if the College is doing all that it can do to make American
institutional life racially integrated and culturally diverse for our children--they deserve no less from us."

In a letter to General Committee and faculty on May 6, [redacted] wrote, "it seems clear to me that racial diversity is dead as an executive priority at the College. It is not at the forefront of the agenda when we hire, and it was forgotten by the time of the Strategic Plan." "There is a point at which too much civility becomes a process of social control, where nothing substantial is discussed," he wrote. "I cannot continue to be effective on the General Committee without the support of the faculty and administration to take serious action toward increasing racial integration and cultural diversity."

In a later letter to students, [redacted] "I have been overwhelmed by the faculty and student support I have received on the issues of racial integration and cultural diversity at the College. Thus, I do not think it will be necessary for me to resign from the General Committee." A committee was formed to amend the strategic plan and began to meet in early June.

Each of the three student demonstrations most often discussed has a particular character, and each touched on other issues in addition to that of racial diversity. The 1969 sit-in focused on the Vietnam War as well as on the lack of minority representation among students and faculty. The 1989 sit-in focused again on the relative absence of people of color on campus, and eventually broadened to include issues of sexism as well; it had broad support among students and some among faculty. Among the sparking incidents was a mural painted on a wall, including what some students saw as racial caricatures. The hunger strike in 1994 had much less support among the campus community, particularly among the faculty; it focused on the denial of tenure to African professor [redacted] whose colleagues, including his colleagues of color, agreed with the tenure committee's decision.

The demands made by student demonstrators in 1989 and 1994 and 1997 vary in their particulars, but their theme is the same: a demand for the College's stated commitment to racial diversity to be made reality, particularly in terms of hiring faculty of color and admitting students of color, and in making an environment in which both can thrive.

The pattern seems to be this: a largely white faculty and administration allows the issue of racial diversity to slip far down on the list of priorities. (In the words of several people in the
wake of the conflict over the Strategic Plan, "We forgot." This is seen by some as the understandable failing of people of goodwill, and by others as unconscious racism. At some point students, both of color and not, become extremely angry when this state of affairs is revealed by some particular event: a mural, a tenure decision, a Strategic Plan. Sometimes with and sometimes without faculty support, they express their anger by demonstrating, usually focusing their demands for change on the administration. Heated discussions ensue, which some see as painful and unnecessary and others see as difficult but useful. Unlike many other institutions, Sarah Lawrence often makes actual changes in the wake of these demonstrations. But then time passes and the cycle starts over again from the beginning.

During the 1989 talks between CSOC (Concerned Students of Color) and the faculty/administration negotiating team, the college committed to doubling the number of faculty of color on tenure-track appointments by making six additional tenure-track appointments of faculty of color by 1993-94. They agreed to consider this change a minimum goal, moving people of color with regular faculty appointments from 6.4% to 12.5%. This was done, and quickly; five faculty of color were hired on regular contracts within the following two years. The total number of faculty of color now stands at 16.15%, about half of whom are guests. Two people of color had tenure ten years ago, and eight have tenure now.

Many of the 1994 demands focused on changes in the curriculum; while some changes have taken place, there is still no formal way to study multi-cultural issues across the curriculum, as there is for Women's Studies or Gay, Lesbian, & Bisexual Studies. There is an Asian Studies department but none for Asian-American, African-American or Latino/a-American Studies. All college exchange programs are still with European countries.

But perhaps more important than these details is the pattern discussed earlier, where goodwill slips into benign neglect and then into painful conflict, followed by more goodwill and benign neglect again. In this context, mistrust remains even when progress has been made. A sustained, unrelenting commitment to genuine racial diversity at Sarah Lawrence could break this cycle. This would mean open, respectful discussion, even among people who strongly disagree, and forums both small and large in which to do it. It would mean students committing to this struggle all year long, at dull meetings as well as at exciting demonstrations. It would mean
confronting each other with care and respect when these issues arise. Perhaps more than any of these, it would mean the white majority here recognizing that this is not an issue of concern only to people of color. It is an issue of justice, and concerns us all. If we could undertake these difficult tasks together, this history could change.
Curriculum

What follows is an attempt to understand the changes in the Sarah Lawrence curriculum in terms of racial diversity between 1987 and 1997. The chart provided is both a useful tool and an imperfect one; the numbers and percentages should be understood as estimates more than as precise indicators. They come from comparing course descriptions provided by the College catalogs of 1987-88 and 1996-97. Three facts are noted: the total number of courses offered in a given subject area; the number of course descriptions that mention the lives and work of people of color; and the number of courses whose primary focus is the lives and work of people of color. A course is listed under ‘primary focus’ if its description indicated that people of color are a central concern of the course; ‘mention’ indicates that people of color are included in the description but are not central in it.

Each course is counted only once; for example, a course listed under primary focus is not also counted as a mention. Cross-listed courses are counted in the department in which their full descriptions appear. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of Courses</th>
<th>Mention</th>
<th>Primary Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian Studies</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Asian Studies, the total number of courses offered in 1987 was 2, in 1997, 5. All were primarily focused on non-European realities, hence the 2 and 5 under primary focus. In Philosophy, 8 courses were offered in 1987, 8 in 1997. None were primarily focused on non-European philosophy; hence the zeroes under primary focus. In both catalogs, one course mentioned a partial focus on the work of people of color, hence the 1s in the Mention column for both years.
Not Applicable was registered where is was impossible to tell from the course description the content to which race was a primary or partial focus, as in studio arts or biology; but of course there are racial dynamics to be explored within these disciplines as well, whose details are beyond the scope of this report. NA was also registered for languages whose diasporas, because of the accidents of history, for the most part do not include people of color: German, Italian, Russian, and Classics.

It's difficult to assess courses with only the catalog information; a course could focus on the lives and work of people of color without mentioning that fact in the description. To know a class and its focuses thoroughly would mean to take part in it, or to interview each professor in detail. The chart is by no means to be understood as an exhaustive or definitive assessment.

### Division I: Performing Arts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of Courses</th>
<th>Mention</th>
<th>Primary Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dance</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>37</td>
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<tr>
<td>Studio Arts</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theater</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>40</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtotal</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Primary Focus Percentage, 1997:** 7.4%

### Division II: Natural Science & Mathematics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of Courses</th>
<th>Mention</th>
<th>Primary Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physics</td>
<td>NA</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Division III: Humanities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of Courses</th>
<th>Mention</th>
<th>Primary Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Art History</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Studies</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Subtotal</strong></td>
<td>46</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Primary focus percentage, 1997: 26.9%

### Division IV: Language, Literature & Writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of Courses</th>
<th>Mention</th>
<th>Primary Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classics</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtotal</strong></td>
<td>75</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>3</td>
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</table>

Primary Focus Percentage, 1997: 15.3%
**Division V: Psychology & the Social Sciences**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of Courses</th>
<th>Mention</th>
<th>Primary Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthropology</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Science</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public Policy</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtotal</strong></td>
<td>43</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Primary Focus Percentage, 1997:** 29.4%

*---------------------------------------------------------------*

**Total Courses Offered, 1997:** 270

**Total Primary Focus:** 17.4%

There have been improvements in the diversity of the curriculum over the past ten years, both small and substantial; overall, the percentage of courses primarily focused on the lives and work of people of color rose from 7.2% to 17.4%. But this may be less a measure of how good it is now than of how bad it was. Ten years ago, to judge from catalog course descriptions, there were no courses offered in non-European dance or music, and writers of color were mentioned in theater and writing course descriptions not once. There were no literature courses that included writers other than white Europeans. Now there is a course in jazz dance, six on non-European music, and writers of color appear in theater and writing course descriptions eleven and five times, respectively. There are seven literature courses that focus on non-white-European writers and twelve more that include them.

If goal numbers of faculty of color reflect the population, what should goal numbers for a non-Eurocentric curriculum reflect? Are the lives and works of people of color seventeen percent as important as those of whites? A study of a curriculum offering truly unbiased knowledge about the whole world and not only part of it might come up with a primary focus
number more like fifty percent. If it were based on world population figures, it might be higher still.

It is probably no coincidence that 17% is also the approximate percentage of faculty of color here. For faculty of color, issues of race generally do not permit themselves to be ignored. While [REDACTED] may not mention race in the description of her course on Crime and Deviance (hence it is not listed as a Mention or Primary Focus), it's unlikely that the realities of people of color will go unnoticed in her classroom. Especially at Sarah Lawrence, faculty and curriculum are inextricable; more diversity in the curriculum would mean hiring more faculty with diverse expertises and passions.

But responsibility for a diverse curriculum cannot and should not fall only on the shoulders of faculty of color. It is up to each of us to uphold and protect our academic freedom, in terms of airing opinions and choosing what and how to teach. It is also up to each of us to ask these questions: in the Sarah Lawrence curriculum, is there a center and a margin? Are there many centers, all valued and argued with equally? Is the knowledge imparted by an education here not only that of what has been called 'the West' and its values but of the whole world?
Contract Employees, Staff & Administration

This section covers everyone who works for Sarah Lawrence who is not a faculty member or a student. Contract employees work through five independent companies, from the forty-two people who work for FLIK, the food service provider, to the two from Follett, the bookstore company. Among staff, faculty assistants work only during the academic year and have no contracts; regular staff provide clerical support services as well as maintenance and security. Administrators are the deans, directors and assistant directors of the various college offices. All college employees receive the same benefits, with variances for vacations; contract employees receive no benefits through the college.

Of a total of seventy-four contract employees, 84% are people of color and 16% are white: a mirror image of the rest of the college community, which is approximately 84% white. This represents the one area in which the Sarah Lawrence record on racial diversity demands no improvement.

Among staff and administration, 16.2% are people of color; of administrative faculty, who serve on college committees, four of twenty-four are people of color, or 16.6%. The college’s Administrative Officers—the President, the Dean of the College, the Dean of Studies & Student Life, the Vice President for College Resources, the Vice President for Finance and Planning, and the Secretary of the College/Special Assistant to the President—included no person of color ten years ago and include no person of color now.

One of the most important measures of a college’s commitment to racial diversity is the racial diversity of its administration. It is not the only measure; an administration may be committed to diversity without reflecting it. As affirmative action has been attacked and dismantled in Texas and California, it is often college administrators allied with liberal faculty who try to preserve affirmative action, while regents and/or trustees and conservative faculty exert pressure to abolish it.

But for an administration to voice commitment to racial diversity without embodying it is eventually hypocrisy. If the highest echelons of institutional power are not racially diverse, even
in the face of expressed commitments to justice, that points to a complacency, an unspoken willingness to allow things to remain essentially as they are.

Again, Sarah Lawrence is small; many decisions about hiring and promotion are made informally, among people who know each other well. While this system can provide a secure sense of community for some, others can be unfairly excluded. A Federal jury recently found that a US retailer systematically discriminated against black employees in corporate promotions because "promotion decisions...were made under an 'excessively subjective' personnel system that allowed lower-level managers to promote employees without review, favoring whites." (New York Times, 3/3/96) Mamphela Ramphele, vice chancellor of the University of Cape Town, has led a campaign there to have all university policies written down. "The old-boy networks had a way of transmitting these things," she has said. "But the outsiders—the women and the blacks—didn't know where to get this information." (New York Times Magazine, 4/13/97)

The administration at Sarah Lawrence should not be understood as the college's only decision-making body; important responsibilities are also held by the faculty and by the trustees. But administrators are certainly leaders, and raise key voices in any community discussion; they could provide real leadership on this issue, not only by discussing it but by increasing racial diversity among themselves.
### DIVERSITY STATISTICS FOR CONTRACTED SERVICES

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Total Employees</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Latino</th>
<th>Native-American</th>
<th>White</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FLIK INTERNATIONAL</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Director</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Managers/Chefs</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>42</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PERCENTAGES</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td><strong>2%</strong></td>
<td><strong>17%</strong></td>
<td><strong>60%</strong></td>
<td><strong>0%</strong></td>
<td><strong>21%</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>COLIN CARES</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Site Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Site Manager</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>21</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>19</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PERCENTAGES</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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<td><strong>65%</strong></td>
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![Page 24](image)
### People of Color

**Staff and Administration**

**1996-1997**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Number of People</th>
<th>Percentage of total Staff/Administration</th>
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<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>83.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total number of people | 197 | 16.2% |
| Total number of people of color | 32 |       |
Table 1

*It is important to note that People of Color included anyone who identified themselves as Black/African American, Latino/Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, Native American, Biracial, or any other racial identity that is traditionally considered 'of color' (even if they also indicated white heritage).

**After significant debate among the analysts, it was decided that anyone who identified as Jewish, or both white and Jewish, would be included in the Jewish category.
Survey

METHODOLOGY

Several OAR members organized a sub-committee whose task was to form a portrait of what racism looks like at Sarah Lawrence. As part of that effort, the Portrait Sub-committee prepared a survey, whose stated purpose was to "form a clear picture of how we interact with each other." Questions were suggested by OAR members at its monthly meeting. Nineteen questions were compiled, focusing on perceptions of racial diversity as it impacted community, faculty, curriculum, and other aspects of life at Sarah Lawrence. The last question on the survey asked for additional comments. The questions generally required YES/NO or check-the-box responses and some provided room for additional comments. An optimistic 1200 copies were produced and slated for distribution; about 400 were handed out and 286 were completed (see Table 1), giving a yield rate of 72%.

The survey was primarily administered to students at lunchtime on January 28, 1997, at Bates Cafeteria, Charlie’s Pub and the Health Food Bar. Members of OAR, armed with pencils and surveys, worked singly or in small teams in each location. Participating students were asked to complete and return surveys on the spot in hopes of enhancing the return rate. To access faculty, surveys were placed in their mailboxes. A very small number were also handed out to individuals who desired to participate but could not be present at the time of general administration. The faculty and miscellaneous surveys were returned, via campus mail, to [redacted] and [redacted]. The surveys were counted, then separated into four self-identified racial identity categories: White, People of Color, Jewish, and Racially Unidentified. Student surveys were classified by class standing (i.e., year in school); non-student surveys were separated into categories of Faculty, Staff, Administrators, and Other. The responses were read, discussed, and analyzed in a series of meetings by the Portrait sub-committee, other OAR members, several volunteers, and recruits. Presented below are significant findings and some noteworthy highlights.

RELATING ACROSS RACIAL LINES

Community

Eleven of the nineteen survey questions focused on community at Sarah Lawrence and
interpersonal relationships (Questions 1-6 and 10-14). The first question on the survey asked if the Sarah Lawrence community is a diverse one. More than one-half of the respondents (52%) said NO; 41% said YES; and 7% did not respond. A closer looks shows that the majority of White Students (59%), Students of Color (71%), Jewish Students (63%), and Racially Unidentified Students (52%) said NO. All 4 Jewish Faculty, Staff and Administrators said YES. White Faculty and White Administrators, as well as Faculty and Administrators of Color, were divided on the issue. Eighty nine percent (89%) of the 9 White Staff members said YES.

Next, respondents were asked to rate on-campus race relations. Most of the responses clustered around choices #2 and #3; that is, most students who responded reported that they perceived race relations at Sarah Lawrence to be either “better than the rest of the country” or “average (i.e., on par with the rest of the country)”. Between the two choices, response #2 (“better than the rest of the country”) clustered more heavily. One Student of Color analyst thought it important to note that the construct of the question is confounded by the fact that the College’s race relations as “average” or “better than” are evaluated against the national trend. That is to say, if the College is average, or on par with the rest of the country which is itself enmeshed in racism and the violence that characterizes the phenomenon, “average” then, no longer connotes the acceptable, but reflects complicity in the unacceptable. Similarly, “better than” loses much of its positive connotation. Race relations in the United States have, in fact, become overwhelmingly problematic, and approach choice #5 in this survey question: “rampant discord”.¹ This closer inspection of Question 2 reveals the relatedness of choices #2 and #5: average and rampant discord. So, here again, being on par does not excuse or justify the College’s troubled campus race relations, but rather situates it as part of a national problem.

The answer to Question 3 was an overwhelming YES that students at Sarah Lawrence expect race relations to be better at the College than in the rest of the country: 82% of the respondents said so.

Question 10 asked for the percentage of one’s friends who were of a racial group other than

¹Two concrete examples: the national atmosphere of xenophobia which enabled the passing into law of Proposition 187 in California (denying basic human services to the children of undocumented immigrants) and the current dismantling of affirmative action.
one's own. One hundred forty five (145) White Students turned in surveys. Ten percent (10%) of them chose to not state what percentage of their friends were persons from racial groups other than their own. Seventy five percent (75%) indicated that race does not influence their choice of friends or partners. Yet more than a third of them (34%) reported having only 5% to 10% of their friendships with persons of other racial groups, the average being 22%. This could be a function of the College's racial make-up. The most common response was 10% (reported by 28 students), followed by 5% (reported by 22 students). One White Student reported 95% of friendships outside of his racial group. None of the White Students said either 0% or 100%.

A pattern emerged when White Students' responses were evaluated by year in school. While the majority of them (91% of First-Years, 84% of Juniors and 89% of Graduate Students) said that race did not influence their choice of friends, 30% of the White Sophomores and 32% of the White Seniors said that it did. One Student of Color analyst suggested that Seniors may have been politicized by the atmosphere of protest and questioning sparked by the hunger strike of 1994.² Admittedly, this is at best a partial explanation. Other factors might be: compartmentalized environments inside and outside the College, idealism, lack of awareness, and adherence to ideas of political correctness. One respondent wrote, "This question is inappropriate. I refuse to pick through my friends to see who's 'ethnic' and who's not." There were several comments like this.

Jewish Students turned in a total of 16 surveys. They reported an average of 19% of their friendships with persons of a different racial group, ranging from a low of 5% to a high of 40%. It must be noted here that it is unclear whether the respondents who identified themselves as Jewish identified their non-ethnic White friends as persons belonging to another racial group, since 44% of these respondents self-identified as both White and Jewish. It is unclear what distinction, if any, they made between race and ethnicity. Also, it is interesting that a few Jewish respondents framed the racism question around discrimination against White Students. When asked if race influenced their choice of friends, none of the Jewish students said YES.

One Jewish Student analyst sought to explain the low number of respondents identifying themselves as Jewish by positing the following: Estimates put the number of Jewish Students on

²This student action was in response to the College's refusal to grant tenure to Horatio Williams, African American professor of Political Science.
campus at one-third of the total population. Thus, the fact that only 6% of the student respondents identified themselves as Jewish (and then only nominally so, as many also identified as White), might indicate that many Jewish people have come to regard the issue of racism, discrimination, and, most interestingly, self-identification, along color-based guidelines. Because Jews of European origin look similar to or identical to Whites, many have come to identify themselves as White. It is also probable that Jews living in New York, a city with a significant Jewish population, would be likely to encounter a lesser degree of intolerance than their counterparts in areas with sparser Jewish populations. This could lead to less of a perceived need to identify as Jewish. The analyst concluded that the distinction between race and ethnicity continues to be a much debated issue of Jewish self-identification.

Students of color completed and returned a total of 49 surveys and had the highest average percentage of friendships with persons of other racial groups: 53%. Six and a half percent (6.5%) of this group reported 100% of their friends being persons of a racial group other than their own. Half of the Students of Color clustered in the range of 70% - 100% friends from a different racial group. Nearly one quarter of these students indicated that race influenced their choice of friends or partners. Those who responded YES to this question also clustered according to year in school: 40% of the Student of Color Seniors said that race informed the composition of their friendship networks.

All 8 White Administrators responded that race does not influence their choice of friends. Their average percentage of friendships with persons of another racial group is 33%, ranging from a low of 0% to a high of 80%. One Student of Color analyst wondered how administrators with such racially integrated friendship networks could have ‘forgotten’ to make racial and socio-economic diversity issues of import in the College’s Strategic Plan.3

To the question “Do you think you interact differently with persons of other racial/ethnic groups in academic versus social settings?”, the majority of the respondents from the student body reported being relatively consistent in the ways in which they interact with persons of other races. Students of Color had a 29% YES response pattern, 71% NO; Jewish students had a 36% YES

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3This accidental omission was acknowledged by President Ichman during the walk-in protest of May 1997.
response pattern with 64% NO; White students, 20% YES, 80% NO; and Racially Unidentified students, 8% YES, and 92% NO. In response to Questions 11 and 12, most respondents said they had not had an interracial relationship on campus. Of the few who had, only half gave additional information. The majority of those who reported negative feedback were Students of Color. Answers to these questions suggest consistency, but say nothing of the nature or quality of our interactions.

**Experiencing and Witnessing Racism**

Figures 2 and 3 portray students’ experience with racism. More than a quarter of the respondents (26%) reported experiencing racism at the College; and nearly a half (47%) of the respondents reported witnessing incidents of racism. Of the Students of Color, 54% of the First-Years reported no experience of racism on campus, although 63% of them have witnessed it. Seventy one percent (71%) of the Sophomores, 38% of the Juniors and 50% of the Seniors reported experiencing racism. Thirteen of 46 Students of Color reported never experiencing racism themselves or witnessing racism on campus. Of those 13, 8 were Asian or Asian American, 1 was Black, 1 was Hispanic, and the remaining 3 identified themselves as White/Native American. The Asian/Asian American students were broadly distributed across class standing (i.e., First-Years through Graduate Students). This finding supports the notion that Asian/Asian American students may experience racism that is qualitatively as well as quantitatively different from that experienced by other Students of Color at the College. Two of these Asian/Asian American students commented: “I’ve only been here a semester, though” and “Not yet, but I’m new here”.

Students reported witnessing/experiencing racism with all individuals. In descending order, most often it occurred in incidents among students, between students and faculty, or between students and staff. When Students of Color were asked about motives behind racist behavior they had experienced or witnessed, “unintentional” and “deliberate” received almost equal ratings. A few students were unsure. Others inserted comments like, “mundane extreme environmental racism” and “pure ignorance”.

**DIVERSITY: ACTUAL VERSUS PERCEIVED NUMBERS**

31
**Student Responses**

**Question Number 4**

Incidence of Experienced Racism

- **White Students**
  - Students of Color
    - First-Years
    - Juniors
    - Graduate Students
  - Jewish Students
    - Sophomores
    - Seniors
    - Year Not Identified

*Unidentified

Figure 2

**Question Number 5**

Incidence of Witnessed Racism

- White Students
  - Students of Color
    - First-Years
    - Juniors
    - Graduate Students
  - Jewish Students
    - Sophomores
    - Seniors
    - Year Not Identified

*Unidentified

Figure 3

*There were no graduate students who did not identify themselves racially/ethnically.

**It is part of OAR’s working definition of racism that white people cannot experience racism. It is suspected that this population of white students who claim to have experienced racism has confused race discrimination or some other form of prejudice with racism. We believe that their white privilege, or power, in this particular society precludes their actually experiencing anything like the racism that students of color on this campus experience.
**Non-Student Responses**

**Question Number 4**

**Incidence of Experienced Racism**

![Bar Chart](image)

- People of Color
- White
- Jewish
- Unidentified

- Staff
- *Faculty
- *Administrators

*Figure 4*

---

**Question Number 5**

**Incidence of Witnessed Racism**

![Bar Chart](image)

- People of Color
- White
- Jewish
- Unidentified

- Staff
- *Faculty
- *Administrators

*Figure 5*

*One person of color identified as both an administrator and faculty member, and was therefore counted in both categories.*

Eleven people did not identify themselves racially/ethnically, and did not identify themselves as being a member of the student body, staff, faculty, or administration. They were left out of these charts.
Race-focused Groups

Question 7 asked what percentage of the College’s students were students of color. The College’s official statistic for Students of Color is 16.9%. Student responses were grouped into three categories: (1) those who guessed 20% or more, (2) those who guessed in the range of 11% to 19%, and those who guessed 10% or less. The White Student analyst of this segment of the survey stated that she divided the analysis in this manner because she felt strongly that both 10% and 20% were conceptually important numbers. Roughly 42% of Students of Color were correct in their estimations. However, half of the Sophomores believed that there were well over 25% Students of Color at the College. In contrast, Juniors guessed lower: 43% of them estimated that there were 10% Students of Color. Of those who underestimated the number of Students of Color on campus, only First-Years believed the campus was diverse as well (Question 1). One group of Sophomores estimated that Students of Color comprise 40% or more of the College -- clearly they were being facetious.

Within the Students of Color group, there was no consistent correlation between the number of Students of Color perceived to be on campus, and how respondents viewed “race focused groups” (Question 14). Sixty two percent (62%) of the Students of Color thought race focused groups were beneficial, 29% thought they were neither beneficial nor divisive, and 9% thought they were divisive. The White Student analyst for this section counted the written-in answer of “both” to mean that students thought the groups were divisive.

White students’ reactions to the existence of race-focused groups show an important link. Forty two percent (42%) of the White Students who overestimated the number of Students of Color on campus also thought that race-focused groups were divisive. Seventy percent (70%) of White Sophomores who overestimated the number of Students of Color on campus believed these groups were beneficial. Forty two percent (42%) of the First-Years who overestimated the number of Students of Color thought that such groups were divisive, 28% thought they were beneficial, and roughly 28% thought they were neither beneficial nor divisive. Thirty seven percent (37%) of the White Juniors who overestimated Students of Color presence on campus thought that these groups were divisive; 37% thought neither beneficial nor divisive, and 25% believed they were beneficial. Of those White Seniors who overestimated the number of Students of Color, 80% thought the
groups were divisive and 20% thought they were beneficial. In contrast, of the White Students who correctly identified the number of Students of Color on campus, 65% thought that the groups were beneficial, 21% thought they were neither beneficial nor divisive, 14% thought the groups were divisive.

Faculty

Question 8 asked what percent of tenured faculty were People of Color. The actual figure is 4.26%. Most students surveyed believed that Faculty of Color comprised 10% or less of the tenured faculty. Twenty-three percent (23%) of Students of Color and 20% of White students estimated the figure to be less than 5%. About 46% of White Students and 39% of Students of Color estimated the figure to be between 5% to 10%. Ten percent (10%) of White Students and 12% of Students of Color estimated 15% to 30%. Some students left this question blank.

The responses of White Non-students (Faculty, Staff, and Administrators) were particularly significant. Sixty-three percent (63%) of them estimated that 5% to 15% of tenured faculty were People of Color, 21% estimated the figure to be 20-25%. One White Staff was the only Non-student who estimated 40% or more.

Curriculum

Question 9, which asked for an evaluation of the College’s course offerings, rendered some very interesting results. It should be noted that no particular type of diversity was specified. Thus, it is not clear whether respondents were answering to cultural diversity (i.e. more Euro-centric), subject diversity (i.e., math and science versus creative writing), or any other classification of diversity in the curriculum. The evaluations of course offerings as not adequately diverse increased with class standing (i.e., year in school). That is to say, as we looked at First-Years through Seniors, dissatisfaction grew. One Student of Color analyst pointed to a few explanations for this pattern. It could be understood to indicate the ways in which the College is seemingly structured to cater to diverse academic needs and interests, but in fact, as students’ ideas become more developed and sophisticated, the severe limitations of the curriculum become apparent. Also, throughout an individuals’s academic career s/he would come into contact with more people who are different, with different interests, ideologies, concerns, and questionings. This contact certainly equals exposure, and necessarily results in the desire to learn more about what the College’s core curriculum fails to
teach. As is evident from these results, the void in curriculum (directly reflecting the relative homogeneity of the faculty) is real. The longer students stay a part of this institution the more aware they become of the ways in which curriculum fails to provide a diverse, inclusive and therefore adequate education.

Fifty-four percent (54%) of all students found course offerings to be diverse (66% White, 9% Students of Color, 9% Jewish, and 9% Racially Unidentified). The percentages of White Students according to class standing are: 86% Freshmen; 62% Sophomores; 46% Juniors; 63% Seniors; and 58% Graduate Students. Note that the percentage decreased as class standing increased, but Seniors deviated from this general pattern. Twenty six percent (26%) of all White Students answered NO; 9% did not respond.

While 47% of Students of Color answered YES to the question of extant curriculum diversity, the percentage decreased as class standing increased: 69% Freshmen; 57% Sophomores; 38% Juniors; and 20% Seniors (but 38% Graduate Students). Thirty-five percent (35%) of Students of Color answered NO; 18% did not respond. For Jewish students, 75% answered YES (60% Freshmen; 100% Sophomores and Juniors; 66% Seniors; and 50% of the 2 Graduate Students). Thirty five percent (35%) of the Jewish Students answered NO; 18% did not respond.

The unanimity in responses of the Administrator of Color and Faculty of Color was remarkable. Among faculty who identified as People of Color, all (3) answered that they thought course offerings were not diverse; the sole Administrator who self-identified as a Person of Color thought course offerings were not diverse. Since White Faculty were very mixed in their responses, no general conclusion could be made. Five of the 8 White Administrators (62%) answered YES to the question of extant curriculum diversity; the other 3 (38%) did not respond. The sole Jewish Administrator found course offerings to be diverse "for a small institution."

Financial Aid

Several patterns emerged from analysis of the responses to Question 15: "Do you think there are students who receive preferential treatment from the Financial Aid Office based on their race? If yes, which students?" Overall, the student body responded NO across racial groupings. White Students had a 76% NO response rate; Students of Color, 68%; Jewish Students, 67%; and Racially Unidentified, 60%. Notably, among the groups, it was the First-Years who consistently registered
the most YES responses. For example, 67% of the Racially Unidentified, 50% of the Jewish, 41% of the White, and 39% of the Student of Color First-Years said that indeed there was preferential treatment in the awarding of financial aid. Our analysts posited that: (1) of all the groups, First-Years -- as a whole -- have probably had the most direct and recent contact with the financial aid process, so their experiences and perceptions are still fresh; and (2) that First-Years may also have a limited understanding of how the financial aid process actually works (especially if their parents handled the paperwork). Knowledge of the process is gradually gained over years of experience and exposure at the College. These two analyses may work together: it is not unlikely that First-Years are enmeshed in the financial aid system without understanding how it works. It is also important to note that the number of First-Years on financial aid has an effect on the responses to this question. If only 30% of First-Years receive aid in a given year, then the other 70% would likely not be familiar with the mechanics of how aid is awarded.

Comments in this section tended to be blunt. "This, my dears, is a racist question," said one Student of Color. A White male upperclassman said that “students who are not White females” receive preferential treatment from the Financial Aid Office on the basis of race. Across racial groups, respondents generally had no clue (“?”,”I don’t know”, “We are trying to find out”, etc.). The great majority of White Students who commented on this question indicated that they believed that People of Color receive preferential treatment from the Financial Aid Office on the basis of race. Answers such as “Hispanics and [B]lacks”, “minority students, because of affirmative action”, “People of Color”, and “[minority students] because of the College’s attempt to ‘diversify’ the campus” characterized responses from White and Jewish Students. Students of Color were remarkably unresponsive when asked to give details about which students they thought received preferential treatment from the Financial Aid Office. Though most did not comment specifically about who received preferential treatment, 24% of them thought race-based discrimination affected the awarding of financial aid. Thirty-one percent (31%) of them did not answer the question. One Student of Color described the question as “degrading”, “inappropriate” and “disturbing”. Other students believed there exists discrimination in the awarding of financial aid based on geography. One White Faculty (male) stated that it was “a statistical fact” that Blacks receive preferential treatment from the Financial Aid Office.
RACISM: WHOSE ISSUE IS IT?

Across race, there was a general consensus amongst respondents to Question 16: “Do you think discrimination against People of Color has negative consequences for White people?” The majority of students (86%) responded YES; 90% of White Students, 84% of Students of Color, 94% of Jewish Students, and 90% of the Racially Unidentified students. One Student of Color analyst noted that it remains to be seen whether or not this awareness translates into proactive measures that change the ways we think about or respond to the racism that is plaguing us. When talking about racism it is usually Persons of Color who dominate and become central subjects of the discussion. If indeed we understand racism to be everyone’s issue — as suggested by the results of this question — then both the structure and nature of our discussions and proposed actions need to be changed to reflect this reality.

Class Issues

Question 17 asked students to consider the wages of the staff they have most contact with: Flik food service workers. Responses showed a general tendency to overestimate the hourly wage paid to a starting worker; $5.50 compared to $4.75 (minimum wage at the time of survey). Results suggest that the number of years spent at the College does not affect student accuracy at estimating this figure. Seniors, as a class, were, ironically, the farthest off the mark, guessing an average of $5.78. All 46 of them responded to this question. The 75 First-Years, meanwhile, guessed much closer as a body, averaging $5.25. One White Student analyst suggested that Seniors may perceive the large sums of money circulating within the school as all inclusive, i.e., reaching all levels of employment. On the other hand, the First-Years may have a better idea of the wage opportunities in the real world, having scooped ice cream or some such similar work before coming to Sarah Lawrence.

Identity: Race, Economic Class, and Gender

Students were resistant to identifying themselves by race, economic class and gender (Question 18). Students frequently replaced the word “gender” with the word “sex.” The Portrait sub-committee acknowledges the significance of this distinction. Fourteen percent (14%) of the survey respondents refused to identify themselves by racial classifications. More than half of the
Racially Unidentified group wrote "NO!", put large X's over the question, or skipped it completely. The other half gave answers such as "homo sapiens", "None of your goddam business," "not important", "American", "human", "woman of all worlds/lands/cultures", and "Mutt". Respondents in this category had an overwhelmingly negative reaction to the question of race. The issue of economic class was treated similarly by the Racially Unidentified category of respondents. Responses included: "sufficiently supplied for a joyful existence", "$5 is a lot of cash", "student", and "princess". Across racial lines, students and faculty predominantly identified as middle class. Several White Students said that they did not know which economic class they belonged to, while others reported their parents' yearly income, often followed by questions like "What does that make me?"

**Free-Form Comments**

In giving us additional feedback, students were critical of the way questions were framed and of the limitations of YES/NO responses. Others reported feeling uncomfortable with filling out the survey. Several questions were viewed as racist. Nevertheless, OAR garnered lots of compliments for its efforts. Nineteen of the 26 White Juniors wrote no comments. Four of the 7 who did comment expressed a general appreciation of the survey and what they decided its motives were. The other 3 who commented gave specific critiques of the survey including: (1) the motives of the creators of the survey were too obvious; (2) the issues were too complex for such a simplistic format; and (3) a non sequitur that was critical in tone. Most White Sophomores (22 of 29) had no comment. Of the 7 who commented, 2 wrote irrelevant statements that were meant to be funny; 3 seemed appreciative; 2 reflected about their personal experiences with race; and 2 criticized the survey as narrow-minded and useless. The remaining White Sophomore said the survey was targeted to racial issues concerning only Black students and ignoring White, Hispanic, and Asian students.

Thirty four of the 44 White First-Years did not comment. Three of the 10 who commented thought the survey was unproductive; one also said it was offensive. Five used the comment section to reflect on race relations on and off campus; 2 appreciated the intentions of the survey. However, one of these two thought the questions were vague and hard to answer with only a YES or NO. A couple of students gave somewhat hostile answers, saying that the survey was "used to boost internal
feelings about diversity and not to help the people it should help.”

Seventeen of the 27 White Seniors did not comment. Two of the 10 who commented reflected on their personal experience of race; 4 expressed appreciation for the survey (2 of whom gave suggestions for improvements). Two others expressed uncertain feelings about the survey; 1 expressed feelings of confusion about the origins of some of the questions. The remaining White Senior commented that one of the questions was in bad taste. One person criticized the survey as not being a good way to “gather concrete data”, and suggested examining interactions between students instead. Ten of the 19 White Graduate Students did not comment; 6 of the 9 who did used the survey to make comments about race and/or class issues raised by the survey; 3 expressed discomfort and uneasiness about filling out the survey, one saying s/he wished s/he were “more qualified”. Among the White Graduate Students and Seniors, a few pointed out class diversity as an issue, and like Jewish Students, a lot of focus was on anti-White issues and race discrimination suffered by White students.

Analysis of the comments made by White Students in the free-form comments section of the survey revealed a general sense of discomfort and uneasiness with the survey. Giving honest answers clearly had emotional implications. This discomfort is captured by the following response from a White Graduate Student: "Can't pretend I'm comfortable filling out this survey. It is hard not to feel accused of racism as I answer honestly." One White Student analyst thought the White Students were “quick to frame questions in terms of the attitudes of Students of Color towards Whites.” A White First-Year commented in this section of the survey that the College seems “self-segregated.”

Five of the 7 White Faculty did not comment. One commented, in detail, on her experience of racism on this campus, expressing feelings of isolation and confusion surrounding race issues. She thanked OAR for the survey, and for “doing for this school what the administration was incapable of doing for it.” Eight of the 9 White Staff did not comment. The only one who commented asked, “Why only Flik employees?” Six of the 8 White Administrators did not comment. One said the questions and explanations needed to be more detailed; the other warned against confusing race and economics. The 2 individuals who identified themselves as White Other (no other status given) did not comment.
Nearly two-thirds (65%) of People of Color did not comment in Question 19. Of the 20 who
did, 8 gave feedback that had a positive/hopeful tone or included useful criticism. Six made general
comments about racism; 2 wanted to know how the data would be used; and 1 wanted “a public
presentation of the survey”. One person simply said “[T]his is a dumb thing.” Other respondents
questioned the relevance of some of the survey questions and asked for clarification of terms such
as ‘diverse’ and ‘people of color’.

Six of the 19 Jewish respondents (32%) offered free-form comments. Two criticized the
wording of the survey as “confusing” or “partisan”. One asked “Is Jewish racial or ethnic?” and
another mentioned anti-Semitic incidents and tensions between Blacks and Jews. The remaining two
respondents said “I think we’ve had enough surveys thank you very much” and “This is good”,
respectively.

Roughly 75% of the Racially Unidentified respondents did not offer free-form comments.
One respondent referred to the survey as “heresy” and “racist”. Others found the questions “over-
simplified” and thought that YES/NO questions would lead to unreliable statistics. Some criticized
the survey for not doing enough, or “not doing anything” to change life at the College. One person
wrote “Thank you” and thought the survey was “important”.

CONCLUSION

A trio of students (two White males, one Black female) administered the survey at Bates.
They reported negative reactions directed towards the survey but not necessarily at themselves. Two
Black female students administered the survey in Charlie’s Pub. They reported a very positive
reception: students treated them in a friendly manner and were very willing to participate. The
White male student administering the survey at the Health Food Bar reported being the target of
much hostility from the students he approached. The complex nature of race relations is indicated
here. Perhaps the fear of being perceived as racist factored into the civility the Black women
reported. With a White male, however, the responses may have been more unguarded. While it is
recognized that students’ individual reputations, their prior interactions with others, and gender
differences may have played some part in these interpersonal dynamics, one could conclude from
the disparate experiences of the survey administrators that race perhaps plays a significant role in the
nature and quality of our interactions on campus.

Concern about bias in interpretation of this survey was constantly discussed. Roughly one-half of the survey analysts were Students of Color. One recurring problem in analyzing the surveys was that the Students of Color inevitably became agitated, distracted and temporarily unable to continue working because of responses or comments that they found “ignorant,” “racist” or “offensive.” White and Jewish students analyzing the survey were not visibly upset by respondents’ comments.

The survey questions were quite pointed. Consistently, reactions and feedback indicated that respondents thought the phrasing of the questions betrayed bias, that the survey language needed to be more neutral or that the questions were offensive. It could be theorized that in deference to honesty, respondents gave answers that painted very bare and often unflattering portraits of themselves and their lives. Those negatives feelings may have been projected onto the questions.

It is difficult to raise a productive discussion about race in a climate of non-acknowledgment, defensiveness, and hostility. Clearly students and faculty have uncomfortable and sometimes painful feelings about race. Despite this, many respondents risked honesty and gave thoughtful answers. One White Faculty took the time to attach a typed page of searingly personal feelings about race matters on campus. Generally, the responses to the survey took essentially two forms: applause for OAR’s efforts and suggestions for improvement, or defensive hostility. From the survey, it is also clear that there is a significant segment of the Sarah Lawrence community willing to participate in the dialogue about race. This willingness is the first step to change, but only the first step.

('00)
Help us form a clear picture of how we interact with each other. The results will be published by OAR (Organized Against Racism).

1. Do you think the Sarah Lawrence community is a diverse one?  
   □ Yes □ No

2. Rate race relations at Sarah Lawrence by circling ONE of the following:
   1 - seamless harmony
   2 - better than the rest of the country
   3 - average (i.e., on par with the rest of the country)
   4 - worse than the rest of the country
   5 - rampant discord

3. Should we expect race relations at Sarah Lawrence to be better than those in the rest of the country?  
   □ Yes □ No

4. Have you ever experienced racism on campus?  
   □ Yes □ No
   If yes, please explain.
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________

5. Have you ever witnessed any incidents of racism on campus?  
   □ Yes □ No
   If yes, did the behavior in that incident seem:
   □ deliberate □ unintentional □ not sure

   Whom did it involve?
   □ students only   □ faculty only
   □ student(s) & staff   □ faculty & staff
   □ student(s) & faculty   □ faculty & administration
   □ student(s) & administration   □ visitors &/or parents

   Please feel free to share additional details about the incident(s).
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________

6. Does race influence your choice of friends or partners?  
   □ Yes □ No

7. Estimate the percentage of SLC students who are people of color.  
   _________%  

8. What percentage of tenured faculty do you think are people of color?  
   _________%  

9. Do you feel our course offerings are adequately diverse?  
   □ Yes □ No
   If not, what are your suggestions?
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________

10. What percentage of your friendships on campus are with persons of a racial group other than your own?  
    _________%
11. Are you currently involved in an interracial relationship at SLC? ☐ ☐

12. Have you ever been involved in an interracial relationship at SLC? ☐ ☐
   If yes, what is/was campus reaction to your relationship?

13. Do you think you interact differently with persons of other racial/ethnic groups in academic versus social settings? ☐ ☐
   If yes, tell us how and why.

14. Do you think having numerous race-focused groups (such as ASU, Darker Shades of Queer, Harambe, MOCA, OAR, etc.) is: ☐ beneficial ☐ divisive ☐ neither

15. Do you think there are students who receive preferential treatment from the Financial Aid Office based on their race? ☐ ☐
   If yes, which students?

16. Do you think discrimination against people of color has negative consequences for white people? ☐ ☐
   Tell us why you think so.

17. Guess the average hourly wage of Flik (food service) employees at SLC. ... $______

18. TELL US MORE ABOUT YOURSELF:
   Gender: __________________________
   Racial/Ethnic/National Identity: __________________________
   Economic Class: __________________________

   Students: ☐ Freshman ☐ Junior ☐ Graduate
              ☐ Sophomore ☐ Senior ☐ CCE

   Non-students: ☐ Faculty ☐ Administration
                 ☐ Staff ☐ Other: __________________________

19. We welcome your comments regarding the survey or other pertinent matters: __________________________

   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

THANKS FOR YOUR INPUT!
In Our Own Voices:
Interviews, Personal Statements & Letters

• Student Voices

Interview

I was suite mates with two white [First-years] and everything was fine. They were a little messy but I told them from the first day about little things: like not to leave their garbage bin in the bathroom because I had a problem with that. They said that was fine with them. I also asked them to clean the bathroom once a week since I cleaned the bathroom once a week. (There were four people using the bathroom: one of the young women had her boyfriend living there.) In late September/early October, they started being really disgusting. I would go into the bathroom and it would just be dirty. And both were smokers I think. Then I couldn't use the bathroom without hearing the boyfriend's voice on the other side of the door while I was using the bathroom. And when I had friends come over, he would taunt them from behind the door while they were in the bathroom, taunting them and making rude noises. One of the young women would sing, "Germ whore, germ whore," behind the door when they heard me or my friends in the bathroom.

They wouldn't clean the bathroom at all and there would be this pile of hair in the bathroom by their door. They wouldn't clean it at all. Because I'm black and have a different kind of hair than they do, it was clearly their hair, but they refused to clean it. It was almost funny. And so I said to them, "Could you just clean the tub and whatever?" One day I wrote a note saying: "Since you guys won't answer the door when I knock, could you just clean up?" And they wrote me back saying: "We think you are being mean because we can't keep our garbage in the bathroom,..." etc. (Later, they accused me of trying to kill them by using roach spray. They had left their garbage in the bathroom and it was teeming with roaches, so I used roach spray to deal with the problem.) In response to their note, I knocked on their door and told them if they would empty the garbage bin everyday, I wouldn't have a problem with it. My friends were in my room when I went to speak to my suite mates and my suite mates were still being pretty nice and everything at that point.
That night, I cleaned the bathroom -- scrubbed it out and washed it. Then my suite mates and the boyfriend went in there and urinated all over the toilet seat, drew stick figures in marker, wrote "Germ Whore" on the bathroom mirror, and put glue all over my door. I left the room and went to see the Director of Housing. I told her what happened and she said, "Well, okay, I'll take care of it." And nothing happened. She said she was going to talk to them. But nothing happened.

Then the school paper published a letter I wrote about our responsibility to clean up after ourselves on campus. One woman had complained about someone leaving chicken bones in her art studio. All my friends -- who are mostly people of color -- were complaining about stuff their suite mates or other people would do. Like in Slonim Woods, people would not wash dishes they had used. The day the letter was published, someone put glue in my lock so that I couldn't get my key in the door. I was homeless for two days. They finally had to take the lock out so that I could get into my room. Then my suite mates went to the Director of Housing and lied, accusing me of having my friends threaten them -- because I'm black and that's what black folks do, right? As far as I know, no incident like that happened. My friends here are not like that, but at SLC when a black person does anything, it's just amplified.

I used to leave my door unlocked and [partially] open when I was there so that I wouldn't have to get up and unlock it or open it when my friends came by. One day I was hosting a prospective student in my room and all my friends were there in my room with me. One of my suite mates came by and yelled "Nigger" at my door then started repeatedly banging the door shut then opening it, then banging it shut, over and over. In front of witnesses! Then in her report countering mine, she claimed that I was the one who had banged her door. I mean, she stood there for about two minutes banging my door right in front of us!

After that, they started leaving peanuts in front of my door, and they wrote "monkey" and "monkey lover" in chalk in front of my door and on their notice board. They would scream "monkey lover!" at my friend, [name redacted] who lived on the hall. They had a notice board on their door and they would write nasty notes on it which seemed to be directed at me. A lot of stuff happened. This is so painful for me because [Student Affairs] did nothing about it. The Director of Student Affairs had all my friends come in to tell their story. And nothing happened. Absolutely nothing happened. The young women weren't reprimanded. I begged to have my room changed. [Student Affairs]
eventually allowed me to move. It took a long time. [They] said there wasn't space but the room they finally gave me had been empty all semester.

Even after I got my room changed I was still living on the same hall with my former suite mates and they were still harassing me. They dragged garbage in front of my room door. Peanuts, oranges -- things a monkey would eat. Then, they eventually demanded to have their rooms changed and got new rooms on a different hall. They did so much stuff and nothing happened to them. [The Director of Student Affairs] told me that I had instigated this whole thing by writing the article in the newspaper. This all went on for a month or a month and a half. I saw one of them today. They don't look at me now. I saw one of them this summer in Washington Square Park with the boyfriend who had been living in their room.

The thing is that I think at any other school it would have probably been a lot worse.
Personal Statement

My first year at Sarah Lawrence made me approach racism and trying to be an anti-racist white person in a different way than I had before. I thought that change at an institution like Sarah Lawrence must be easier than change in the United States at large...not like any kind of change is easy, but I figured that this had to be an environment where there were more possibilities for it. But even talking about race and racism with other students was strained. So many white students I spoke with denied the existence of racism on this campus and were not able to look at the deeper forms of racism at work here, let alone the racism that every white person contains. As long as no one is being beaten up or called names there’s not a problem. Students wouldn’t even call other students black or Asian in some effort to be color-blind. They’d rather say, “See that woman with the blue pants and the earrings with the back pack over there,” than “see that black woman ...” I don’t buy statements like “I don’t see a person’s race, I see the person.” Like pretending race doesn’t exist will translate to racism not existing. What is it that paralyzes people from talking honestly about racism?

I spent the whole year feeling stupid, like I didn’t know how to begin discussing issues of race, didn’t have the tools, couldn’t articulate my thoughts. When there were opportunities for dialogue I couldn’t answer questions posed to me: “How many students of color should be at Sarah Lawrence?”

I knew that one of my classes was in no way living up to its description which included issues of race. Chances for deeper discussion were skimmed over, questions unanswered. I sat there wanting a real discussion but unable to take it to that level. Nearly everyone in that class was scared to bring race into the conversation.

At the same time as examining the politics and workings of Sarah Lawrence and trying to understand how racism works institutionally here, I was and am trying to understand how racism works in me. And I have realized that I am scared to find out. Part of not being able to begin a discussion of racism in my class was due to the suppressed nature of that environment, to everyone else’s fears, and to my lack of confidence in my intellectual understandings of racism. But another part of it was the fear of what might come out of me in that discussion. Fear that I won’t know how
to live as an anti-racist person, fear that it's not even possible, fear that I'm not and can't be the kind of person I want to be.

As the year progressed I grew more and more hesitant to pinpoint what exactly was wrong with Sarah Lawrence...I guess because I didn't feel like I had the right to do that without totally examining myself first and gaining a clearer understanding of my own racism. To me this means seriously facing my fears and learning how to get past them so I can begin to change. Part of me feels like I need to do this before I can work with other people on this college's racism. But if I am going to live and learn here for the next few years, I have to do both of these things now. At the start of this year, I know that I have a responsibility to make Sarah Lawrence a racially diverse institution. And I have a responsibility to look at myself just as critically as I look at Sarah Lawrence. A white friend of mine told me that when she is comfortable about issues of race she knows that she's not working hard enough. I can't let myself be comfortable, here or anywhere.

September 1997
Interview

As a graduate student in the fiction program, I really feel that administration is very much on side with regard to issues of diversity. We are fortunate in that we have visionary people, like [redacted] who are in key positions to initiate change. Her commitment to diversity is strong and her support definitely affects my relationship to Sarah Lawrence in a positive way. It makes me hopeful...

While there is so much change that is happening in our program which is tremendously exciting, I know that sometimes I have felt that something huge is missing from my experience here, in the sense that when my fellow students refer to great texts and writers, I feel as though there is a real gap. Where is the knowledge about writers of color? Where is the exposure in our classes, to a multiplicity of voices - beyond Morrison and Baldwin? Where are the critical discussions that will equip us as readers and writers to deal with issues of diversity?

I feel as though I am unable to have the dialogues I really need to have to help the process of my writing. For instance, I want to be able to discuss the burden of representation, and how I’m concerned about portraying violence from a South Asian male, because I am afraid it would contribute to the dominant stereotype about South Asian men. If students are generally unaware of the issue writers of color face, regarding the burden of representation, how is this dialogue supposed to happen? Moreover, if we are unable to get beyond cultural translation in class - how do we dive into the deeper issues of what we are writing about? I feel constricted because of the general lack of awareness around the issues that are critical for writers of color.

I think that there is a real reluctance or fear when we talk about issues of race in relation to writing. I remember during one class, I spoke at length about race and representation. I ended up being one of the only voices to address the issue and felt very much alone. Afterwards, I remember feeling really regretful to have opened my mouth at all - because mostly, I was met with silence. The fear or discomfort makes it difficult to dialogue and break down some of the barriers between students with different backgrounds, orientations and politics. Often, I hear students say that the reason they don’t speak out when issues of race and writing are being discussed, is because they just want to listen and learn. While listening is vital, it is just as important to contribute so as to engage in a dialogue which is mutual. Students need to feel
empowered enough to feel able to comment on diverse writings and that empowerment can only come from exposure and engagement with difference.

Currently, there is a real lack of exposure to contemporary voices, to critical and diverse voices. A lack of exposure means that students and faculty alike lose out. Therefore, what is urgently needed is attention to a multiplicity of voices which reflect the makeup of a changing America. We need to be adequately prepared as both readers and writers - who are engaging with diverse writing. It should be faculty responsibility to ensure that students have exposure to different texts, so they can be equipped to respond from a place of both respect and knowledge. And clearly, the exposure will only be there, if the commitment to diversity is there in a broad based sense.

Beyond my experience as a writing student, what happened in the past few months prior to graduation gave me a much clearer sense of the climate on campus. A lot of people were really unhappy and the response to the graduation speaker attested to that unhappiness. Clearly, the outrage and frustration felt and expressed by students was not simply about the graduation speaker. Rather, it was outrage at an issue which is much broader, and historically rooted - the issue being the general lack of diversity on campus. I strongly feel that while the events surrounding graduation culminated with some disappointment and frustration, they simultaneously present an exciting opportunity for the college to deal with the issue of diversity in a way which is creative.

Quite often it is too easy to polarize the issues so that the situation becomes one of us and them. For instance, I attended a meeting where staff discussed the possibility of seizing the student flyer which was to be handed out during graduation day. I make mention of this only to illustrate the us and them mentality. The flyer had not even been read prior to this discussion - yet the assumption made was that it would be confrontational - which it was not. I have also heard students talk about resistance in terms of military strategies - plans of attack. I don’t think that polarizing the issues is the creative solution. I feel that it is too easy to think and act in ways which are binary - which don’t examine the complexities of interactions - and the possibilities for new ways of working with one another towards a common goal. The challenge for Sarah Lawrence right now is to create an environment, where all members of the community truly feel as though diversity is indeed a common goal.
This is no easy task. We are in a climate which dismisses the importance of affirmative action. We are in a climate where funds are diminishing, and priorities are changing for the school - where many people feel overworked and underpaid. We are in a climate where people feel burnt out, hopeless, betrayed and genuinely at a loss for ideas for strategic change. Where will the vision come from? Where will the leadership come from? As a school, we need to move beyond Band-Aid solutions. We need to look for solutions which are ongoing - which will sustain change at all levels. I think that there is a tremendous amount of good will on this campus - and the consciousness around issues of diversity is developing. However, good will needs to be reflected concretely.

Students in particular, need to see that the commitment is there in a very visible and proactive manner. At this point in time, there is a lot of room for improvement. Right now we’re decreasing the funding available for assistantships or financial aid for students, while at the same time, trying to increase the presence of students of color. That presents a really big challenge. Part of dealing with this challenge requires questioning our priorities and being self critical. Who are we hiring? Who are we accountable to? What is faculty and administration doing to broaden their networks, so that people from diverse communities and backgrounds are at least considered for openings? How are we integrating a collective commitment to diversity in all that we do - from issues of funding to recruitment and retention? What is the school doing to create an environment which fosters respect and greater knowledge for and about issues of diversity at all levels? And most importantly, what strategies are we using to build alliances across different factions within our community - so that the vision for Sarah Lawrence is created and cared for - by each and every one of us.

May 1997
Interview

I remember taking a seminar my first year. It was really small, only about 5 students. And the professor was the type of person who lectures a lot so it was not really a seminar: many of us were not talking much in class or answering questions or speaking out really. But in conference, the professor sort of implied that it was because of my heritage that I wasn't speaking out, that maybe it was a family thing or just that culturally I am supposed to be reserved because I am Asian—even though he did most of the talking in class. That's one of the things I remember most about my first year. I'm from New York City and went to a magnet high school so it was really diverse. Coming up here was kind of a shock, both as a person of color and as someone not coming from a very financially privileged background. And I had issues walking to Bronxville. This is outside of Sarah Lawrence, but like having names called at me, being called "chink" walking in Bronxville.

There are definitely positive things that happened, like having the upperclassmen who were students of color who reach out to us. I came in the fall after the hunger strike and one of the demands in the hunger strike was the same as one from the 1989 sit-in: [to create] the students of color space. So the seniors were working hard to get those goals accomplished and the students of color space was sort of happening during the end of my first year. I was, along with another first year student, chosen to run the space because we were [among] the few active first years on campus. The whole ordeal was very, very stressful because we had to go to senate—which was mostly white—and sit through this whole long debate about whether it was worth it to be a two person position, how the space would be run, etc. Of course it was clear in my mind why this space was worth it... but proving it is a different thing. I feel that the managers still have to prove why the space is worthwhile. Every student space on this campus has to be petitioned for every year but we always have to make a list of things that go on in the space, such as activities that we would hold there or whatever. How can we hold events there? I think the space fits no more than twenty-five people. It's all about language, about how we use the space and what it's for, and that it's a resource center, and people use the books down there. Part of it is that as open as the space is supposed to be to the entire campus and as many times as we have had open house for [white students] to come in and look at the space...people are afraid to go down the stairs! White students are afraid to go down to a space that's called the student of color space. And that is why I think the administration is trying
to find ways for us to not have the space. But it is not our fault that the rest of the campus is not using the space.

There was a man named [REDACTED] who graduated my first year who was in the Theater department and directed the play, Once on this Island. Of course he casted the few actors of color that we had on campus. He was a black man himself. I just remembered this one big Coffeehaus party or jazz night when everyone was in there. Then after rehearsal, the whole cast walked in and there was such a change in the room, a change of mood! Like suddenly it's a spectacle because the cast walked in. And [REDACTED] sang, then [REDACTED] sang and you could feel this strangeness in the room. I feel like the white students on this campus idolize students of color in this weird way or have this idea of them being cool and hip and they want to hang with students of color and be down. It's so weird and fake and it freaks me out sometimes. In fact, I went to a leadership training event, and afterwards was talking to a white student who ran other groups. I told her how the student of color groups usually work together on projects. I wish I had called her on what she said afterwards because I knew she would have wanted me to call her on it. She said to me, "Sometimes I feel afraid to approach student of color groups, it's great that you work together but I just don't understand...." Then she went on to say something along the lines of walking into Bates and all the black students sit together and they're just like too cool and she can't approach them and why do they all have to sit together? She sort of portrayed their coolness in this elevated, out of reach, alienating way...like there aren't five thousand other white students sitting around together in Bates all the time. Saying students of color aren't approachable because of that reason is racism on a different level. Instead of racism because of bigotry and hate, it's making us intangible, not real. I really wish I had called her on it but it really threw me off.

I feel like a lot of people here still think that racism doesn't exist on this campus and that we're in this happy little bubble. The type of white liberals that are here are the sort of people who are like, "Well, we love each other, we're happy, we get along, let's not be divisive." There was a round table discussion in Senate about community at SLC. It was comprised of four white students (I think 2 or 3 of them were first years). Race and class were not discussed at all. And the people on the panel were very much lovey-dovey -- like, "love the world, heal the world" kind of thing. One student of color was particularly upset that these issues weren't discussed. I told a senator who
was on the panel that students were upset that those issues had not been discussed. Two girls from the panel came into Senate and were basically arguing back and forth about how they didn't understand why those issues needed to be discussed because we are a community of students and they didn't want to address issues of race, class, gender or sexuality because they didn't want to be divisive. We were not asking for tokenism, which is what they were arguing against having, but it was about representation. To exclude anything when you talk about community at SLC is wrong. I was very upset because we don't choose to be divisive, we don't choose our race, we don't choose our gender, and these are very much the realities of our lives every day at SLC. To talk about community here and to not talk about first year students of color walking around feeling no community at all is giving a false sense of what community at SLC means.

I feel like the lines of communication about diversity are all crossed and tangled in weird ways. They are slowly becoming untangled but I feel like a lot of people are at different levels of understanding. Some of the incoming first years and upperclassmen are waking up and seeing things on a different level. But a lot of people are tired of always explaining and teaching. When are we going to come to the point where people start finding answers on their own or become willing to find answers on their own? Perhaps it’s a matter of curriculum. That basic level of consciousness is what’s missing. I feel like change is happening really, really slowly and it’s bad because it’s the 1990’s, and it’s sad because the consciousness is out there in the world and we’re not bringing it here; we’re not spreading it here. I have a love/hate relationship with this school. I hate all the problems; I love the people who were supportive of me, and I love some of the professors and some of the classes but there are a lot of things here that would make me bitter, would make me want to leave, and would cause me to have an ulcer my first year here. But because I value the type of education I [get], I make those hard choices: to struggle and make it better.
Interview

At SLC, people talk about racism and such as if they are out of the norm of general society. I think that attitude betrays their age and/or their refusal to look realistically at what is going on on campus. This campus is simply a microcosm of what we see out there in the larger society. I consider racism to be very blatant at SLC and it is coming from people who have not really thought about the use of language and actions. It comes from their home training, and it is coming during a time when racism is becoming as dominant as it was in the 60's and 70's. Racism in this society is coming back big time -- and consequently, it's becoming very blatant at SLC. It's very distressing. I have been at SLC since January of 1991. I remember a time at SLC when people from different racial and economic backgrounds could sit down and agree that different opinions were okay and have a political dialogue in the pool room or some other space on campus and it was a thorough conversation and took hours and nobody would look to leave and it brought more people into the conversation. That dynamic at SLC is no longer there....I have become disillusioned about the possibility of change or how much could be changed. I'm starting to see things realistically. Realism has been kicking my butt. Realism has caused me to wonder if there is the possibility of change. To hear [the current Chairman of the Board] running around campus saying she has "hired a Section 8 girl." The woman she was referring to is at least [her] age if not older, with a child my age -- and I'm 32. (To say "I hired a Section 8 girl" and have nobody but the woman call her on it is atrocious.) The woman began filing an action suit against SLC for discrimination, but [the Director of Personnel] called her into the office to negotiate about it and they gave her a raise and a promotion. It wasn't all that much of a raise and the promotion didn't give her but so many more duties. She was downsized out of the job about 6 to 8 months later.

I'm tired of people assuming that I'm stupid and that I don't see their undercover racist stuff, which to me is blatant. I had a meeting with [the Dean of Studies] after Admitted Students Day a few years ago when anti-Semitic and anti-black things were written on the ground in chalk and spray painted. It was bad. In the middle of the night they called the maintenance people in to clean it up.

1 Section 8 is a government-subsidized housing program. A lawsuit forced the City of Yonkers to build low to medium cost housing which they did on Midland just west of Kimball Avenue. SLC sent baskets to welcome the new neighbors and hired one of them.
Then, a second wave occurred when those who had had nasty things written about them wrote nasty things about people they thought had done it. So there were a lot of anti-white male and anti-white things written on the ground. Not pretty things. One of the things I remember is they took the word HARAMBE and broke it down letter by letter to say something dirty, nasty. and when they got to 'B' they said that "Black women are the white man's bed warmer." I got very upset with this and went to see the head of Admissions who suggested that I speak to [the Dean of Studies and Student Life] who in turn told me that if I "inform" her as to what the groups on campus were doing, she would "remember" my suggestions. And she was so polite and decent and respectful about it! [The then Dean of Admissions] had asked me to come down and tell her how the meeting had gone and I did. I told her it was one of the worst one-on-one meetings I've ever sat in on with another individual. She said "Really, that's very strange because [the Dean of Studies and Student Life] just called me and said the meeting went well." I think that the administration on this campus has to analyze what's in their language, what's in their behavior, what is innate to them, and what is learned.

Looking forward, I would like to say that I see SLC with at least a 30% population of students of color. Is that a reality? Maybe 20 years from now, if SLC is still around. Because if they continue to go up in tuition like Bennington--with whom we used to go neck and neck with every year for the highest tuition and which is now in bankruptcy--they might not. I would like to be able to say that in the future SLC will have a president of color. I'd like to be able to say that. But along with the 30%, it might be 10, 20 years. I would like to be able to say that the curriculum is completely diverse. That we not only have studies for African Americans, but Asians and Asian-Americans, Native Americans, Latinos, Middle Easterners -- just a whole range for students to chose from. We do have a bit of Asian History already. For the rest, I have to research on my own with a professor who may not have a clue as to the area I am researching and some of them are not willing to read along with me. I'd like to see that change. I'd like to see professors who, if they don't know about something, that they are curious enough to read along with me so that I am not solely informing them, that it is a collaborative effort. I'd like to see that. I'd also like to see professors who are radical enough to want to change some things, but who are willing to negotiate for progress instead of stagnating or becoming so fed up with the system that they stop participating altogether.
I'd like to be able to sit in a classroom and not be the only one speaking for black women, or black people, or people of color. That's the one that really kills, because sometimes as the single person of color in a class you are speaking for everybody of color. And I am not professionally black. I don't get paid to teach people about my culture and everybody else's. If SLC ever decides that they want to pay me to be professionally black, I will stand on a soapbox and forever speak the realities of that, but until that point I don't want professors calling on me in class to give my unique perspective to this particular issue.
Interview

I’m a senior, thank God, except that means that I have to get a real job. My first year here, all the really active students of color were here, the ones who raised all sorts of hell, and that was pretty cool. But one thing that I found I didn’t like—which some of the bi-racial students were also irked by—was basically that I walked onto campus and everyone expected since I am Asian that I would be down with all that, that I’d be very cool with not liking white people, automatically assuming that all white people had preconceived notions and that they’re all negative notions. Well, that wasn’t how I was raised. Most of my friends are white and they are cool; they understand the fact that I was raised in a white house and that I don’t necessarily identify as [a person] of color that quickly. And I didn’t have that many obvious problems, but they just expected that there would be this automatic solidarity against the white oppressor that I didn’t feel. And those really active students of color were pretty cool with the fact that I didn’t agree with them. But it was just kind of awkward. And it was just so weird.

There were discussions in Common Ground one night about whether or not to let white people in—which was understandable given that it was Common Ground and it’s not for white students—but it seemed that the manner in which they went about it was really hostile towards bi-racial people and people of mixed heritage. I heard about a woman who went to HARAMBE and, being bi-racial, didn’t really feel welcomed, was attacked, called a traitor. That’s not cool at all. And I’ve heard stories about one guy of Middle Eastern descent being invited to Common Ground and when he showed up, they were like, “What are you doing here? You’re white, you’re not allowed here.” And there’s not a lot of open hostility but there’s a definite feeling of “you’re not welcome” to bi-racial [people] or people who don’t look obviously of color—and “of color” means Asian, Latino, or Black—that’s all. They’re ignoring all the bi-racial Native Americans. A lot of people that I know here have some Native American [ancestry] and they’re ignoring all of that. They’re ignoring people who are half-Lebanese and half-white.

One day I was talking with somebody in the Pub about people of color and she asked me how I identified. I said white. Then I pointed out a student who was half-Lebanese and so she’s not white. And when the person I was talking to asked her, she said, “Well, I’m half-Lebanese. My grandmother curses in Lebanese at people, I’m half-Lebanese, and that’s how I was raised.” And
there's a guy who is part Arab and someone else who is Romany. You know, just because people look white doesn't mean that they are or that they don't have the same issues [as people who are obviously of color]. Like there's this one woman I know who was raised a large part of her life in foster care in San Diego and so she was raised Latina - very much so. She knew a lot about Latino history, joined a gang at a very early age--just fervently Latina. And yet, people wouldn't accept her as a person of color because she was Irish. But they would accept another woman who was mostly Irish and African American and some Native American because she is part black. There is some kind of double standard there that shouldn't be. To use an analogy that I find helpful, sometimes, it seems almost like the way that the gays and lesbians on this campus feel about bisexuals. Like we're there but really not there; we're like a traitor to both groups. It's ridiculous because in the end, whatever group is being prejudiced is oppressing the other group.

I've met plenty of white people around here who are assholes, but they're plenty of other white people who are really cool, really accepting. And it's just crazy the amount of people you find out with Native American heritage that you just did not know before. Regardless of the culture, it is still there racially. And a lot of them say, "Well I have white privilege because I look white so I am not going to claim that [other ancestry]; I'm respecting that [other ancestry] because I wasn't raised that way so I'm just going to say I'm white." But it's still there. And there are people who look incredibly white but don't identify that way because they're not. Like a lot of people assume because of the way you look or the color of your skin that you are "of color". Or that if you don't fit into the traditional groups of Asian, Latino or African American, you are not of color and it doesn't matter. What really bugs me is that there are plenty of relatively decent people on this campus and they are not given a chance because they are white. I've had other students of color see me with white students and say hello to me but not to the white students I was clearly with.

Another thing with me is that I use terms like "faggot" and "nigger" all the time. I'll use "nigger" as a stronger expression of "asshole" or "fucking bastard" and I'll use "faggot" in the same way. Or I'll say, like, "theater fag" in a joking context because that's what we did at camp with all the theater people regardless of their sexual orientation. But I don't mean those things in a racist way. I don't even think about the historical racist foundation. Sometimes I'll use the term "white" in the pejorative too. In my natural usage, that's how I'll use it. You know, like how black people
congregate and they'll be throwing the word "nigger" back and forth between each other and it's cool? I don't understand that. Or how it's okay for Jews to joke about Jews and the Polish to make Polish jokes. I also use the term "guinea". I use a lot of racial epithets and I won't even think about the history behind them and the meaning but I'm careful who I use them with. And that's so weird coming here and not being able to say "theater fag" to somebody. Or not being able to say this or that. Or driving and somebody cuts me off and something slips out of my mouth and whoever I'm with--usually a white person--will say, "Well, what did you say that for! Don't use that word. That's not cool!"
Interview

I’m a transfer student from Bronx Community College and apparently that makes me an underdog. Somebody said “Good for you!” when I told him. It was a person of color from California who said it too. I’m a hopeful junior. It’s my first year on this campus, my first week. There were only two black people at registration so I was a little bit intimidated but I went through it anyway. I guess my first experience of racism here would be with my housemate. We were having a conversation about names. She is very particular about being called by her middle instead of first name. I mentioned that my name is [name] but that I’ve gotten used to being called [name] you know, almost trained like Pavlov’s dog. She thought about it for a moment then commented that I was a lot more intelligent than she had thought. I ignored it, of course, just pretended she hadn’t said that. I’ve kind of gotten used to people saying things like that because I grew up in Boston.

My second experience was yesterday when I had a bookshelf delivered in my absence. There was a white student filling in at Westlands and she would not let me get the bookshelf without showing ID. And I said okay, fine, but she had to stress the fact that I needed ID to get the bookshelf. It was just the way she said it, as if I didn’t speak English. Clearly, I speak English because I’m at Sarah Lawrence. Then when I presented my ID, she proceeded to read the closed note that the delivery person had left for me, attached to the bookshelf. I said to her, “Excuse me, that’s my name on the note; it’s addressed to me so you shouldn’t be reading it.” She snapped at me and said she had to log it. I told her she didn’t need to log the note, all she had to log was that it was a bookshelf. I felt that it was a real invasion of my privacy; I don’t think she should have read the note.

I’ve had people walk up to me and just touch my hair without asking me -- strangers! I thought that was kind of rude. Or people you know from around campus and you say hello and they look as if they don’t see you at all, as if you are non-existant, and they don’t answer you. That’s basically been my experience so far. I really wish there were a lot more people of color. One woman had the nerve to say to me, “Why are all the black people here from Jamaica?” I’ve also been told, “You speak so well” or “You don’t act or dress like the rest of them” and “You have such a good grasp of the English language; you’re so articulate.” I’m not sure exactly
what's going on here at Sarah Lawrence. I thought it was an interesting place from the catalog and that I would have different experiences. I guess I wasn't expecting this kind of experience. I thought this was a very progressive school and I'm finding out that it's a very elitist, very white school, still "we're doing you a favor, we're meeting our quotas" kind of thing. Nonetheless, I am here so I will take the opportunity to get as much information as possible to get from where it is I am to where I want to be. And if it gets to the point where I can't bear it, I guess I'll then have to [make a new plan].

One woman put her hand in my hair and wanted to know if it was real -- if it was all my hair. My hair right now is all natural, I was bald for a while and I am going through the process of growing it out and it's almost like a spiritual thing. I will be 30 years old next month and I have a four year old. When I had my son, my life changed. I guess the best way of dealing with that change was the hair, going natural and finally finding a direction for myself and deciding, "okay, this is what I want to do": going to school and getting myself together. So my hair is very personal. I would rather someone grab my ass than touch my hair. So this white woman felt that she had the right to put her hand in my hair -- I wouldn't go so far as to say it's a rape -- but it was such an infringement! And she had this bright red hair but I would never dare go up to her and say, "well, your hair is bright red, could I touch it?" Then she proceeded to ask me where she could go to get her hair braided. This is a white woman. And I kind of just laughed it off. I am just amazed that they allow people like that in this school. Like I said, "I am thinking that this is a very progressive school and these people would kind of understand that we have all kinds of different people in the world." I guess not. I've also heard that a lot of people come to Sarah Lawrence because they didn't get into NYU. And from what I understand, Sarah Lawrence needs the money so I guess they're just taking anybody right about now. And I guess maybe white people feel the same about us. I guess they feel infringed upon by our being here and so they're taking it out on us in any way possible.

I do have a question though. How come there are not enough men of color on this campus? We have a lot of white men. But I have seen what, maybe four black men. Where are the black and Latino men? It's only been a week but that has been my experience.
But I’m really satisfied with my courses. I met a wonderful woman. She’s the Director of Student Development. And I think I’m going to really enjoy her course. The energy was really good in the interview and she seemed really excited about what I wanted to do and she was the first person with whom I could really let my hair down. I think her class will be a great introduction to Sarah Lawrence because I’m just here to get my stuff and leave. You know, what’s really sad about the whole thing is that I have a lot at stake here. My four year old lives with strangers so that I can come here. And I’m kind of disappointed that I’m coming here and getting expensive bullshit. I could have gotten the same bullshit at BCC, except that at BCC you can decide what and how much, but here, they’re spoon-feeding it to you, except with a silver spoon. I’m offended that I have to take out loans to deal with this bullshit and the more people of color I talk to, the more I hear that I just have to grin and bear it. But there are times when I am going to speak out. And as long as I don’t hit anybody, they can’t throw me out. That’s where I’ll draw the line. I’ll be very aware that I don’t hit anybody. But I will not have a problem telling them what I feel because I’m paying $33,000 to come here too. And I’m taking out loans, mad loans to be here.
Interview

I participated in the diversity protest at the President’s House in May. I walked in with everyone else. By the next day or within a couple of days, I received a letter in my campus mailbox from [redacted] I took Literary Theory and Criticism with him last year. The letter was a page and a half long and there were approximately 6 or 7 names written across the top of it. He had written it to several students, to some donnees, myself, and a friend of mine whom he knew outside of class. In the letter, he expressed his concern that we hadn’t all talked to him about [the protest action] previously, and he wished that we had discussed this personally with him before going in and doing the protest. I felt the tone of the letter was that he was disappointed in us. At the beginning of the letter he was explaining to us why he felt our message of walking in was not appropriate in his opinion.

He said how he understood (I am paraphrasing here) what [redacted] was trying to get at in comparing us to various historical references he made. He didn’t refer to the Nazi reference, but he referred to other things and said that by going in and not giving people the freedom to sign on their own, that the signature would be worthless because it was forced. My immediate reaction to the letter was to become upset because I hadn’t expected that to happen. I don’t know if the intent was to shame me, but I felt he was ashamed of us in some way. I felt like he was trying to educate us to his opinions and to what he thought about it, but it was a very upsetting thing for me.

So then when I had a conference with him for class, after the protest and after the letter, I ended up talking to him about it. So I told him my own approach to it, that I hadn’t known a lot about what was going on about the planning of the protest and I didn’t have a lot of information about the Strategic Planning Committee, but the things that had been told to me struck me enough that I felt it was important to participate, [to] do something. In his letter and in talking to him, he said he wished people had come to him before and discussed these issues with him, and I guess I hadn’t, for the full year, been aware of all the issues. I was aware that, obviously, we are not the most diverse campus, but I wasn’t aware of the Strategic Plan specifically until much later in the year.
I doubt I would have gone and asked him about the protest beforehand because I doubt that I would have asked anyone’s opinion. I would have just thought about it and made my own decision. I talked to him about how I’d been interested in running for senate in the beginning of last year but never thought that I could get in or be elected, so I kind of lost sight of that. Then this year I was so moved by everything that happened that I ran for General Committee, so I’ll be working with him on General Committee. I’m also taking his African Literature lecture.
Personal Statement

Folks always think that when someone starts talking about racism they’re merely referring to insulted feelings and/or some sense of not being accepted. Certainly the aesthetics of racism are hurtful, but as a phenomenon, racism implies and deals with issues of power. Racism is not merely about dislike, hate and prejudices, it speaks of and to the violences which are the result of disparaging structural and institutional power dynamics as they intersect with race.

My skin is thick enough now to allow for me to be able to decide how much energy I’m going to put into feeling my insulted sensibilities when folks allow ignorance to govern their words and both casual and purposeful behavior towards me (— sometimes). I have much less faith in efforts towards “One Love” than I do in efforts towards creating and maintaining an integrated and diverse college. Racism manifested structurally at Sarah Lawrence is reflected in faculty and curriculum. Racism at Sarah Lawrence screams through enrollment figures.

I in no way expected that during my time at SLC I would not be insulted or offended. My experiences in 20 c. America are such that I am offended more often than not. Necessarily, I have built up a thick skin. Necessarily, there are times when struggle and protest move out of the realm of the personal and emotional and into a sound practicality and realism. It is wholly inappropriate to think of racism at SLC as simply a matter of hurt feelings, or ‘the failure to make someone(s) feel welcomed,’ when Sarah Lawrence in 1997 has an incoming first year class that is 2% Black, and there are departments in this college still without teachers of color, and others with absolutely no non-Western orientation.

I am enrolled at this college, I expect to have my educational needs met. My principal investment is in my education, I am not invested in enlightening the good-willed, but dangerously ignorant and/or complacent. Simply, I try to move towards securing an exceptional education for myself. However, at every hand and side I am blocked. My learning is constantly and consistently impeded. If it’s not the hostile (and guarded) social climate fostered by SLC’s “institutional neglect,” it’s the hellish experience of realizing that although the thirty thousand plus is paid, and the loans hang around my neck like a noose, I feel like I have no options within my department to be educated in an adequate or appropriate way.

In departments around the college, teachers of color are disappearing.
My department, the Psychology Department, last year had only one professor who taught and represented an African orientation or African-American perspective. The college failed, this year, to retain that professor. What the college did was fill the position, maintaining representation (filling it with an African-American professor) while actively sweeping the Psychology Department clean of an African orientation.

Racial diversity and representation in the faculty and the curriculum has yet to be established. The little headway that has been made in the school is slowly chipped away through dissolution of professorships because of the inherently tentative nature of guest appointment and tenureship appointments. Regardless of the rhetoric of inclusion espoused by the administration, the racism inherent in the structure and functioning of SLC is clear. How do you explain away an incoming class that is only 2% Black? (I say Black instead of African-American, because that number could include African people from throughout the Diaspora.) Translated into raw figures that means of the 284 first years for Fall '97, six are Black. Of those six students only one is male. That single male is the 0.35% of the incoming class that is Black male. The implications are clear and direct. The reality violent.

Faculty and administration allow themselves to get so distracted and befuddled by students’ anger that they “forget” or just refuse to see the injustice and violence in so many of the college’s operations. Good-will without change means very little when the stakes are still high.

I resist the sentiment that graciously extends a long timeline for inclusion, as if people of color in and throughout the college somehow translate into negatives for the college. There exist no such quantity controls for hiring White professors and administrators and admitting White students. Qualified -- and as is usually the case, overqualified--individuals of color can and will do nothing but enhance this college. The mindset and/or individual that (consciously, unconsciously or nonconsciously) rejects the above assertion and waves the flag for gradual “trickle-in” tactics of inclusion may indeed be of good-will, but is still operating from some basic racist assumptions.

This struggle is not merely rhetorical, it is also structural. We need to make large and concrete steps towards making this college’s administration, faculty, curriculum, and student body inclusive, representative, and truly diverse. If it’s too late to do anything about the
incoming class for Fall, then there's a transfer group. True commitment creates through both obstacles and confrontation.

Commitment with priority status, that's what we're after

... that’s the road to change!

(GR)

August 1997
Personal Statement

I.

Four years ago, an old white man stood up and screamed "Nigger!" in my face as I sat reading on the subway. I actually looked around to see to whom he was referring. I felt my detachment and innocence being ripped away from me, like clothes, in that unforgettable moment. He was looking at me, talking to me, and, yes, he really meant me. It was the first time I had ever been called "nigger". And that was a less traumatic experience than the pervasive racism that I experienced during my first week at Sarah Lawrence. There was, however, one major warning sign about a month before I was scheduled to begin my first year. A young lawyer -- a Jewish woman -- approached me at work. I knew her by sight but we had never spoken, so I was quite surprised when she stopped me. She shook my hand, told me her name and identified herself as a Sarah Lawrence alum. "I heard from so-and-so that you're going off to Sarah Lawrence," she said. "Congratulations." Before I could even blush and say "Thank you," she wrinkled her brow and asked with genuine perplexity, "But how can you afford that?"²

The problem is not that she wondered about it, but that she felt it was perfectly okay to ask. I was taught that inquiries, especially public ones, about a stranger's financial status are considered remarkably indecent at the very least. But this brash violation of social etiquette is typical of how black people and other people of color are not allowed the dignity and privacy automatically and unconsciously extended to others -- others who are sufficiently privileged to be considered human and entitled to personal boundaries.

The young lawyer's behavior is consistent with boundaryless behavior I have experienced and observed at SLC: the touching of black people's hair, our bodies, the commenting on our clothes, speech patterns, language and intellectual ability, etc. It also explains to me why young white women here feel absolutely entitled to touch and stroke me during casual interactions, during brief hallway conversations, in ways that I only allow lovers to touch me. Their youthful,

² Simple-minded folk might argue that it is a reasonable question since SLC is the most expensive undergrad in the country. However, it is an everyday occurrence at that law firm for young white people to run off to Harvard, Princeton, Yale, Stanford, U of Chicago, Georgetown, Sarah Lawrence and the like in order to continue their education. I doubt this is a question posed to them, especially not by strangers.
sexual coming-of-age, perceived collegial permissiveness, and white middle class boundarylessness is magnified in relation to black people and people of color. I cannot help but experience this on a macro level as well: this entitlement to my body echoes the historical use of black women's bodies by white people to nurture white children, to spare white women, and to sate white men.

II.

"I think black women are so much more beautiful than normal women," a white student sighed to me with such painful longing. We were sharing a table at lunch that first week. She also said she had always wished for hair like mine (likely fucking story since I know how they treat people from her hometown who have hair like mine; and did she not want the skin and hips and social stigma that go along with the hair, or are those parts of me not as valued as the cool and funky neo-nappy hair?). She even said that if she had hair like mine, it would stop her from shaving her head the way she does now. If one listens closely, one realizes that such statements are magical permutations of the word "nigger". No?

Racism causes traumatic wounds. I am left after each incident with the symptomology of war veterans, battered women and rape survivors: I suffer unresolved anger, feelings of helplessness, isolation, and hopelessness. I bear the burden of displaced and inappropriate guilt, wondering if I had invited the comment or behavior because of how I dressed or wore my hair. I castigate myself for not adequately defending myself, for not having had the perfect retort on the tip of my tongue (of course I can think of a thousand witty, pithy, biting responses later). I criticize myself for not confronting and/or responding with sufficient indignation. I sometimes avoid the person(s) after the incident or have difficulty looking them in the face, as if I had done something wrong. I become hyper-vigilant and defensive. I am easily re-traumatized and each new incident re-awakens the trauma of prior incidents. I obsessively replay the incident in my head and try to rewrite the script of how things went down, you know, make me the winner, the triumphant, good overcoming evil. And sometimes I awaken in the 6 o'clock light with my tongue tangled up around some ugly word or a name, with the memories lying coiled and rattling at the base of my brain.
My favorite fantasy is wishing I had simply slapped the person (almost always a white woman). But no one would defend my actions as healthy and normal. No one would see the violence in the offender's words or the unconscious intent to harm. But violence is a great fantasy. Its illusion of instant gratification, personal satisfaction, and concrete closure is tantalizing. All the more so because there is no real support from the administration, as was proven beyond doubt by the events of Fall 1996. How does being called “nigger” and “monkey”, having peanuts and oranges left on one's doorstep day after day remain secret, unaddressed, and unreproached at any college in 1996? Too often, one is required to offer empirical proof of intangibles and vibes; but there were witnesses. Still, Student Affairs sat on its collective financially- and legally-conscious ass, calmly waving its blame-the-victim flag.

I would not be surprised if some black student or alum were to just snap and go ballistic on campus with heavy duty artillery; because it is that bad. Living with this shit, day in, day out, on all fronts, never any safety -- something will eventually give. And because I interviewed almost all the students of color whose voices are heard in this report, I got to hear my story told over and over and over again. It's uncanny. Even those who did not want to go on the record shared remarkably similar blueprints of experience.

III.

I don't walk around all day consciously aware of my blackness, sometimes I am just me; but there is always someone with a comment or a question to put me black in my place. Some SLC faculty member asking -- me and only me-- in a roomful of students where am I from. What's up with that? And no, did not already know the birthplace of every other student in the room. (My interview with her left me sitting on Bates Hill with my head between my knees trying not to vomit.) Just in case I forget what I am, there is always some member of the SLC administration talking down to me, pointing and enunciating slowly and clearly like a kindergarten teacher. Or some white student saying with gaping-mouthed astonishment, "Oh, you speak so well! You use the language so beautifully!" The unverbalized parenthetical being "unlike all the other black people I know" or "contrary to my expectations" or some such backhanded, unconscious foot, flat and heavy against my solar plexus.
I remember how an SLC faculty member (whose name now escapes me) opened up a post-film discussion last semester by inviting us to explore how we look at the “other”. The film was about black (Senegalese) women. I hate when professors use pronouns like “we” and “our.” Too often those words do not include me. And I see the terror flashing on the faces of my classmates when they are trying to indicate poor people or people of color. They don’t know which words are okay to use (though I suspect there is much less hesitation in private). White people aren’t, as part of their upbringing, provided with a non-offensive vocabulary with which to address or interact with people of color. It is my personal belief that nothing in the upbringing of any white person teaches or prepares them to deal with me as an equal, as a peer. Once I grasped this concept, the sting of surprise disappeared from racist incidents. They still burn mercilessly, but expecting the blow is very sanity preserving. Sadly, I occasionally catch myself waiting and feeling off-balance when a white person fails to offend me. Usually, it is a function of their level of sophistication, not a lack of racist views. Time always tells. I believe every white person is racist, just as I believe every heterosexual is homophobic. Those are the defaults in social conditioning. (Discussions about whether blacks and other people of color can be labeled racist and lesbians, gay and transgender people being homophobic would be a whole other conversation). One positive effect of my experiences with racism at SLC is that it has made my connection to other black people more infinitely precious.

Last year, more than half of my friends outside of SLC were white; but because I carried the debris of my SLC experiences into my outside relationships, most of those friendships have been devastated. A few survived, but only because a handful of my white women friends came to at least accept, if not understand, that they often and uncontrollably become the enemy. And we work, and talk, and wait it out. Sometimes I go on rabid rants about white people because I need to speak my truth frankly, without censorship. (Of course I do this with other black people.) And I feel an entitlement to do so that I do not extend to white people who want to rant about people of color. Call me biased.

And I am angry that again the wounded must bear the burden of healing. I want white students to pour out their guts and share their innermost thoughts and feelings, make themselves vulnerable while the danger of re-victimization is ever-present, never naps, never leaves the
room to take a leak. Let them be a public spectacle for a change, let them be soulful and blue. I want white people at SLC to find appropriate s/pl/aces to discuss and deflate the ugliness that is inside them, inside every one of them without exception. And for any white person who reads this and becomes offended, that indignation and denial is proof of it. Be humble and courageous. Own it.

I'm tired of hearing white folk say that they are not racist. Enough talk. Walk the walk already. And let’s see some institutional responsibility and pro-activeness, huh?

[Redacted] (‘00)

September 1997
• Alumni Voices

Interview

It really started for us in 1985, when we first came in as [first years], [name] and I; [name] came up with the name Harambe, for a black student group. It was an informal group, no chair or anything, and we organized social activities, like in honor of Black History month. I think we did weekly parties.

At the end of that first year, the spring of 1986, we began to be aware of the contradictions in the so-called progressive liberal arts school. There was only one tenured full-time faculty of color there, [name]. We became increasingly concerned with that—that our experiences as people of color, as African-Americans, weren't really acknowledged, in class by professors, in the curriculum.

Our sophomore year, 1986-87, Harambe had much more of a political focus. I think we drafted an informal proposal for more faculty of color, and were in informal conversations with Dean [name] about more classes and a more diverse curriculum. She asked what areas we were interested in, and at the time we were interested in literature; so she did bring in a black faculty member to teach literature, [name], and he taught African-American literature in the spring of 1987. Nothing had happened in the fall, it was still the same dismal situation, with [name] being the only full-time black faculty. [name] was there in art, but he was part-time.

So they added black faculty, and at the time that's what Harambe was concerned with, the presence of black faculty and students. That was a concrete change. And the administration was receptive; they were pretty good with funding speakers and all. During black history month there were receptions at Westlands and they would fund that. But there was still no substantial change with the curriculum and the faculty numbers.

We were away for the 1987-88 school year; and when we came back, we expected more would have changed. They kept [name] as part-time faculty. He only taught one class. Besides that, no other change was implemented. So when we got back, we were mad. We were
seniors and we were mad. That's when things really began to take off, at the beginning of the 1988-89 school year.

In 1988 we entered into more intense conversations with the deans and Alice, and drafted proposals, and really nothing was accomplished. They continued to have that part-time place for someone teaching African-American literature, but that was all.

In the spring, tensions were high, because there'd been a couple of incidents: somebody had drawn a portrait of Jimi Hendrix in Garrison, and a lot of students of color were really insulted by the portrayal of blacks in that picture. There was a big confrontation between the students. And then there was a party and a whole bunch of white students were rapping, and we got mad. I don't know, we were immature; looking back on it, we could have picked a better battle. But we said Well, this is a false representation of this art form, and how dare you. That caused a big stir, too. So there was student tension.

In the spring there were faculty meetings about curriculum, and that's when we started actively protesting. We had a core group of people in Harambe, but then we did a coalition group called Concerned Students of Color, CSOC. Some people came from other student organizations; they were definitely student leaders on campus. We had diverse political interests, but we were able to come together around this. Then the scope was expanded from African-American to all students of color.

The first protest I remember was standing outside the faculty meeting in late March or early April of 1989. There was really no movement, but I remember being so inspired by everyone's energy and enthusiasm. It started as a very small demonstration, where we marched from Westlands to where they were meeting, in the cafeteria; and then a whole bunch of people just joined us, and there were drums, it was great.

Then nothing happened, and we had more intense meetings, especially student meetings, when the broader student body would come and the coalition informed them as to what was happening. I think we had majority student support. And faculty support, too. When we did the sit-in, a lot of faculty would come during the day, and they would sit with us and talk. I think they supported the principles, the demands for a diverse faculty and curriculum and student body. But at the same time as they supported it, it was like Damn, you're faculty, what are you doing, if
you support this so much? I can understand now, being a faculty member myself; I understand having to negotiate those politics. But at the time I thought, You say you're for us, but you're not doing anything. But now I can kind of see it.

Emerged early on as a spokesperson for the faculty; she would speak publicly. We talked to her and said, Could you not do that? Because you're the only faculty of color, and to emerge as the spokesperson just puts it in an uncomfortable light. Part of what we're fighting for has to do with you. So she understood. She would come to the sit-in and sit with us and talk. We always felt she supported us.

It just got to a point where they really weren't moving. They would say, We understand, You're right, Yes, this needs to change, but nobody would do anything. There was no significant institutional movement for change. Everything was piecemeal and part-time and not about incorporating people permanently. So it culminated in this sit-in.

The night before, we had this mass student meeting, and the students were behind us. We told them at six o'clock in the morning we were going to take over the administration building. Everybody was revved up. It was great. We marched into Westlands at six or seven in the morning, and it was so funny. It was supposed to be a surprise, we didn't tell any administrators; but I guess they got word, and they had this note on the door. It said, We totally respect your right to engage in this, but please respect our building. Trash cans and ashtrays have been provided!

So we took over the building. People came together from all different perspectives. It was nice, and we felt there was a lot of support. It was a love-in. At night there was this one woman from Kenya who would sing. People would bring their guitars. You know where the stairway is in Westlands? That was our stage. After eight o'clock people would come in, even people who weren't really involved, they would just come in and do something. It would be like a show. The second day, a camera crew from a cable station came. Now we were 10-5 activists, we didn't do anything before ten o'clock in the morning. And this camera crew came in at six o'clock! They were stepping over all the sleeping bags, turning on those bright lights, people were scratching their eyes. They said, Can you tell us what this sit-in is all about? We said Yeah, man, later.
There was some talk that CSOC was some fascist group, and someone drew sheep on the sidewalk, saying that people were blindly following CSOC. The whole activity took place a week before spring break. After the sit-in disbanded, and I decided to stay on campus. We stayed in the dorms. One day I came home and I couldn't open the door; the key would turn, but the door was sticking. It turned out some students had Krazy Glued the door. I pretty much knew the guys who did it.

It touched off a whole wave of activism. After the sit-in there was a Take Back the Night march, and people got together and talked about sexuality and violence against women. Of course we were blamed for everything; they would say, This is CSOC. But it really wasn't. We also brought up the contradictions about how many people of color worked on the staff, like in the kitchens. But for me, one of the big issues was that there were only two black faculty of color who had tenure positions, and only one who had a full-time tenure position. It just seemed ridiculous.

The most intense activity was from late February through graduation. That whole April was intense. We entered into negotiations, but we weren't really in the mood to negotiate. We always left feeling like there were no substantial agreements or changes. So in frustration we thought, Forget it, this is a farce. We stopped going, and they freaked out about that, too, thinking that meant we were going to do something else. But by that time graduation was a week away.

It did make the *New York Times*. It made the Westchester papers at the beginning and WBAI and the last day the *Times*. That's when the Board of Trustees said Look, we've got to talk to y'all.

We met with the Board of Trustees; I think we demanded to meet with the Board of Trustees. It was in this really chi-chi building in Manhattan. There was a black woman on the Board, and she was really concerned; she tried to reach out to the black students. But at the time we were so critical; everything was lame, we didn't care how they put it. But they were lame, don't get me wrong. It was this liberalism: Oh yeah, you're right, but there was no change.
I think students have to continue to be vigilant. There needs to be some kind of education, so students know what the power configurations are there. Maybe students need to do some challenging in the classroom. Anticipate some backlash. I heard about Susan James not being kept, and that doesn't make sense to me. But you could take that as a signal, that there might be some backlash. It's country-wide, and we need to be alert.

July 1997
Personal Statement

While we are very privileged to be college students, social structures act on us in ways that limit our opportunity to protest: whether it be our somewhat tenuous status as financial recipients, our lack of free time due to work-study and job commitments, etc. Here at SLC, the primary way that student protest is structurally precluded has to deal with the school’s very nature as a liberal institution. The thing that liberal institutions fear most is conflict and confrontation—either from the left or from the right. Rather than seek out the causes of conflict and address them directly, liberal institutions prefer to quietly absorb any conflict and maintain the status quo. To this end, we spend a lot of time talking about “community” here at SLC. We get to know our professors and some administrators. When we have to take up the task of persuading our faculty and administrators to live up to their responsibilities, we are often forced to break with the notion of civility on which this institution thrives. Too often, it is this talk of “community” and this “politics of civility” which results in nothing substantial being discussed.

Another element of the strategy to avoid protest and confrontation at SLC is the great amount of emphasis placed on “student input” and on “including a student voice” in campus issues. Students are shown the “appropriate channels”—whether it be student senate, various college committees, or task forces—often realize very quickly that they are devoid of any real power. In fact, contrary to providing them with an effective voice, these channels often isolate students’ voices within a group of faculty and administrators. In addition to isolating their voices, these students’ time, creativity, and organizing potential are then taken up with what amounts to be the busy-work of committees with no power to affect any real change.

Students realize the lack of power in these “appropriate channels.” This realization is most clearly visible in the case of the student. Every year, senate has trouble getting students to run for all of its open seats—much less run in contested elections. Add this to small percentage of students who actually vote in elections and what results is a strong suggestion that students don’t feel that senate is a mechanism which can address their real concerns in any real way. Whether or not we view these channels as having any real power, one thing that we can be sure of is that some administration and faculty will continue to point to them, insisting that students have a “voice.”
Taken together, the strategies employed here are very effective. This notion of "community" encourages students to believe that faculty and administration are really doing all they can with "very scarce resources." The "politics of civility" discourages students from taking an uncomfortable step and challenging people to live up to their responsibilities. The supposed existence of a "student voice" encourages students to feel that they somehow beat a certain amount of responsibility if problems persist. It is because of these effective mechanisms which absorb and diffuse potential conflict that the opportunities for effective protest at Sarah Lawrence seem few and far between.

But on May 7, 1997, approximately 75 students walked into a dinner hosted at the President's House to demand a greater commitment to diversity by SLC. The college had been losing ground in terms of diversity ever since the 1989 sit-in. The walk-in represented the culmination of a lot of hard work on diversity issues carried on throughout the year by different groups and individuals. But more specifically, several events second semester combined to create the opportunity for this student protest. The first of these was the tenuring of 7 white faculty while several faculty of color were not retained. These actions did not go unnoticed by the student body. The second was the publication of the College's Strategic Plan, "Sustaining Our Legacy; Creating Our Future"--a title all too apropos considering the fact that the creators of the report seemed to think that increasing the number of males on campus would bring about true diversity. This report, which was meant to articulate the College's vision into the 21st century, made only cursory reference to racial and class diversity and enraged many students who felt that this should have been a focus on its own.

By far, the most important event which created the opportunity for this protest was Professor [redacted]'s letter saying he was contemplating resigning from General Committee. He cited the "impasse on racial integration and cultural diversity" as well as the lack of responsibilities shown by "white executives, administrators, and faculty [in] open[ing] their minds and their hearts." As a respected member of the faculty, his letter sent shockwaves through the College and articulated the urgency of this issue to everyone on campus. Finally, setting the stage for this protest, was the decision by senators to discuss the crisis in diversity at their traditional end of the year dinner with the administration and select faculty. Our successful
protest was the culmination of these events and was dependent on the momentum created by them.

For me, the most encouraging moment of the last few weeks of the semester was the "returning students meeting." I was amazed to see that in the middle of the busiest week of the academic year and a full week after the walk-in, more than 60 people turned out for a meeting. People were full of fresh ideas. The fact that that meeting was skillfully chaired by two first-years seems to ensure that there will be no leadership vacuum in these struggles. It was at that meeting that the results of the election for [the Diversity Committee] were announced. As it turned out, some 170 ballots were cast in a very last minute election...what was that about student apathy?

The 1997/98 academic year should prove to be an interesting one at SLC. There is a wealth of students who have been politicized by the last few weeks of this year and they will be returning to campus ready and eager to be involved. Students will undoubtedly play a much more active role in campus organizations. At the same time there will be many challenges. [Redacted] who has worked so hard to diversify campus, will be on sabbatical first semester. In him we will lose (albeit temporarily) a great mentor. There will be new hurdles to meet in attempting to work within the structures of the college while not becoming entirely co-opted. Also there will likely be challenges in terms of establishing good working relations between student organizations on campus. A momentum of student activism has been created, however, and it should prove very difficult for anyone to turn this momentum back.

May 1997
• Faculty Voices

Interview

Did I experience racism at Sarah Lawrence? Yes, absolutely. Since they have such a unique position, so close to New York City, they can pick and choose who they want; in terms of writers, they've used that to their advantage over the years. They have what I would call a revolving position for a minority in the writing program. They're not the only school that's done this; but for me it was even harder to take there, once I realized what was going on, because after all, other colleges are other colleges but Sarah Lawrence supposedly stands for something a little different.

It's a revolving door. What you get is the recognition of teaching at Sarah Lawrence; and they get to have the feeling that they're doing something progressive without actually having to deal with it. You're there to provide a certain kind of color, for want of a better word, but they don't want you there on a permanent basis.

For me there was the added drama of the student sit-in. This was a group who came in as [first years] and had been lobbying as [first years] to make some changes at Sarah Lawrence. They'd basically been put off until their senior year, and they'd finally just had enough; in their frustration they took over the administration building, to try to force the administration to start dealing with some of these issues. It became obvious to me that the students were totally legitimate in their complaints, and that nothing they were asking for was outrageous or couldn't be done. But if you were for the students you were a radical and you were anti-Sarah Lawrence. They made that very clear.

The worst part was the faculty meetings, where I had to sit and listen to these people try to deal with what was going on. At first they thought it was humorous; they thought it was a joke. As it lingered on, they realized that it wasn't a joke, that the students were serious in their demands. I guess there had been some attempt to redress these problems in the sixties, and they'd hired a lot of black faculty—they all left, but for a brief period they came in—and what I was hearing was this resentment. The way at least some of the faculty portrayed it was that basically
a gun had been put their heads, to let in these unqualified or underqualified faculty members, mainly just as window dressing. They didn't have the right stuff to be teachers. And they weren't going to make that same mistake again.

I remember one faculty member, a young professor, untenured, white, who felt very threatened by the turn of events, swearing allegiance to Western Civilization, to the Western canon, 'I mean, what's wrong with that? What's wrong with it?' and everyone going Yeah, yeah, right, everyone applauding his bold statement. That's when I walked out of the meeting. I had just had enough. What was really awful about this was that I was sitting there, as a guest, hearing this. They didn't feel that there was any danger in saying this stuff with me around. After a while I realized: They're talking about me.

The students were the real victims. They were looking to the administration for some kind of guidance. It became clear to me from that point on that I could not stay there.

It's become more and more obvious to minority faculty over the years that Sarah Lawrence has a really big problem. You can teach there but you can't stay there. After a while I think the community is just going to understand that this is something they don't want to support, and they're really going to have a tough time getting minority faculty. After a while, the word is going to get around that it's just not the place you want to go.

It really is sad. I'm more sad than angry about it. The private Sarah Lawrence is a different animal than the public Sarah Lawrence. It's a systemic problem, and there's going to have to be some kind of massive push there. They're going to have to clean things up from the trustees on down, in order to insure that a certain kind of justice gets ingrained there.

It could be a fabulous place. For all the crap I went through, I really enjoyed teaching there.

November 1996
Interview

Q: How did you come to teach at Sarah Lawrence?

[Redacted]: I arrived in the fall of 1994. I had responded to an ad asking for someone to teach "ethnic psychology" or "ethnic issues in psychology" or something like that. I wasn't really sure what that was. I was planning on taking some time off to finish my dissertation, but I wanted to send my résumé to Sarah Lawrence to let them know I was finishing. I was thinking of it for the future. They called me in August; I think they had found someone, and then that person declined, late. So they interviewed me, and I told them that I didn't know what "ethnic psychology" was--I still don't--but I could certainly teach about the psychology of African-Americans. So that's what I did my first two years.

Q: What has been your experience here?

[Redacted]: My experience has been wonderful in terms of the work I've done with students. I've had some fabulous students; I was wonderfully surprised by how much I enjoyed working with them, and by how much I learned.

My experience on the campus has been pretty isolated; I haven't interacted with very many faculty members, except in the fitness center. That doesn't mean that I didn't have occasional conversations with faculty members. I played volleyball sometimes last summer, and got to know more people; but in terms of support or collegial relationships, I relied a lot on [Redacted] in the beginning, and [Redacted] was very supportive, and [Redacted] If I sought out support or advice or needed something, people were always very generous with their time and information; I received a good deal of support from the Dean of the College and the Dean of Studies office, in terms of dealing with students. But in terms of other kids of interactions with faculty members, I really didn't have very many. I didn't eat in the faculty dining room; I find most faculty of color don't. I would sort of breeze through. If I wasn't meeting anyone for a specific appointment, I wouldn't stay. Or I just wouldn't go there at all. I think that is pretty typical.

I think to most people I was pretty invisible. When I started, [Redacted] who taught painting, had a guest position as well; we were the two African-American women starting at the
same time. We're around the same age. Everybody would mistake us for the other one. To me, we look completely different. She has very long dreadlocks, and we just do totally different things. So we would always laugh when people would come up and ask her how her psychology class was going, or would ask me how my art classes were going. We were called by each other's names in administrative offices and by faculty members—and particularly in the post office. It was really quite something. I think it's an example of people not being able to recognize African-Americans as individuals.

Q: Has the college changed since you were a student here?

I think the ideology in terms of the curriculum is still pretty constant; but some numbers have changed, certainly in terms of students of color. When I was here, we could only have one student organization, that everybody of color belonged to; it's nice now that students can have Harambe and Unidad and ASU, that they have the numbers to enable them to do that. And I am particularly pleased with the existence of OAR and the work that you all are doing. I commend you on your efforts. In terms of faculty, there are a few more—not many more tenured faculty, not so many more permanent faculty, but there are more.

The most disturbing thing to me over the past few years has been hearing students of color, particularly African-American students, talking about issues of racism they have to confront with faculty members, either in the classroom or in conferences. Students are not in a good position to handle these interactions. They are keenly aware of the power dynamic between faculty and students; they don't have the tools or the skills to deal with these issues. That has been particularly disturbing. I chose to take the position of providing support to students, rather than confronting faculty with these issues. I sometimes wonder if that was the right position to take.

These issues are pretty typical. They're certainly issues I faced as a student; and some are similar to issues I faced as a faculty member. But it seems to me that Sarah Lawrence should be a place, particularly for students, that minimizes those kind of experiences. That's not to say that students of color aren't going to face racism in many different settings; but it seems to me they
shouldn't have to deal with it as much here, in this environment, so it is disturbing that it happens.

**Q:** Can you describe an example?

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**Answer:** One example is when someone is the only student of color in a class, and issues related to race come up, and the teacher turns to the student to act as the expert on the topic and teach the class. That's just very inappropriate. First of all, the student may not know, and is certainly not the expert; aside from that, it's not their responsibility. It's a very uncomfortable feeling; I can speak from the position of being a student in that situation. It's very uncomfortable to be singled out that way. You're already singled out, just by your presence in the class.

It gets into this issue of fine lines--like with faculty encouraging students to engage in conference work related to their racial or ethnic group, when the student hasn't brought it up as a topic. When the student hasn't suggested it, to assume that that's where their interests lie is problematic.

I've had students talk to me about very overt kinds of racism as well--like people patting them on the head, or making comments about physical appearance, specifically hair. You can relate that to the kinds of disagreements that students and faculty might have about appearance anyway; but I don't hear about those kinds of stories with white students. It's particularly salient around issues of race, around physical appearance for African-Americans and what's acceptable.

And then there are issues involving faculty--for example, where they don't have knowledge about a particular area related to people of color, and they tell students that there really isn't very much work in the area. I've had students beat around the bush about what to do for conference, and I'll say, What do you really want to do, what are you interested in? And they'll say, Well, I'm really interested in this, but I tried to do it for a conference topic last year for another course, and I was told there's not a lot of information. And I happen to know that there's a wealth of information, and lots of different ways to go about researching these particular topics. Students are pleasantly surprised; but I wonder about the ones who never find anyone who says Yeah! There's lots of work in this area!
When committees interview potential faculty of color who teach from a distinct non-Western perspective—and this has also come up in tenure review—they often ask candidates if they are willing or intend to teach mainstream work, in whatever their discipline is. I find that terribly offensive and hegemonic. It's as if one has to legitimize the scholarship of people of color, as if it's not worthy to fill the text requirements for an entire course. In other words, to legitimize your course, you have to include mainstream European work. It's ludicrous, especially since committees don't ask people coming to teach mainstream courses if they intend to include the work of people of color. It's a prime example of the way cultural bias perpetuates itself and becomes institutionalized.

Q: How do you think these situations could change?

As someone who's spent a lot of time thinking about racism, studying the psychology of racism and the processes of oppression, I think there has to be some real personal confrontation about personalized levels of racism. People have to be willing to engage in a process that will allow them to recognize some of their own biases. There has to be recognition that this is a serious issue, and so it has to be confronted in a serious way. I would advocate for outside intervention, for someone or some group to come in and help the entire college go through a process of evaluating themselves on the level of racism that exists in this environment. And the kind of racism it is—because people tend only to think about overt forms of racism, and they don't think about the more covert and insidious forms that exist, particularly within very liberal settings. If people are willing to engage in those processes, it's a step toward change.

I also think people have to be willing to confront their colleagues on these issues. That's something I've heard about happening very infrequently at Sarah Lawrence. As there should be, there is a level of respect between colleagues. But at some point it becomes disrespectful to allow certain offensive behaviors to continue. A lot of the racism that occurs is between teachers and students, and it happens in a way that faculty may not be aware of. I believe that if they were, it would diminish, and that they would be more sensitive to hearing it. I think that would make for a better learning environment.

May 1997

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Interview

I was recruited. People who had been at Sarah Lawrence previously had mentioned my name; so the school was listening to at least some of its former faculty, about enlarging the pool of faculty of color. But there was never a sense of how I could become a substantial part of the Sarah Lawrence faculty. In terms of pedagogy, I never got a sense of a way of talking about it with my colleagues, so that I would know if I was doing a good job. I felt shut out in a lot of ways. I felt that there was some information I was getting, but a lot of information was just not there. It's like that Eddie Murphy skit on Saturday Night Live, where he dresses up as a white person; he walks around and gets everything for free, oh, this is what it's like to be a white person! People tell him all kinds of stuff he never hears as a black person. And it's not even malicious. You're not in the loop. You're never in the loop.

I think there is a real lack of regard for the work of African-American poets, Asian-Americans...we're not seen as part of the mainstream, as part of the canon, we're always seen as slightly less, no matter how much we may know. I remember having a conversation with a student who was livid because she had brought in some work clearly influenced by someone like ntozake shange, and was not particularly well critiqued; the Sarah Lawrence workshop leader had said something like she didn't know who ntozake was...Now it could have been a joke, or she was being dismissive, or cutting, or there was simply a refusal to look at a particular kind of urban, feminist esthetic--which basically comes from ee cummings, but hey. It's not dealing with the fact that we're all using the same tools but we may come up with different products. If someone can claim to be having a deep discussion of American poetry and not even be able to say ntozake's name, whether you like her work or not--it's like saying, well, I won't talk about Carolyn Forché. Certain people's work is popular, everybody knows it, and it has influence, especially on beginning writers. It's that kind of attitude that struck me as incredibly destructive, and it pissed me off, to put it mildly. It made it less likely for me to want to get involved more deeply with Sarah Lawrence. That's the way I come to what does racism mean to me in terms of Sarah Lawrence.
The school needs to return to its original mission in a very solid way. Those experimental schools from the 20s and 30s like Bennington and Sarah Lawrence were so much more interesting than what they've become.

November 1996
Letter

June 28th, 1997

Thank you for your letter. I have been thinking about it ever since it arrived. Last night I heard my wise and true friend of many years, [name] talk about coming to study at Tanglewood after two years of apprenticeship conducting in Europe. He arrived with a sense of himself as a musician, based in fine and rigorous training already undertaken. "But," he said, "what I learned at Tanglewood was what I did not know...what I had not learned." His words struck me as a metaphor for my inner struggle with racism. Before I can take stock of how much I think I know, and how much I think I have learned, I am reminded of the opposite: that I don't know very much, and that I have endless learning to do.

This is a very personal and subjective response to your question about racism at Sarah Lawrence. I think that it's difficult to know ourselves, much less others, and more difficult still to connect meaningfully with those who are different from ourselves. Life feels like a perpetual journey of "connection-making" - one which I love, but on which I meet failure as often as success.

I've come to believe that racism is endemic to the human condition. In the large sense, history confirms this. In a lesser but equally real sense, we can see and hear it every day. If we're lucky, we can take "lessons" in how to combat it. My own principal teachers have been my friends of color, particularly my African-American friends. I have met all these friends at Sarah Lawrence. [names] and [names] have been and continue to be my teachers. They have helped me listen to myself (especially to all the racist things I don't realize I'm saying); they have generously opened their hearts and minds; they have forced me to have courage.

Last summer I had the opportunity to travel and attend conferences for two weeks in South Africa with seventy colleagues in the early childhood field from all over the U.S. We were a very diverse group in terms of ethnicity, economic background, and educational credentials. Leaders of color - representing the United Nations, national organizations such as Head Start, and major universities - were in the majority. There were Asian, Black, Latino and White early childhood teachers whose schools or districts had raised enough money to send them on the trip.
Every time we boarded a bus for a site visit, met in a conference room, or gathered to share a meal, there were choices concerning who would sit where, and with whom. Because I knew no one else, I made it a practice to take the first empty seat. Sometimes people were friendly, and sometimes they were not. But I learned a little bit with each encounter. And together we learned something about the courage, the pain, the outrage, the extraordinary achievements, and the amazing forgiveness of our Black and Coloured South African colleagues.

At the Early Childhood Center, some of the work began with us almost four years ago is beginning to have an impact. (I have tried to document these beginnings in a paper I gave as part of a seminar on racism at the University of Athens in March.) Next year the ECC Parents Association will again be co-chaired by an African American, and many of the committees will be chaired by persons of color, both male and female. , psychologist and ECC parent, has helped to design a series of evening programs, focusing on personal stories and issues of identity, as a continuation of our efforts to recognize ourselves and accept each other as members of a diverse community. Knowing how to look each other in the eye is important. We have also established a Diversity Committee whose first mandate is the development of recruitment strategies to increase applications of minority families to the school. Numbers matter.

Do I think there is racism at Sarah Lawrence? No more so than anywhere else. The important question is, how to we talk about it openly and honestly, or as honestly as possible, given our individual understandings of the moment?

With all good wishes,

Sincerely,
Interview

It's complicated. I can just give you my reactions, off the top of my head. I can say pretty honestly that I haven't experienced for myself or any of my students any racism. My students were all white, one half-Asian, so I guess it wouldn't come up. But I have observed a sensitivity to race, which reminds me a little bit of the high school I went to, a private girls' school. It's that feeling of everyone being very aware of the fact that I'm Asian. But not negatively. It just seems to be important in some way—much more so than at a place like [New York University], where there are a lot of Asian students and faculty. This is such a small school and I feel like such a rarity.

I went to this very WASPy boarding school in Massachusetts, where the people who were black, Asian or Hispanic really stood out, because there weren't that many. I do feel that way at Sarah Lawrence. I got into Sarah Lawrence as a graduate student; it was a choice between that and NYU, and I picked NYU. The thing that really tipped the balance for me was that NYU gave me more money. But also I think unconsciously one of the reasons I didn't choose Sarah Lawrence was that it was so much like my high school.

I find the west coast very different from the east coast in terms of accepting Asians and Hispanics. Asians are extremely assimilated there, in a way that they're not here. They're in the government there; and here it's a rarity.

In my class, race didn't come up as an issue. They seemed to take mixed ethnic groups much more for granted than I did. My feeling was that if the mix had been different, they wouldn't have been fazed. I have noticed more socio-economic apartness than racial apartness. When I've seen some of my students be disoriented, I think it's more because of that.

It's come up with colleagues only in the most positive sense. Only in the most positive light. I've been in environments where my race is such an issue; then I would go to Sarah Lawrence and no one would mention it. I'm so used to people coming up to me and saying point blank, Are you Chinese or Korean? So not having it mentioned was almost weird to me.

July 1997
Interview

Did you experience racism at Sarah Lawrence?

Not in any overt way. I was first hired in 1977; I was there for two semesters. But at the time, I was the only black faculty person. So while I may not have experienced personal racism directed at me, the fact that I was the only black faculty person there said something. They had had more blacks teaching there prior to this, in the sixties. Given Sarah Lawrence's history of at least the appearance of progressive learning situations, it did seem a bit odd to me, that whatever efforts were being made weren't leading to more faculty of color being hired. That's really all I can say. There were a lot of great people there. But looking at the campus at that moment, that would have been glaring to anyone. Just after that, [NAME] was hired, so things did begin to change.

If you had some kind of workshops for faculty and staff... clearly it would have to be voluntary. Part of the problem at a place like Sarah Lawrence is that liberal veneer; some people might be somewhat self-righteous about the fact that it was being offered at a place like Sarah Lawrence, and wouldn't think it was needed, given what is at least the official history of recruitment of students and faculty and the kind of people who have been there over the years. I would foresee some resistance, coming from unexpected quarters. Are the faculty and staff willing to acknowledge that the situation is one that would warrant forming such groups?

If there is not support for such workshops, maybe more informal groups might be able to draw people. If people felt they could talk openly and informally, without fear of censure or of being attacked personally, they could express what they genuinely feel. Things could come out that they're not proud of. People could begin to talk, as faculty and staff, in small groups, to say there are things that have happened here, these are things students have recounted, people have been interviewed, this is a reality. Maybe a way to begin to address it is to talk among ourselves about these experiences. Then it's not seen as an imposition or something being done by fiat. Perhaps something could be done without a structure, with that sense that we're all culpable and capable of saying and feeling and doing things that are not representative of the better angels of our nature.

[NAME]
March 1997
Interview

I got here in 1961. To the best of my knowledge, in terms of the history of the college, racial diversity up until the early 1960s meant Jews; the great argument of the thirties and forties and fifties was about that, with a little assist from Hitler. Originally William Lawrence wrote this wonderfully awful statement, about how the girls should be from those families that would be socially at home in Bronxville. The faculty rebelled against that from the first day, in the thirties when getting faculty members from among the many brilliant and poverty-stricken refugees from Europe. I really think this made the college respectable. It was a place that gave Jewish students a fair shake in the thirties and forties. Of course after the war, between Hitler and the Holocaust and Israel and all sorts of things in American society, anti-Semitism died away—obviously not entirely, but so much that by the end of the fifties, it was much less of an issue. That's a whole pre-history of this.

During that period, there was rather little discussion of blacks. Virtually everybody at Sarah Lawrence thought, I am a liberal, We are against Jim Crow, We are against southern senators, for Roosevelt and Truman, against Eisenhower, etc. Internally I don't think they realized how little they were doing to secure the whole panoply of what we're interested in. I think we always did reasonably well by eastern Asia, but not by Africa and many other places. In terms of admissions, so few applied I don't think they encountered any sort of operative prejudice. Prejudice, if it was there, was let's keep the Jewish quota down.

What happened after 1960 or 1965 determines a great deal of what's happened since, because that's the base from which we have changed. The faculty and administration as of 1950 or 1960 was in some ways very much what it is now; it's been added to and enriched, but I don't think it's been changed. There are a lot of neo-conservatives all over the country, but not particularly at Sarah Lawrence. We always had [BLANK], from whom horrifying statements can be taken. The best one was when people landed on the moon; he said Oh good, we can send the Negroes there. But he was a minority, maybe not of one, but of two or three, which does not determine the faculty. A group that believes that we are liberal, we have done it, then is faced with Wave Two in the 1960s, both from students and from younger faculty, and the discussions, the arguments, the quarrels, have alternated ever since.
The famous first occupation of Westlands took place in 1969. The cynical way of putting it is that their boyfriends at Columbia had occupied various buildings in 1968 and so they wanted to do it. That's really much too cynical. The objection that sparked it was a rise in tuition. Obviously tuition has always been a terrible sore point, because since the place opened it's been horrendously high. In fact, it's proportionally less high now; we're only a couple of hundred dollars ahead of Harvard, and we used to be over twice as much. The initial demand in occupying the building was that the tuition rise be rescinded. Obviously we were not waging the Vietnam War.

I don't think that the demands for diversity in 1969 were narrower than they would be today; they said that there should be more of whatever we want today, and therefore more money. They were less sophisticated about where the money might come from. I don't think students are quite so ignorant of this today. There's no such thing as a free scholarship. But they really did think that the faculty and administration, if it wanted to, could switch things; and indeed, some of the faculty would say Shucks, aren't there too many administrators, can't we get rid of about twelve of them and then have whatever faculty members we want? But that's not so easy to do.

They occupied for ten or twelve days before spring vacation. They were studiously rude on high moral principle, the way they were in the 1960s--on the whole, less so in 1989, when they did it again. I wouldn't say that President Raushenbush dithered; she played a waiting game. She was a little short of money and therefore couldn't do everything that was wanted. She was also already resigning, as Alice Ichman is this year, and couldn't commit the incoming president, DeCarlo.

The most conspicuous result was the first formal Black Studies program; eight or nine teachers were hired, mostly part-time, and a coordinator. It was done quickly, and none of them lasted. DeCarlo's hope I think was, Give them enough rope and they'll hang themselves; what's worthwhile will last and what isn't will disappear. In the short sense, I suppose that happened. The really interesting and now veteran black faculty members who are here now were not in that wave. They came in the next ten years.
Then what happens is twenty years of rather minor politicking, compared to other places, although it could seem strong here. And then the events that led up to the occupation of Westlands again in 1989.

The faculty is really awfully good-willed; on the other hand, although a lot of it teaches politics, I don't think they're very politic. In 1989, we dithered, and blithered: let's try to split the difference, anything to get peace. This is inexperience and weakness again. Faculty were very critical of the tactics: people occupy a building and want five things. I don't care for the occupation of buildings, but it's possible to distinguish. It's possible not to say the world is coming to an end.

More promises were made than they had the money to come through with—although Alice Ilchman very deftly managed to live up to the letter, to get just enough black and other non-white faculty members on tenure lines within five years. She was obviously terribly aware of this.

It's disappointing that it takes occupying the administration building to get an electric jolt, and then significant promises. The sense that students had was, If we don't, things go to sleep. They have something there. The tendency can be to go to sleep. Just before the events in 1989, a fairly large amount of money was set aside to build a new student center, maybe even with a swimming pool. What can you do when you make promises for new faculty members and new programs? There goes the student center. We are now hoping to raise money for a student center again.

The events of 1994 were relatively brief. They did hire a number of people; under the calendar rhythm, it was a while before any of them came up for tenure. Students really don't know how the faculty is organized, governed, or financed; it's easy to say, You're not living up to what you promised, none of them have tenure yet. It's tiresome to them to hear Well, that doesn't happen until the fifth year. Of course most of them did get tenure, but Horatio [Williams] did not, the merits of which seemed very problematic. He was a very appealing person, but some students didn't care for his teaching. I guess that's why he was let go; I wasn't on the Advisory Committee, I don't really know, and they do keep their own counsel. But others were loyal to him, and then there got to be group loyalty to him. It was an individual matter; I really don't think he was let go because of racist counterattack. But certainly it was genuinely thought to be.
The faculty view tends to be, We're in a pickle, let's do something. Since not so much was done by the students, it didn't occasion special faculty meetings and compromises. But it was a very sharp focus, halfway between the 1989 occupation of Westlands and the present.

To end this cycle, a president could talk more effectively in the quiet years, and not give the impression of Whew, they're quiet, let's do nothing. On the other hand, the maximal demands really do go beyond what the college can finance. When you don't have much, it's perfectly fair and politically effective to say, We want more. But when you have a fair amount, then comes the painful part, of saying How much actually do we want, assuming we have the power? That I don't think has ever been done.

When I was first chairman of my division in 1969, I got them to pass a resolution that we aim for eight full-time tenured posts in eight different non-Western fields. We've never gotten them all at the same time. But all of them have been appointed at some point; not all have stayed. The last battle was to get a permanent Mid-Easterner—which while had the post was somehow thought to be a right-wing plot, and now that is here, I don't think anyone's dissatisfied with it. He's with us for the foreseeable future.

A donnee of mine some years ago, was convicted by our Student Conduct court of being one of three students who made homophobic remarks, which is not the same as race but is part of a team together. This cast me in the role of the evil right-winger, insisting on civil liberties for son. There was a play, and 's son apparently did very well in it. He came out and he was friendly with these other two, including my donnee, and they gave him a flower to signify their approval. Up comes another student named whom I've never met, who sort of wriggled at them; apparently his body language said, This is a homosexual giving his partner a flower. Since he didn't say a word, but wriggled, it wasn't strictly speaking against our speech code. You have to say something. This rather annoyed them; apparently lost his temper and called a faggot. This got him up in front of a judicial review board. My donnee was said to have laughed, rather than to have said anything, and to have yelled, although nobody heard what he yelled. So the two of them were convicted. The procedure was horrendous; they should have just said, For Christ's sake, kids, grow up. However, this became on campus a kind of left-right thing, and it became
nationally quite an issue. A month earlier was the University of Pennsylvania's 'water buffalo' case, another kid farce which ought not to have become national politics, but did. There was immense bitterness; and I being the minority gadfly Socrates was cast mistakenly in a far-right and homophobic role. After two years we ended up completely changing the speech code, and completely changing the judicial review board, but not rescinding the students' sentences. At the last minute, the civil liberties union was going to sue the college on their behalf, but they didn't want to do that, they weren't that sort of people. That's the part that in my capacity as a don I've been most concerned with. But there's only been one case of that sort.

Legally, it's a matter of harassment; harassment is supposed to involve something repetitive, not one explosion. You don't any longer, as a good old dean of a male college would do, crack the two football players' heads together; but __________ can do that when she wants. Which has been done in several incidents since. The next year, a second donor said something at least as offensive; but at that point they didn't want another case of that sort. So __________ very sensibly just told them to cool it, to shut up. That's not a solution for something major; but it can do for a lot of these college incidents.

This is de facto I guess a conservative position; the campus left did want the speech code enforced, to put the students and the college on record as saying, This kind of insult cannot be tolerated. I don't care for those insults; unfortunately, what do you do with free speech?

It's such a protean issue. Paradoxically, in view of how the words are used, there's much less racism now, but much more racial hostility. Back when I was young, if you didn't live in New York or San Francisco, most Americans had probably never seen a black doctor, a black diplomat...The ones they saw really did seem lower class and could be thought to be stupid. You have to be psychotic now not to know that there are black actors, black computer programmers, black professors and so on. On the other hand, as the struggle for equality emerges, there's going to be a lot of objection. When you have total and complete slavery, 'they know their place,' there's not much struggle and violence; it's when things improve that you begin to get the contests. The impression is that we have an awful lot more hostility, more ill will and hatred—that I think is true—but it's not based in racism as it was in my childhood, an assumption of complete inferiority. It's based on a greater political respect: If I don't somehow stop them,
they're going to overtake me. Which very few people thought in 1935. It's an odd way of using words in current discussions.

In the long run, I'm an optimist. [REDACTED] was very impressive, saying it's going to be just as bad in two hundred years. Maybe he's right. On the other hand, maybe he isn't.

[REDACTED]

July 1997
Interview

My family are cotton farmers in Mississippi. Fannie Lou Hamer worked for my family. Fannie Lou Hamer was probably in the civil rights movement because of my family. When you read her story, about how they threw her off the farm when she tried to vote, that's my grandparents. So there's definitely a difference between what I've seen in the world and what goes on here at Sarah Lawrence.

But I don't think it's any different up here. I hear the same kind of conversations I heard in the south. I hear the same opinions. I don't think the racism is any better or worse. In the north it's more hidden, and in the south it's right out there, you can't avoid it. That's really the only difference I notice. Just this past year, with the strategic plan—it's amazing that that issue never came up. We're still that dumb occasionally.

This is just my own guess, but I would say the problem is complacency. And the trustees are so focused on other things. And it will always include that there's not somebody in the room raising the question. Anybody—but it usually ends up with someone who has a personal stake in that question continually raising it. I'm gay and it's the same with gay issues; somebody's got to be in the room saying, Excuse me, we've left something out here. And nobody was in the room; or if they were, they were being real quiet. That can happen around here, because the groups get small, and they can eliminate people if they're not paying attention. I didn't think of it as bad will; but I certainly thought, That's a real big mistake.

In the theater department, students would like to be able to produce more theater that comes from their own backgrounds. That's hard to do if there aren't the numbers of students there, if there's not enough energy around that issue to make something happen. That goes on with black students, Hispanic students, Asian students; in the theater you can have a real voice to create something, and if you can't create it, you look around and say, What's stopping me?

There's also always the issue of what we're actually producing: what plays are we putting up, what are they talking about, what are the main issues involved. You have to try to find some way for a lot of different voices to get heard. I direct about one play a year. I can't be in charge of producing everything. We do about thirty or forty plays a year; whatever student energy is driving that is important, but you may need to help that energy as well, by saying Can we broaden
this picture? Can we add some other things to it? It's difficult if there's not other support there besides just your voice.

I scream all the time that we do all these plays and our percentage of actors to actresses is not the same as the school's. We're not giving women the number of roles we could. The school is 75% women. It's as if we were at Spelman and decided to do a season of Neil Simon. Why would we do that? But we sit here every year and do play after play with male casts, or as many men as women, or even sometimes more; who are we doing that for? In the theater these issues come up all the time. Because theater is representative.

I'm thinking of doing "Carmen Jones" next year; and there's no way I can do an all-black production of "Carmen Jones" at this school. I have to figure out what that means. Two years ago I worked on Anna Deveare Smith's "Fires in the Mirror," and did that with a mixed cast. One of the plays I work on in my directing class is "Six Degrees of Separation"; and the students always look around to see who's going to be the black person in that part. I say, Guess what? You're going to play that part. We're going to investigate this material, and you're going to walk through that role. But that's different than putting it up on a stage.

It's so important for students to be trained with a wide range of material. If we can't do "Carmen Jones," they can't be exposed to it. So I have to find some way we can do it, and still maintain something that is "Carmen Jones." The whole thing's written in dialect; so if we decide to do it, we'll have to figure that out too. It's a significant piece of black historical theater. We can't just say, Oh well, we'll ignore that part. I may find the problems unsolvable.

I've been trying to find a Hispanic play; it's still going to be me doing a Hispanic play, with a lot of my sensibility in it. But it's either that or not do one, which I think would be ridiculous. We have maybe seventy students here of Hispanic origin. Some of these plays, even more than "Carmen Jones," call for casting an actual Hispanic person, someone who can really embody that life. Seventy people doesn't give me much to choose from. With those kind of numbers, it might be impossible. [Note: There are 51 Hispanic students at SLC, as of 1996.]

This will be my first year on Advisory Committee, and I'm going to get a real close look. That's one of the reasons I wanted to go on. I've been on Admissions for the past four or five years, watching how this whole issue plays itself out. I'm learning. It's a lot of people with a lot
of goodwill, and that doesn't necessarily make it work. It doesn't take much to make the conversation happen. It takes somebody making a noise.

I don't think we're yet doing everything we can. If that can happen with the strategic plan, we're not yet doing everything. About four or five years ago, we tried to create a conversation on racism. We did some work in the theater; we videotaped some student gatherings where we talked about it. But it was very hard to sustain. Anything that sustains it is great; if it's sustained long enough, perhaps it gets in people's minds and they can help sustain it after a while.

It's hard to learn. Especially when staying the same feels okay. It doesn't feel like it's that bad. It's work to learn. The reason I bring up my background is that everything I learned when I was a kid is still there. It's not gone. I remember all that stuff, and it can surprise me how fast it can be right in front of my face. It's been work for me to look at that and say, What am I going to do with that? How am I going to use that and not just act like it's not there or try to destroy it? It's not going anywhere, and I'd better be able to use it in something.

It's better if we hear it from each other. Then you know it's out there, and you don't have to feel like you're alone with it. I felt that for years. When I had been here for a while, they started to slowly bring in more black faculty, and you could really have a chance to meet people and talk with them. And I would tell some of the faculty here how I was brought up, and what I was told to think about them. I would tell somebody, I was taught that you were an animal; and they would say I knew that, but I never actually heard it. To be able to say it out loud to someone and get something back from them helped a lot. I think they were interested in the conversation and I know I was. It's hard to hide it from someone who's seen it. Oh no, I recognize that. I've smelled that before. I know just what that odor is.

June 1997
Interview

My experiences at Sarah Lawrence are not that different than my experiences throughout the world; I think most people of color wind up being not at all surprised that racism exists everywhere. What's really surprising about Sarah Lawrence is that it is a place promoting or attempting to promote understanding, compassion and awareness; but I've found people can be just as ignorant here as anyplace else.

I am not sure how one goes about making changes. My concern is that the faculty—I do feel it is primarily the responsibility of the faculty to make many of the necessary changes—is really not as open nor as interested in change as we say we are. It seems to me that the faculty feels more threatened by the idea of change than need be. Why is that, I don't know. These feelings have surfaced several times since I have been teaching at Sarah Lawrence, and the general reaction of the faculty to the questions of change and diversity has been the same. There seems to be a fear that somehow something is going to be taken away from them or from the faculty body at large. The concern seems to be that, rather than the idea that something might be added. That's perplexing to me.

I was on the first Diversity Committee in the late eighties and found out how hard it is to deal with these issues. Especially in large forums like faculty meetings. That's probably not the best place to talk about much of anything. I mainly know the faculty I work closest with, and I have a pretty good read on how they feel about things; but once I get beyond there, everything is so social. You don't find out what people are really thinking. They are very nice, or they are very careful and polite. It is hard to judge. But the way this college runs, much of the hiring and how people progress is controlled by the faculty. The faculty has to take responsibility. If we want change and more diversity, if there is some sense of urgency, it isn't the administration, I think, that is the biggest obstacle.

I feel the administration has done a great deal. I do not believe in the end it is their responsibility however. I had several discussions at the end of the semester with my students, and I suggested that perhaps they were focusing their attention in the wrong way. I went through several different scenarios, trying to explain to them how things actually are done here, and how it wasn't the administration they need to impress.
We as a college have made progress in the area of diversity, but we still have to get over certain obstacles. The discussion must be kept ongoing. Often when the issue comes up, it gets lost and dissipates. When it resurfaces, a lot of time and energy is necessary again to inform people why these changes are important. The students are trying to tell us something. Every few years these issues reappear. We need to continue to address them, let their concerns be catalysts for more and more meaningful discussion.

July 1997
Statement Excerpt

For a while, I was the only black female tenured faculty member among a few other guest faculty of color here at the college. Along with the few students of color, I too experienced first hand what it meant to be few in number: to be more visible while at the same time invisible, to be stereotyped and face more personal stress, to experience the sense of being an outsider. Classical and contemporary social theorists George Simmel and Rosabeth Kanter have written about the significance of numbers for social life, arguing persuasively that numerical shifts transform social interaction. I learned from their work, and my experience at Sarah Lawrence, that increasing the numbers of students, faculty and staff of color is the central starting point for transforming the life of the college for the better.

From [Name]'s Senior Lecture, May 1997
• Administrative Voices

Admissions - Interview / [Redacted]

In March of 1997, [Redacted] interviewed Dean of Admissions [Redacted].

[Redacted]: How does the admissions office get the word out about Sarah Lawrence?

[Redacted]: One of the things we do, that most colleges do, is mail students information after they've taken the SATs or ACTs. We buy the names of the kids who fit the SLC profile.

[Redacted]: Profile by SAT?

[Redacted]: Not just the SAT: the students who are interested in a liberal arts education, who are thinking about studying things we offer here, or who might be thinking about a college that's smaller. We use a pretty broad set of parameters.

Remember the Student Descriptive Questionnaire? It's something you fill out way at the beginning, when you take your PSATs. With SAT and ACT, we buy a total of 113,000 names. We send them an information packet, called a search piece, which introduces them to Sarah Lawrence. The other thing we do is travel throughout the U.S., throughout the world, and visit high schools and meet with students in small groups.

[Redacted]: How do you decide that? I know my high school never got visited by a Sarah Lawrence representative.

[Redacted]: What you say is true. There are thousands of high schools that never get covered. We usually go to places that we get students from. Sometimes all of a sudden a student will apply from a school and so we'll go. And students hear back, parents talk, brothers and sisters talk.

[Redacted]: Yeah, I have a friend who's applying from my school who hadn't heard of it until I said something.
Sure. In fact, this year I'm about halfway through reading the pool, and so many students have said on their applications, I have a friend who goes here or who has graduated from here, and he/she told me about it.

In our OAR meetings, there has been a rumor that due to financial crisis in the past couple of years, there has been more of a push to get kids from private schools or rich public schools. There is no movement to get more students from private schools. In fact, in the past six or seven years, more students at the college are from public schools than from private ones. It flipped. Right now around 65% of our students come from public schools.

Have there been any statistics or studies done about the quality of the public school the student is coming from, considering there are some very upscale public schools out there?

We know a lot about the school when we read the application. The first reader is a geographic reader, and is required to know as much as possible about the individual school. So when you're talking about the applicant, you can really put that applicant in the appropriate context. Some private schools aren't that great. There are a lot of public schools that are really great, that have international baccalaureate programs. There still are a lot of public schools that aren't great. The way we do admissions here is we start with the individual. We see what that individual is going to bring to Sarah Lawrence. How is that individual going to fare with the rigors of Sarah Lawrence? What contribution is this student going to make to community life?

Then you put that individual in the context of their own school. What are the challenges the student has every single day? Some students have really great challenges, because as many as half the classmates they started with aren't there anymore: they've dropped out, got kicked out, whatever. And for some students there is great privilege. We try to understand what each individual has gone through.

Another big part of the application is if the student can write, and really, if the student likes to learn. We gauge that differently for each student; is he/she in an environment where it isn't appropriate to learn, where it's appropriate to just sort of go to school, hang, whatever? We can tell if that person really loves to learn. They do things like read books at lunch.
Crisis is a pretty strong word for the situation we're in. The great thing is that Sarah Lawrence has an endowment, and when a college has an endowment it is basically insured. We really never technically run a deficit, because you've always got this reserve. You want to use this reserve to make your place amazing, and we've been able to do that.

There is no movement to get more rich kids here—because I and the college firmly believe that when you have diversity, every type of diversity, you're better educating everyone at your institution. The culture is making that hard for us, because of affirmative action problems. In Texas and California, what's going on is really scary. It calls into question this diversity. When you can't practice affirmative action, you can't have an entirely diverse student body. It's that simple. The courts will argue differently, but it's true.

I've heard there is a decline in students of color applying to Sarah Lawrence. Is this true?

In the past four or five years, the number has been just about the same. There was a slight decrease in the percentage last year of students of color, by 1%. So we've been running 17%. When I first got to the college, in 1989, the numbers were incredibly low. We had numbers like 10% or 12% of students of color here. There was a real effort to recruit more students of color and it worked.

You just do it. You go to certain schools, you do your search differently, you do special event recruitments. We continue to do those things. In fact, last year we did more than we had ever done. We have a student of color recruitment intern as part of our office, who works with student of color groups on campus. There is also a "roundtable," made up of students, faculty and administration of color, who discuss how to recruit students of color. We stage a student of color phone-a-thon. At this time of year, we do a follow-up with students of color in the applicant pool who are in various stages of their applications; we work with them and tell them what's missing and what they can do. We're thinking about a publication that talks about the student of color community in the admissions packet.

We did have a lower percentage last year, and this year there is a small drop in the number of students of color in the applicant pool. We have no idea why, because we've done more than we've ever done in the history of the college. I think part of it is that there's a sense
that places like Sarah Lawrence and Vassar are not as accessible because of our cost; that's despite me and [redacted] going into high schools, public and private, saying to families, "It doesn't matter, apply!"

How does race factor into the admissions process?

[redacted]: One of the things that affirmative action litigation has done to college admissions offices is made us not talk about it. What I will tell you is that I firmly believe in having as diverse a first-year class as possible. Method is getting harder to talk about publicly.

But race is definitely a factor?

[redacted]: You could surmise that from what I said. It's very hard to say we practice race-blind admissions here.

What can the admissions office do to make the campus even more of a diverse one?

[redacted]: We think we're pretty creative people, and we've been very successful in the last few years in getting the application numbers way up. We really rely on students to help us, because students are the best spokespeople for the college. We know how to write about it, and we know what to say to guidance counselors to get students on the road; but there is nothing more credible than hearing from someone who actually goes to the college. It's why we have senior interviewers. They can describe the experience. So we want students to help us. We are very fortunate, we do get a lot of help, but we can always use more.

NOTE: [redacted] will be leaving the college as of the fall of 1997. [redacted] Associate Director of Admissions, will serve as Acting Dean of Admissions.
Financial Aid - Interview /

**Question:** How does race play a part in the distribution of financial aid?

**[REDACTED]:** Not at all. We don't consider any of that. Does that mean that subtly I can't recognize names and possibilities that a person is of color? Probably. But when the dollar decisions are made, it's absolutely cut and dried, by a formula, regardless of any of the EEOC concerns.

**Q:** When you say a formula, is it standard for all colleges?

**[REDACTED]:** Yes, we all do essentially the same things. We ask our families to complete these crazy forms, which at the end tell us, This is how much a family should be able to pay. I subtract that number from our cost and then very succinctly, formulaically award financial aid, according to the remainder.

**Q:** Is it entirely need-based?

**[REDACTED]:** Yes.

**Q:** There's no merit aspect?

**[REDACTED]:** None whatsoever. We've had this argument since I've been here, for four years. I have worked at other places where merit becomes a very divisive tool. It sculpts a community that isn't necessarily the community you want. While maybe that would help us attract full-pay students, from my perspective it's never been successful in my eighteen years of doing financial aid. So the college still says that financial aid is to level the playing field, regardless of your individual financial circumstances. If you're able to be admitted to the college and you can't pay your whole way, then the college will help you do that. As long as we stay that course, this will stay as academically pure as a community can be.

**Q:** Do you know what percentage of financial aid recipients are people of color?

**[REDACTED]:** No. I have refused to keep that information. I have a different bias, and that is protecting the economic intimacy of our families. Sure, we see more persons of color coming
from the lower and middle income strata; but it's not outside of the national reality. No, I don't maintain ethnicities. I'm really committed here to treating each kid on their own information.

Q: How much of the process is computer-provided data and how much is your discretion?

[ Redacted ]: The computer provides the basis of my decisions. But it does nothing else. When it really boils down to kids coming in with extenuating circumstances, that has to be done case by case. I would say half of my work spits out of the computer, and half is looking at the individual circumstances, where the square peg doesn't fit in the round hole. It's hard to categorize this; I take one kid at a time, so each one is handled in what I would consider the fairest and most consistent manner.

Q: What role do outside advocates for the students play?

[ Redacted ]: That's extremely helpful when I have done what I am allowed to do. Then, when we're talking about things outside of those allowances, we have a committee on financial aid: seven or eight of us, two faculty, two senior staff, two administrators. We sit and we talk. [ Redacted ] and [ Redacted ] are sitting on my committee and they can tell you, this is not an easy process. Because we then make exceptions to the rules.

Q: So in terms of student concerns about the subjective part of the process and how racism could play in, that would be the place where that risk is run.

[ Redacted ]: Sure--except for the fact that I'm probably the only one in the room with the information about ethnicity, and that's only because of my relationship with the student. That conversation is not allowed, and won't be allowed as long as I sit on that committee.

Q: So if you're discussing incoming students, whom nobody knows, the student's race would never be mentioned.

[ Redacted ]: Never. In fact, I would take extraordinary exception to that coming into any part of the conversation. That is irrelevant.
Q: And how much relation does the student's later financial aid support bear to their initial commitment from the college?

We maintain consistency. Once the student is here, we are committed to fund them for four years. That's what the intricacy of the first year is. If the student wants to be here and the college says you should be here, then there's no question. We do what we have to do.

As far as the community of financial aid officers, and there are many of us, I call us the old Woodstock kids. We support ignoring gender, sexual orientation, race, and economic abilities; we fight to say that that's nobody's business. That puts the onus of diversity on other areas of the college. I know that [redacted] is passionate about creating the right community here, seeing that people of color are well represented.

Q: Do you have any last comments about the general situation in terms of diversity at Sarah Lawrence? Any thoughts about the controversy generated by the walk-in?

I was very pleased that the students forced the conversation—because the folks who usually create conversations around here come from their own experiences and their own knowledge of the world we live in. If in your own world there are no people of color, then you never know that that's an important part of any conversation you have as a professional. I think that's exactly what happened. The kids were absolutely right. The absence of the issue of diversity in the strategic plan came out of that old conversation, where their own personal lives are devoid of diversity. So they never noticed! I couldn't have been prouder of our students, for standing up and saying No, this is not acceptable in the nineties, and it's not acceptable at Sarah Lawrence. After that, I watched a commitment made by people who care. That's what should have happened all along.

Speaking as a member of a biracial family, we don't know how to have this conversation. We don't understand parity of language yet. Until we teach each other to talk about these issues, there will always be a continental divide between us. Once language is identified, it will take the discomfort out of the conversation. [redacted] in the middle of the takeover started referring to the students as Nazi; and all the grownups rolled their eyes and thought Oh God, we know what you're trying to say, but it's an inappropriate allegory to use here. Until we allow all that
horrible language to come out of each and every one of us, and put it on the table for us all to
look and pick up the pieces that belong to us, we won't get very far. That's my frustration in
discussing diversity issues. We won't own what we really feel. It's okay for people to feel
uncomfortable. It means they're listening.

It's difficult to speak with whites who say 'I am not racist'; that just gives you the level of
ignorance and lack of awareness. You have to admit that part, to move to the next part, which is
healing.
Library - Interview / [Redacted] & [Redacted]

[Redacted] is the Sarah Lawrence Librarian; [Redacted] is Assistant Librarian and Head of Collection Development. This interview took place on February 3, 1997 to discuss racial diversity in the library collection.

**Question:** In general, how would you describe the library collection in terms of racial diversity?

[Redacted]: It's always changing...and it changes as the faculty changes. I think [Redacted] was hired in 1989, and the student demonstrations about these issues were that year. In the years that followed the course offerings have been much more varied: Asian American Literature, Latin American...The courses that [Redacted] offers are all brand new.

**Q:** So the curriculum led the way?

[Redacted]: Sure.

[Redacted]: This collection is very curriculum driven. That's why it's so patchy in some places.

[Redacted]: It's also because it reflects what students do in conference work. Sometimes they tend to do things of topical interest, and that affects the collection also. We scan the student conference topics to order books for the collection. I would say that for every one book we buy on Shakespeare we probably buy ten or twenty in multi-cultural or gay and lesbian studies.

**Q:** How would you describe how it was when you came here?

[Redacted]: I always characterize the collection as cheese. Swiss cheese. It was difficult to satisfy all the needs. We don't have a core collection, as other colleges have.

**Q:** So the changes were curriculum-inspired at the beginning, but now that they've taken off, you are generating more on your own? How does that work?

[Redacted]: In art, for instance, if there are books by or about African-American artists, we tend to pick those books up. We still have some state funding, about four or five thousand dollars a year, that allows us to supplement our own resources.
It's to develop what we see as our strengths. So we've done women's studies, human genetics and multi-cultural studies.

In 1991, some students from CSOC (Concerned Students of Color) came in to talk about the collection; we went through the guide for establishing Asian-American core collections to try and see what we had.

Some black students came in and said we didn't have anything--this was about two years ago--but we code our orders by subject, and so I was able to print out the list of multi-cultural things I had bought in the last year.

Q: We've been talking mostly about the book collection. In terms of journals, how does that work?

It doesn't work at all right now. I'm out of money right now.

Journals are very hard. We have a core group of journals we've collected over time, and each has maybe a thirty or forty year run, and it may be in a very traditional area, but you can't just cut it off and say well, we're not going to collect it now. It tries very hard, but it's probably impossible in this area to do everything that students wish we did.

Q: So it's harder to meet your ideal goals there than with the books?

Absolutely. Because you have an ongoing commitment to these journals. Every year for the past couple of years we've sent out a list to faculty to see if they could make suggestions for cancellations.

We also have a full text CD Rom data base called Ethnic Newswatch, that provides the full text of hundreds of ethnic newsletters and newspapers. You can print out your article, it's not a citation. We were able to cancel subscriptions to things like the Amsterdam News, because it's all right there.

We encourage students and faculty to come in with book requests and journal requests--

Not journal requests!

Yes, book requests certainly. If it's something we think we could use for the collection--I don't remember ever turning down a student request. We try to accommodate that.
And I go through all the interlibrary loan requests to see if we shouldn't buy them instead of borrowing them.

[Redacted]: Sitting here, we feel that we try, to some extent at the expense of traditional subjects, like science and foreign language and traditional literature. I don't know when the last time was we bought a book on Milton--maybe just one or two a year. We tend to really focus on these new things. If you look at our collection of African women writers, it's strong, because of [Redacted] there.

[Redacted]: We encourage the students to make an appointment with one of us when they're working on a major paper. We've done maybe eighty of those consultations so far this year.

Q: So if students were not satisfied with what they perceived the library to be doing, it wouldn't take much for that to be different? Since it is so focused on their requests, their inputs, what books actually circulate?

[Redacted]: If they're disappointed, they haven't told us, and therefore we can't respond. It's not that we don't want to respond.

[Redacted]: Sometimes the students are disappointed because their topics are so current, and there just aren't many books on those topics.

Q: Thank you very much for your time. Is there anything else you'd like to add? What are your goals, where do you see yourselves moving?

[Redacted]: At various times representatives from campus groups like Harambe have come to see us to talk about the collection--and I would just encourage them if they are concerned not just to come in for the first meeting and depart, but make it an ongoing dialogue. Maybe there are things we have overlooked. And we have offered to give these groups tours of the collections they might be interested in. To figure out what we have first and to build.
A Word About Trustees

In a November 1996 memo to the faculty, Chair of the Board of Trustees, wrote, "The four priorities for the future of Sarah Lawrence are:

* to sustain our distinctive pedagogical approach and educational program;
* to ensure the excellence and well-being of the faculty;
* to attract and retain the most able students; and
* to create and maintain the physical settings that are needed to accomplish the first three priorities."

If this list of college priorities is ever to include racial diversity, much closer contact needs to be established on this issue between the trustees and the rest of the college community. Of 32 active trustees, 4 are people of color (including , 12.5%. Three of these four will retire within the next two years, and the processes to nominate and appoint their replacements will occur. Some kind of ongoing, formalized liaison between the Board of Trustees and the Diversity Committee, or OAR, could make contributions to the search and appointment processes and sustain an ongoing conversation about these issues, to help keep them from being pushed to the periphery.

Of course, a main concern of the Board is fundraising. In her letter, mentioned various fundraising strategies. "For each strategy," she wrote, "we also have to assess the likely donor response, in order to find the approaches that will be the most persuasive, that will evoke pride, excitement, and a desire to 'get on board.'" There are now in this country many large foundation initiatives on racial diversity in higher education--the Ford Foundation's is one--which could be investigated, as part of a plan to create a Sarah Lawrence with a racial diversity record to be proud of. There need not be an assumed link between attracting donors and avoiding this issue, or, as in the Strategic Plan, between racial diversity and fiscal danger.

Affirmative action is the major issue in higher education in our time; as the college moves into a new era--a new president, the turn of the century, the 75th anniversary in 2001--we could resist the temptation to achieve a bare minimum and make our commitment to genuine racial diversity one of our "areas of special pre-eminence," and meet the challenges of the new millennium as leaders in this field.
Goals

According to the statistics provided by the Westchester Colleges Project on Racial Diversity, White/European Americans constituted 76% of the United States population in 1990; Black/African Americans constituted 12%, Hispanic/Latinos 9%, Asian/Pacific Islanders 3%, and Native American/American Indians 1%, for a total of 24% people of color. The projections for 2010 are that African Americans will constitute 13% of the population, Latinos 13%, Asians 5% and Native Americans 1%, for a total of 32% people of color and 68% European American.

The American Council on Education and its Office of Minorities in Higher Education call their annual conference "Educating One-Third of a Nation"; at Sarah Lawrence we are still far from having one-third of our students, faculty, and administrators be people of color. To commit ourselves to achieving that goal is possible, morally responsible, and educationally indispensable, for all of us. We have made a start; in the face of financial and legal challenges, we can either retreat from our commitments, grudgingly meet their minimum requirements, or establish ourselves as leaders in this field, recognizing that our freedom as members of an academic community is inseparable from justice for all.

Here are some goals toward which we could work, to make genuine racial diversity a reality:

Students

- A student body including 32% people of color by the year 2010, with an interim goal of 24% within the next five years. From our past record, it's clear we're capable of increasing the number of students of color here by up to 3% a year; if we achieved that consistently, we could meet our goal by 2003. To work more slowly, we could commit ourselves to increasing that number by just 1.5% a year, achieving 25% by 2003 and 32% by 2008.

- A permanent group for peer dispute resolution, trained to cope with student-student disputes involving race.

- Permanent racism-awareness training for incoming first-year students, as well as structured ongoing workshops for continuing students.

- Opportunities to study abroad in non-European countries.
Faculty

- A faculty including 32% people of color by the year 2010, with an interim goal of 24% within the next five years. Again, we have proven capable of raising this figure by 8% over ten years; if we were to commit ourselves to moving slightly more quickly and increasing the current 16% by just 1.5% a year, we could achieve 25% by 2003 and 32% by 2008.
- 28 tenured faculty of color by 2010, with an interim goal of moving from 8 to 16 within the next six years. This number quadrupled between 1987 and 1997. The current goal would mean tenuring twenty faculty of color over the next thirteen years.
- Wide distribution of detailed hiring and promotion criteria, and of news of planned hiring.
- An ongoing faculty group to discuss the issue of racism, particularly as it might arise in classes or conferences.
- Faculty workshops on racism awareness.
- A viable Diversity Committee or some other comparable group to address the issue of racial diversity consistently and permanently.
- A college in which people of color are included in every department and on every committee.

Staff & Administration

- A staff and administration including 32% people of color by the year 2010, with an interim goal of 24% within the next five years.
- At least two Administrative Officers of color within the next five years.
- Wide distribution of detailed hiring and promotion criteria, and of news of planned hiring.

Trustees

- A formal liaison between the Diversity Committee or some equivalent group and the Board of Trustees, to address the issue of racial diversity.
- An understanding that college visions and commitments must include genuine racial diversity, regardless of the college's financial situation.
Curriculum

- A cross-listed program in Multicultural Studies within the next five years; programs in African-American Studies, Asian-American Studies, Latino/a-American Studies and Native American Studies by 2010.

- An increase in the number of courses whose primary focus is people of color from 17% to 24% within the next five years. We moved this number from 7% to 17% between 1987 and 1997. An increase to 32% by 2010, aiming toward 50% eventually.

- A college forum on this issue in the fall of 2003, to assess our progress.
OAR
FOUND 1996

We are Organized Against Racism (OAR) and have come together based not on our individual identities but on our shared recognition of the injustice of racism and our commitment to ending it. We focus our work on our own community here at Sarah Lawrence not out of bitterness but out of love: the kind of love that refuses to let lies and injustice persist, that makes the invisible visible, that insists on transformation even when it is costly, that will not give up a vision of a world in which we are all free. Toward that end, we each put in an oar, to correct the course of the boat we share. New members are always welcome.

Membership 1996-97
We wish to thank all the members of the Sarah Lawrence Community--students, faculty, staff, and administrators--whose participation, energies, and resources contributed to the completion of this Report.