Many Voices - One Community

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Intentional Connections=Student Success

by Carmaletta Williams
Executive Director for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Learning really does come first at Johnson County Community College. We want our students to be successful, and we have an entire community committed to making that happen. The Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (ODEI), like many divisions, departments and the campus as a whole, has been working diligently for our students. An essential goal of JCCC and the ODEI is to recruit, retain and *graduate* students. Therefore, we have launched "Intentional Connections=Student Success" (IC=SS) to guide and assist our students through their educational journey. I am extremely pleased to say that a mentoring program being developed by the Learner Engagement Division has blended with Intentional Connections to create a much stronger, larger campus-wide structure and strategy for student success.

The title and function of this program, Intentional Connections = Student Success, are taken from statements made by Johnson County Community College president Dr. Terry A. Calaway, who reminds us that data shows that no matter how slight the connection to or the role of the person with whom the student connects – success results. Also, we know that students who are engaged in some way with the institution and its activities simply have a much stronger chance for success. We must, Dr. Calaway insists, make Intentional Connections with our students in order to provide them with the best learning experience possible and to guide them to academic success.

Intentional Connections addresses the holistic needs of students from their first steps on campus until they walk across the stage at graduation. We recognize that student success is predicated on more than a student's ability to pass an introductory math or reading class. Affective conditions and needs more than intellectual ability are often the barriers to student graduation. We propose to create "safe webs" around our students to help them through their educational journey. These safe webs include both faculty/staff and peer mentors, counselors, family and community connections, and any academic reinforcements they might need.

We piloted a program in the Spring 2010 semester. Twenty students were paired with mentors so that we could "test" the program. We found that students were eager to be connected with a mentor. They came to meetings and freely

shared their academic and personal information with us. They told us of their educational goals and dreams. More importantly, they were quite clear in understanding and articulating the challenges to their success.

Equally exciting was to learn that we had many more people volunteering to be mentors than we were ready to accept in this pilot program. Most insightful to me were the places from across campus from which our mentors came. Almost every department on campus, including document services and our custodial staff, had people volunteering to be mentors. I cite these two divisions because their inclusion taught me that people outside of the classroom were realizing that they had the power to help our students succeed. Their inclusion as mentors taught our campus that connections, whether in the classroom or in the lunchroom, were essential to student success.

Our first full program will include JCCC students entering in the fall of 2010. To be included in the program, students must be full-time, committed to learning and being engaged with the institution, and declare their intention to graduate from JCCC. Our Intentional Connections students will know that with successful completion of a degree from JCCC, they are able to compete on the world market with others with comparable degrees. They may not have started their educational journey on as strong a base as they perceive others have, but in the words of Abraham Lincoln, "there is no evidence that [they]may not be a better scholar, and a more successful [person] in the great struggle of life than many others, who have entered college more easily."

As students enter IC=SS, we will take individual, holistic looks at them in order to identify their strengths

intellectually, academically, emotionally, socially, physically and economically. As there are few restrictions for admission into this program, Intentional Connections students will be diverse in many arenas. Recent demographics reveal that larger communities of unserved, underserved, economically deprived, and marginalized people are moving into our area. We welcome them and will address their special needs. It is no coincidence that students in these populations have had less educational success than those in majority population, middle-class communities. Access, inclusion and equity have been denied to many of them. We will fortify their learning experiences in this program by bringing them to an understanding that they can control and chart their own futures. Their academic and affective needs will be addressed in the core structures and strategies for this program.

They, however, will not be the only students admitted to IC=SS. Students from every socio-economic group, including higher income groups, and every ethnic group, including mainstream America, are eligible for inclusion. There will be no race, age, length of residency or previous attendance requirements or restrictions. In addition to traditional high school to college students, we also anticipate that a significant number of students in this program will be non-traditional, adults who are returning to higher education for a myriad of reasons. Remarkable growth in our enrollment numbers is due to members of this cohort who are retraining themselves for expanded job possibilities.

Some of the needs of our students are certainly academic. Data gathered for JCCC's involvement with Achieving the Dream demonstrates that of the Fall 2006 cohort of 3,025 students enrolled in developmental and "Gatekeeper" courses in English and Math, only 30% of Black students, 46% of Hispanic students, 45% of Asian students and 43% of White students persisted to one semester in the second year. The numbers are even more dismal for those who enrolled in at least one semester in each of the first three years: only 25% Asian; 15% Black; 24% Hispanic and 23% of White students persisted. What this data on persistence reveals to me is that learning and the capacity to learn, regardless of the Bell Curve or other flawed studies like Arthur Jensen's in the *Harvard Educational Review*, are not race-based. Many of the differences lie in affective regions, such as social situations, economic hardships, family conditions, and the opportunities students have had for effective learning. Ethnicity alone does not seem to be the controlling factor in these courses. Students of all ethnicities in these courses are not being successful. We must look at the student's whole learning experience and together, with the student, try to determine what is interfering with their success. We know, like in the words of Harlem Renaissance anthropologist and writer Zora Neale Hurston, "Black children don't learn by osmosis" and neither do Brown or White. So just putting them in the same spaces will not bring a cure. We need to reach our students where they are and bring them to acceptable success levels.

We also will look internally. We will take a critical look at our curriculum, pedagogy, and culture to make sure that we are providing the best possible learning experiences. In all cases, best practices for student success will be explored, created and engaged. We will provide the most successful teachers, in terms of the academic success of their former students, to teach our students. We will work extremely hard to create a campus environment where all students feel comfortable and secure enough to engage with the institution. We want our students to see themselves reflected in our curriculum and campus community; to feel respected in their classrooms and on our grounds; and to feel safe to engage completely with the institution. Their diverse needs, abilities and motivations will be taken into account in creating a strong, working strategy for student success.

We don't have a magic wand to wave to make this all happen in a minute. It will take time, but we have taken our first bold steps. Once we realized that we pretty much already have everything we need to make this program and our students succeed, we launched this program with our available resources. We realized that we have a campus community filled with people who understand the rigors of higher education. We came to learn that our faculty and staff are willing to extend helping hands and to give freely of their time and energy to advance the lives of others. We recognized that our community is committed to helping enrich students' educational journeys any way they can. We came to learn that we have a campus community that is willing to make intentional connections so our students can succeed.

Across the Borders

by Danny Alexander

The singing over the opening bass and synth carried a quaver that sounded a little like American Indian song, but this was clearly hip-hop even before Arabic rhymes started cascading one after another. And all of that musical color served as a perfect complement to the slide show Sara Jawhari showed of her trip to the Gaza strip. Yes, these pictures featured a few shots of forbidding walls and wire and rubble, but the spirit of the music emphasize the dominant images, one beautiful child's smile shining after another.

"I was getting mad during the presentation," one of the students told me after the talk, "but when I saw those kids' faces, I felt hope."

And, on February 22nd, that balance of heat and hope lay at the heart of a very important evening at my school, "Viva Palestina: Report Back from Gaza," hosted by Jawhari and the Johnson County Community College Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

The Office asked me to introduce Sara Jo (as Jawhari is perhaps best known around school), and it was, indeed, an honor. Since I've been working with the diversity initiative, which takes me out of the classroom and into much more of the day-to-day life of the students around campus, I've been incalculably impressed by so many students, but it's hard to think of many who work as hard to change our campus as Jawhari.

As I said that night, Sara is one of our school's great unifiers, and Sara is one of our school's great builders. She has worked as a student ambassador to represent our school to the community, she has worked tirelessly with human rights groups, she's helped to network and mobilize students from throughout the city, and last year she played a key role in our first Multicultural Night Celebration.

For these reasons and more, many of us were excited when we learned Sara was going to be traveling to the Gaza Strip over our winter break. We were excited because we knew what Sara would do with such a trip. She would use such an experience to raise awareness, and she would use that experience to build and unify others around a compassionate vision.

Palestinian herself, Jawhari plans to double major in journalism and anthropology, and her dream is to travel the world documenting the struggle for human rights. During the Report from Gaza, she showed just how well suited she is for such a task.

Jawhari told the story of the delegation she traveled with to bring desperately needed medical supplies to the Gaza strip. Of six speakers, her presentation was perhaps the longest, but important. She dealt with the many difficulties the delegation faced trying to move through Egypt, finding itself in a police-instigated riot and interminably detained more than once. [For a longer version of that story, see http://www.campusledger.com/news/2010/01/26/aiding-worlds-largest-prison] But it was also riveting because, as she said and made us feel,"all of my senses were heightened" in the short time she was actually able to be in Gaza.

She told a story of trying to sleep in a hospital on her first night in Gaza and hearing a birth in a nearby room. She tried to explain the magic of"witnessing a baby being born, though not with my eyes." Knowing the power of hearing a child's first cry, I found myself thinking that is, indeed, witnessing the event, and it added a beauty that lay at the heart of the night's presentation, the unending struggle for life in the face of destruction.

Then, she told stories of her encounters with the generous people of Gaza, particularly children, including an 11-year-old, she described as speaking as if she were 60, and a girl in a pink jumpsuit she would run into twice, whose family would almost coincidentally host her and whose picture, thankfully, would find its way into the later slide show.

She talked about the significance of the ruins in the strip, homes that served generations of a single family and that were completely lost to Israel's bombs a year ago in December. She talked about the hundreds of stories she heard and how they deepened her perspective, recognizing how many of the efforts to isolate terrorism were horrifically keeping everything including food and clothing out of the hands of the people of Reza, people who were so generous with her and her delegation.

After Jawhari, spoke Mohamed Al-Housiny, a working architect currently pursuing an MBA at KU. Having grown up during the first intifada in Gaza, this experience was not as fresh and raw for Al-Housiny, but his testimony was every bit as passionate and moving. Though he was the first of the speakers interrupted by a frustrated group of Israelis in the audience, he emphasized precisely the key point, that none of us are guiltless when it comes to the kind of oppression that is taking place in the Gaza strip. Knowing his taxes contributed to the status quo, he plaintively and unforgettably declared,"I have blood on MY hands that I can't wash off."

His eloquent talk was followed by a passionate testimonial by Omar Bayazid, a Syrian-born business student who moved to the United States when he was 8. After apologizing that he wouldn't be as eloquent as Al-Housiny, Bayazid also made an unforgettable impression, testifying,"I realized I came to be saved by the people of Gaza—by their manners, by the way they carry themselves."He told of a farmer who had lost virtually everything, including two children, who maintained his faith saying,"I thank God for every day."

As powerful as those three talks were, the next three speakers added an entirely new dimension to the evening. They were Melissa Franklin, Marei Spaola and Jodi Voice, three students from Haskell Indian Nations University representing the Comanche, Lakota, Muskogee, Creek and Cherokee Nations. They, too, had been to Palestine with an indigenous youth delegation that brought them together with the Palestinian Education Project (PEP), the Seventh Native American Generation (SNAG), the Middle Eastern Children's Alliance (MECA) and the Xicana power group, HUAXTEC. Out of these experiences, they formed a group called the 7th Generation Indigenous Visionaries (7thGIV). Many parallels between the experiences of indigenous Americans and Palestinians resonated for them, including the history of genocide, relocation and elaborate systems of control.

Franklin spoke first, and she talked about the parallels between the Palestinian border wall and the walls that have traditionally segregated indigenous Americans, most notably the U.S./Mexico border wall. Franklin also pointed out how Haskell itself was established by the Bureau of Indian Affairs

as a way to isolate and eliminate the American Indian as a people. She told of the roots of the indigenous youth delegation to Palestine, which was not desired by the campus and had to begin with meetings in her living room.

Spaola spoke next, talking of the way the Palestinians he met on his trip surprised him with their interest in his background. "Tell us your stories," they said. "We thought Native Americans were extinct." Even so, he talked of how knowledgeable even the youngest people he met were regarding world events. And perhaps the most telling part of his story involved a moment when he was filming the Palestinians he was with and someone in an unfriendly crowd hit him with a rock. A young Palestinian told him, "Marei, come on. This happens all the time. Just keep going." The young man's acceptance of such hostility rattled Spaola and made him think about how we in the U.S. are generally buffered from such open conflict.

Finally, Jodi Voice closed out the evening by talking about the cultural exchange between her delegation and the Palestinians they met. She talked about how they wanted to come to visit our reservations, and her fond memories of how they all shared music and stories and laughter. "They have a beautiful culture and they are a beautiful people," Voice said, and she added, "They helped us to heal."

Voice also did a beautiful job summing up one of the most important aspects of culture. She said, "Everything we do – the songs we sing, the connections we make, the stories we share. This is our resistance."

After that, she played that song, the Palestinian statement of solidarity with the American Indian, Resistdance, by the Refugees of Palestine. As I mentioned at the beginning of this report, that song served to underscore the promise in the children's faces in the slideshow that closed the evening's formal events, and that moment gave a sense of hope to the student I talked to after the event.

For me, that spirit of hope as resistance was what the night was about. There was hope even in the fact that the group of Israelis that had a grievance with the presentation stayed long after to talk with the presenters, but that's not to say they left happy. And that's too bad, because I don't think anyone in that room saw the Israeli people as the source of the conflict. It's just so hard for everyone to get around all of the pain and resentment.

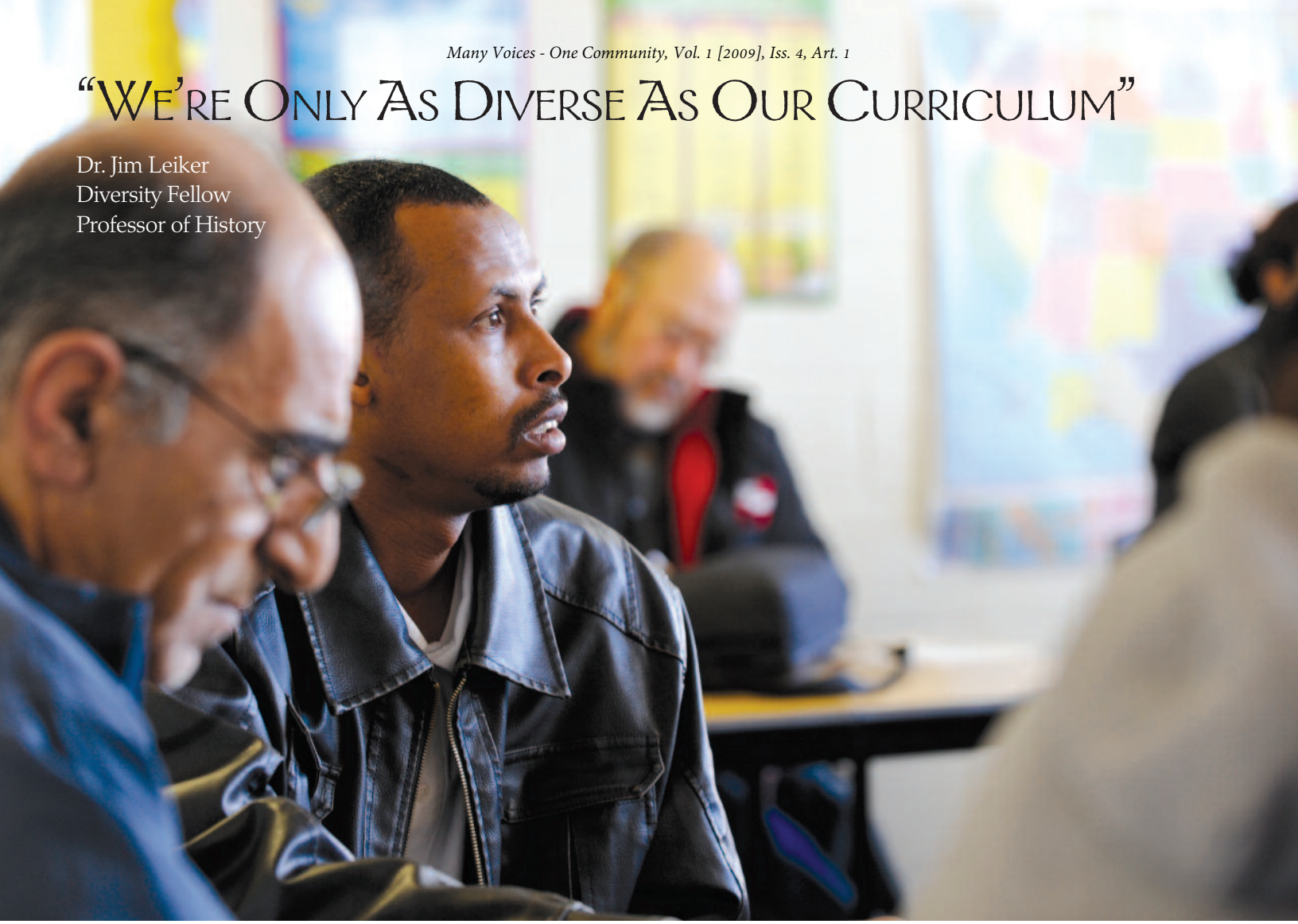
As an American who knows that the restructuring of the world after two World Wars has led to a series of oppressions for which I am certainly (albeit passively) responsible, I wondered how we could get past this concern of the Israelis that they were being blamed for all of the troubles between their government and the 1.5 million Palestinians living on a tiny piece of land 25 miles long and less than 7 miles wide. I think all of the speakers pointed toward the answer—at two poles perhaps Al-Housiny's emphasis on our mutual responsibility and Voice's emphasis on cultural exchange as a form of resistance.

What the Report from Gaza said to this participant was that none of us are innocent, but the conflict was also not really between any of us in that room. As with so many issues facing our world today, people are being pitted against each other when it is actually a power structure that is reinforcing the conflict. As long as governments, whomever they represent, are not genuinely after the best interests of the people – the majorities and the minorities – then the political status quo will attempt to blame all of the victims and pit them against one another. It is only when we begin to talk about whose walls divide us and whose interests they serve and, indeed, the cost of the blood on our own hands, that we can begin to get to a strategy by the people, for the people and of the people. I saw and heard such a vision in the Report Back from Gaza, and as with so many times before, I'm thankful for this latest lesson from a group of students to those of us called teachers.

Sara Jawhari

"We're Only As Diverse As Our Curriculum"

Dr. Jim Leiker
Diversity Fellow
Professor of History



Twenty years ago, a wise professor told me that any college or university is only as good as its course offerings. Though his wisdom has not dimmed over time, I would amend his statement to say that diversity in any educational institution is only as good as its curriculum. A quick glimpse at JCCC's online catalog shows an array of courses and programs as diverse as the thousands of students who come here, some seeking specialized training for imminent entry into the workforce, others beginning a process that will continue through a bachelor's degree and graduate school. Whatever their goals, students must learn to function in a world that grows ever more complex. No better opportunity for learning to manuever through that complexity exists than in the most important room on campus: the classroom.

Studying foreign languages seems the most basic way to get past stereotypes and overcome the island mentality that confines so many Americans to their own culture. French, German, Spanish, Latin – the European tongues – remain a staple at JCCC. But in recognition of the demographic changes sweeping the globe, the last few years have seen the addition of Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, Hebrew, and others. If it's true that capitalism knows no national boundaries, then it knows no national language either. Corporations today expect their executives to function well in Calcutta, Dubai, Cairo, and Tokyo. In such an environment, mastering or even expressing oneself in an elementary way in another language is an enormous asset. It also serves someone well right here in Overland Park. How many of our librarians, teachers, social workers, and nurses originate from foreign countries?

The sociology course *Chinese Society: Past and Present* offers another example. Students discover the rapid evolution that China has made from a peasant society to a model of socialism to its current position as an economic superpower. The United States has maintained a strained relationship with China, skeptical of its human rights and environmental record but dependent on its supply of consumer items and debt financing. The course *Introduction to History: Japan* draws our attention to China's neighbor, a society that industrialized even faster yet retains a curious mix of the

traditional and hyper-modern. Often when casting our gaze to rising Asia, we forget the societies that lay closer to home. Anthropology's *People and Cultures of Mesoamerica* uses archaeological and ethnographic methods to examine the variety and continuity of traditions from Mexico to Costa Rica. Of course, one need not leave the U.S. to study diversity. African American Studies and Native Americans also offer in-depth understandings of the historical and contemporary forces that have shaped the food, customs, politics, and identities of various peoples of North America.

Assume, however, that our students will never travel, never work with anyone who does not speak English, never associate (in a meaningful way anyhow) with someone who does not look like them. They are still surrounded by difference. The psychology course *Human Sexuality* reminds us that people love, form relationships, and express themselves sexually in a variety of ways that challenge anyone's conception of normal. Sociology's *Marriage and Family* similarly examines the diversity of the most foundational of human associations. Questions about "when and with whom is sex appropriate?" or "who should be allowed to marry?" are some of the most divisive yet personal issues of our day. As with other debates, a challenging curriculum taught by professionals in the field is not designed to change students' values but to give them intellectual tools for confronting difference.

Too often we forget that cultures need not originate from language, race, country, ethnic group, or sexual orientation. *Introduction to the Deaf Community* explores Deaf Culture by comparing values and norms between Deaf and non-Deaf people. Students examine terms like "disability" and "hard of hearing," as well as philosophies about manual communication versus oral methods, to develop a better awareness of the many issues that affect this community. Those issues hold long-term implications not only for parents and family members but for politicians, administrators and media.

Some say that college classrooms are not the place for such material. After all, parents of a Deaf child can educate themselves about these things; travelers can always buy books on tape to learn a language; professionals who practice a little sensitivity and common sense will perform just fine in a diverse world. Right. And a smart person with Internet access and a stack of law books can be his own lawyer, or a person with medical books her own doctor. In theory, that is all possible. But in reality, the professions of law and medicine insist on the discipline and skills that come with formal education. Cultural diversity should be no less rigorous. It is time to stop treating diversity as just something nice people believe and treat it the way educators should: as a body of knowledge acquired through intense study that informs our lives and interactions with others. At the end of the day, we are only as diverse as what we teach.

Photographs Offer No Objective Justification

Jon Charles Miller
Student and co-editor ofVOICES 4

Photographs offer no objective justification for feeling certain about anything; as the days pass it is harder to understand what's real. If we rely on nature, the edges become blurred, and it is harder to remember specific days, but entire years take a crystallized form. Have all forms become detached from nature and do these beliefs lead to a nature dialectic that is outdated, as the self-limiting line that follows people from birth walls them in,
memory becomes a jail
we fall prey to the predatory pockets of self-awareness. technology creates a sphere from a circle; our life leads back to its origin

What will the world be without you;
it will be the same before you existed.

Concepts created in their antithesis:
Time created by the sphere.

The sun rejects closure
The world is with us
and we run naked behind
language's attempt to fill the intangible
void; our attempts to find the encompassing light
words succeed at keeping tangents at distance
and the sun's endeavors to create closure will always fail
we search for the shadows from stars
always searching for something that has already passed
or never existed

Anatomy must be studied:
an organism's structure must work in unison for it to survive, new ideas must not compound, but structure must be realized before the formless can be understood: a bird stays in flight, not because one wing flaps harder than the other, but because both move in unison.

The type of self-awareness becomes dangerous
new ideas are introduced
until the image becomes blurred
that's fate: whatever's happened
aphorisms become volatile
once landscape lived and was fructuous: the vastness
can never be acknowledged
the mathematician must be tired,
language runs behind the intangible
unclothed words will never unite two people
misrepresentation is the antithesis of the already happened
miscommunication is the antithesis of misrepresentation
objective values can never be placed on landscape
and misrepresentation will only be cued by light
that attaches itself to everything

the barefooted mules that walk through pines must be tired, the wind
whispers in a language
that can't translate and the mules' vision greys
at the mountain path birds with one wing flapping harder
than the other fly overhead through grey clouds
and against the breeze. The bird's gesture towards the barefooted mules
in a language that doesn't translate.

The photograph becomes blurred
due to a miscalculation or misrepresentation
but I could never remember facts or names and dates
only the songs sung
on yellow walls
and the radio on the nightstand
but for me that is gone
as the landscape erodes
and sediment deposits
into water that does not speak the words:

the grey depth takes

2010

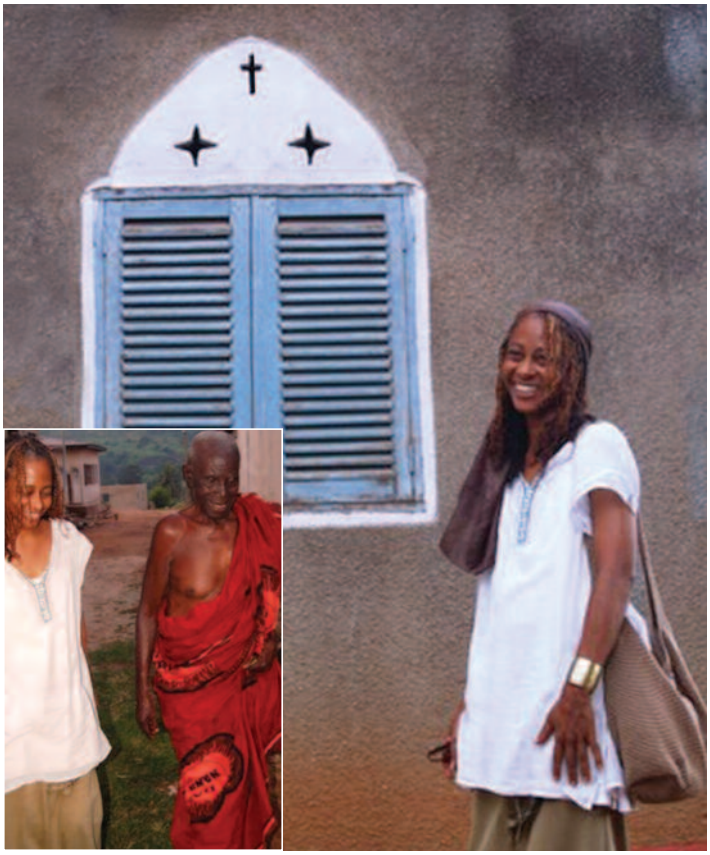
Full Lip Press

by Marvita Oliver
Student

I lived in Ghana, West Africa, for almost 12 years of my life. My son and I returned to the states in the cold of December, 2008, to spend time with my family here. Once here, I decided to attend JCCC as a way to help me transition back into living in the states. Living in Ghana was an experience that will remain with me. It was in Ghana that I finally learned to be myself. When I look back, I realize that my journey to Ghana began as a child moving from Georgia to Kansas.

When we arrived in Kansas, it was cold. My father had moved into an apartment, and my mother had driven us here in her VW. My brothers and I were thrilled. We started school right away. In Georgia, our private school teachers had been white nuns. Now I was going to public school as a fourth grader and, oh yeah, I was going to be the only black person in the whole building. There were a few other black students in my brothers' school.

The first few weeks I must have had a very strong southern accent because whenever I said my first name, Marvita, teachers called me Marquita, Marguerite, Margret, Mayeta,...



even Rafuta. Name butchery was something I could not have expected, as a fourth grader. This led to my first compromise. I asked my teachers and new friends to call me Karen, my middle name. Besides, Karen sounded "whiter" than Marvita did. That name change worked, until my friends learned that "Marvita" was a blend of my father's name, Marvin, and my mother's name, Annita. So, my close friends called me, Marvin, to my parent's initial chagrin.

In Georgia, we rode the bus to school, not because we were "bussed," but because we attended private school. In Kansas, we lived just close enough not to be on the bus route and just far enough that it was a bit of a walk. One day walking home alone from school, I was just about at our apartment when I got the surprise of my life. A kid yelled out from the passing bus a name that I had never heard said to me. I understood what the word meant, and it felt as if a bolt had shot through my soul. I looked to see if anyone had seen or heard what he said. It looked as though no one had, – except for the children on that bus. All I could think was, "I thought they said that people weren't prejudice in Kansas."

In time I learned that yes, prejudice could be found in Kansas, in subtle ways especially. My friends called me a good dancer, but I wasn't good enough for the school's drill team. I was written up by a choir teacher for disrupting my class because some of the class were freaking out over my afro. I won the field day sporting track event but wasn't allowed, as promised, to compete in the inter-district meet. This was small stuff in comparison to what others have gone through, as I would learn. Growing up in Kansas, overall, has been a great experience that I have no regrets about. But the pressure of assimilation as a child was very strong for me, as the only black, or one of a few, from elementary to high school. A few snubs left a zing to my young spirit, but for the most part, I was able to get over and "forget about it," as they say.

Actually, they were nothing compared to what I learned from one of my father's books, *House of Bondage*, a huge book with pictures of South Africa during apartheid. I learned the photographer had to sneak the pictures and was exiled from his country. Blacks were under apartheid. The meaning of the word is just as it sound – apart hate. The pictures in the volume were both beautiful and awful, showing what it was like to be black in South Africa. From what I saw, it was terrible. Yet the people were able to look wonderful from the soul, like Frederick Douglas says. That

intro to Africa and its people was very abstract for me. I knew it was real, but reality for me was Overland Park. Here, I was free to live among white people or any other. The biggest pressure that I had I put on myself. I wanted to be so like my friends and peers.

When I was growing up, almost every face I saw was white, with skinny noses and thin lips, unlike what they saw when they looked at me with my broader nose and not so skinny lips. My behind didn't fit into the jeans they sold in the neighborhood, without protruding. J-Lo and Angelina hadn't hit the scene yet, and a big behind and thick lips were yet embarrassing for me.

My hair was spongy, black and curly, and often a mystery to style. My white girlfriends had mostly straight hair that they washed every morning in the shower. - What??? I began to blow dry and hot curl to press and smooth out my hair. As a result, my hair never grew past my shoulders. When I stopped pressing my hair and started wearing a natural, twisted style instead, my hair grew to the middle of my back. I also developed a habit of pressing my lips in, so they didn't look so thick. Over the years, my facial muscles were stressed and tense. I also was constantly squeezing my behind in, so it didn't stick out so much. By the time I left high school, I was tired, yet still contorting, pressing, squeezing and assimilating.

In time, I attended an historically black college and experienced culture shock once again when I began to live and interact with black people. I was learning what it was to be black. Some of my new black friends told me that I acted white. Well, I guess all that pressing, squeezing and contorting worked after all. But I didn't want to hear that, not from black people. I learned more about Africa. The opportunity came for me to go to Ghana, West Africa; the idea of a nation of Black people made me want to meet my family, though I knew no one there.

When I arrived in the airport at Accra, Ghana, the heat hit me in the face and gave me a full – body wrap. As I mingled with the Ghanaians, I recognized the faces of some of the people. They looked like so many people that I had seen in the states. It was as if I had found families, not yet my own, but the relatives of so many people that I had known. It was when I saw the resemblances of the faces in Ghana with those in America that I understood that we were all members of one tribe or another. In Ghana, there are the Fantes, the Ga, the Ewes, and of course the Ashanti, and many more tribes. These people, though they were unique, clearly resembled each other. In time, I began to recognize and name the tribes myself.

The relaxed atmosphere also hit me in the face. There's something about being relaxed that makes a person simply beautiful. It became a habit for me to rise before dawn, awakened by the rooster's crow and the birds orchestrating the sun's appearance and putting the day into place with all their instructions and calls to each other. No alarm clock was needed. The natural sounds outside of my window let me know what time it was, and in time, my own internal clock adjusted to the routine. It was best to get an early start in the day, to beat the heat that would come by 7 or 8 o'clock in the morning. By noon, folks are ready to take a break from the heat, come together, and eat, sit, relax, or sleep. People took their time. At first, it seemed very foreign and often frustrating. But in time, I learned also to take my time. Patience is a virtue.

There's also something about watching an orange-red sun burst drip, drop, dip and spray a purple haze into the sky's horizon day after day that affirms your own place on earth.

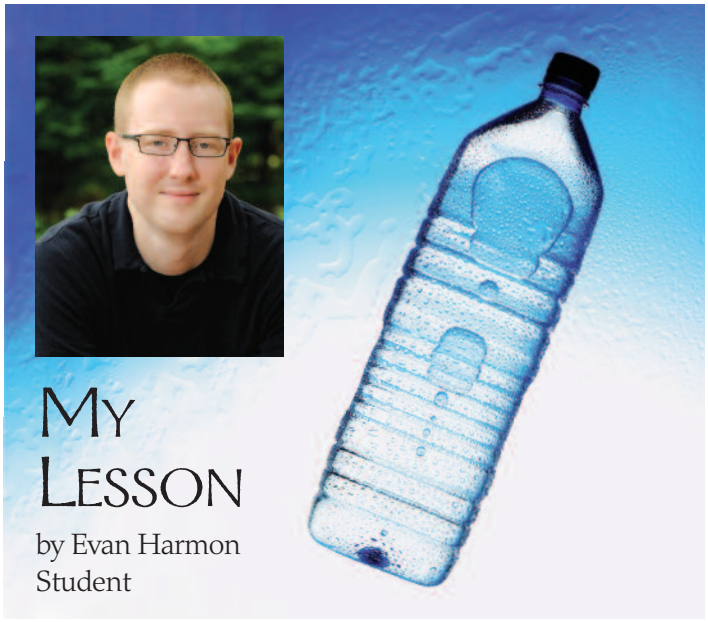
When I came to Ghana, I saw people whose color ranged from blue black to albino, with all shades, mostly brown, in between. No one pulled in their lips or tried to hide their behinds, as far as I could tell. Indeed, many of the lips that I saw were big, thick and beautiful. The women had more curves than I could count. Teeth were amazingly straight and white. Most of all people, male and female, were comfortable in their own skin.

I laughed at myself in Ghana. I couldn't push my lips out far enough and had to ask myself where my behind was, not to mention all the other curves. It was all very liberating. I relaxed my face, my body, and my mind. I accepted who I was and rejoiced in the expression of me and felt at ease with being myself. I saw me when I looked at the people in front of me.

After all the years of trying to be like someone else, I was now able to see that I didn't have to assimilate to another culture because I belonged to a culture of people who were happy with who they were, and who were happy with me as I was. I wasn't "different" there.

Now, I am back living where I grew up as a child, and I am enjoying the experience. I am comfortable with who I am, and as a result, I am able to give more of myself to those around me. Overland Park has changed some over the years, and I am enthusiastic about realizing the changes that have taken place and participating in the community.

Ghana is across the Atlantic. Did I have to travel half way around the world to find out who I was and to give up on my full lip press? No, but that's how it happened for me, at that time in my life. There were many things that I experienced in Ghana that helped me to slow down and to be happy with who I am, no matter where I am, and that is something that I will always cherish about my time living in Ghana, West Africa. Akwaaba.



My Lesson

by Evan Harmon
Student

The decades-old van hurtles down a treacherous, dirt road, lurching violently at each bump, rut, and pothole. With each lurch I am amazed the van does not fall to pieces. I clench the sides of my seat in a sorry attempt to comfort myself. There are no seat-belts, and if there were such a thing as a speed limit, the driver would surely be breaking it. The powdery dust from the dry African savanna pours in the open windows and adds yet another layer to my already caked clothes. The radio blares, alternating between cheesy, sentimental 80's American pop music and even cheesier African pop music. I am in Ghana, West Africa, visiting my brother who is in the Peace Corps. And Ghana is soon to teach me something I will never forget.

We stop at a gas station – a few Ghanaian men sitting around a rusty, dented oil barrel with a hose sticking out. A few mud huts pepper a barren, flat landscape. It's too dry here for grass to grow, just a desert of dirt. As one of the men sucks in a mouthful of gasoline to begin the syphon, a small, barely-clothed boy slowly approaches the van. I search my pockets to see if I have any money to give him; what amounts to U.S. pennies can go a long way in Ghana. But this young boy does not want any money. He has something else on his mind. The boy meekly points to what I am holding in my hand – a plastic water bottle, barely half-full. In the rare presence of someone so immeasurably, unimaginably wealthy, his desire is simply to have a drink of water. I realize, this must be what true poverty is. This must be true misery.

Yet, through all this misery, I never met a single, miserable Ghanaian. In fact, they are among the friendliest and happiest people I have ever met. If you ever meet a Ghanaian, you are likely to be treated to the biggest, brightest smile you have ever seen. Even that young boy at the gas station seemed to exude a resilient joyfulness. He didn't let a silly little thing like the lack of water get him down. Most everything in Ghana – its people, customs, attitudes, music – seems to exist as a kind of collective defiance of often dire circumstances. Ghana is a living testament that happiness is indeed a choice, and that success is possible in the most unlikely of scenarios.

Throughout my stay, I witnessed tragedies, saw them transcended, and experienced the character required to bridge the two. My life has its fair share of challenges, but having seen the possible depths of tragedy and despair, feeling sorry for myself is no longer possible. Third World problems expose First World problems for the luxuries they truly are. But whatever world I find myself in, hopelessness no longer makes sense.

Although it might seem paradoxical, it is no accident that a foreign culture taught me such an invaluable lesson about how to live in my own culture. It is the reason diversity matters. As a thoroughly non-diverse individual – white, straight, middle-class – it is an admitted luxury that I am rarely affected by exclusion or inequity. But for me to ignore the diversity of people, cultures, and viewpoints, that is a choice made at my own peril. That is a self-inflicted exclusion from the richness that diversity so readily offers. And I suffer my own inequity as one who is not just uniform in my demographic traits, but uniform in thought, values, and what I am able to accomplish in life.

No school, class, or book taught me this, nor could any. I knew about the extreme poverty in Africa, but I did not truly understand this until I was next to that child that was in need of something so basic. And I knew something about challenges and how to overcome them. But I was not a resilient person until I saw firsthand a culture that routinely overcomes challenges greater than I have ever faced. No one set out to teach me this, and I did not even know I needed a lesson. But just looking around once in awhile can teach you some pretty useful things.

Madre de los Campos

Miguel M. Morales

He wasn't good enough to look at her
but at the end of each week she'd wear a smile
that apologized for her skin.

He'd talk to her in a way that tried to diminish her.
He'd cheat her out of wages we'd earned with sweat.

Returning to the hot station wagon,
she'd hand everyone their money.
She'd pay herself last with what was left over.

Sitting next to her as she drove everyone home, I seethed.
I hated her for letting him talk to her that way
and for giving away our money to those lazy cabrones
who didn't work as hard
and who didn't pack their lunches
or even bring water.

I'd cry hot, angry tears that plowed the dirt on my face.
I vowed never to be as stupid as her.

When she'd drop the last person home,
she'd pullout the egg and chorizo burritos she made us early that morning
for lunch that day.
It was her lunch that she hadn't eaten.

And as my sisters and I shared mom's comida,
she'd give me a smile that apologized for hurting me
but not for loving me.

And I did the same.

A World Away

Professor Emeritus Bob Perry
Sociology

In the 30 years he taught at JCCC, and well before then, now Professor Emeritus Bob Perry traveled far from Kansas, bringing back to the classroom and college hard-earned knowledge and insight from around the world. From South Africa to Turkey and from Argentina to the Russian Far East and beyond, Bob has spent many summers abroad on an array of academic programs. In addition, he taught one year in China at JCCC's sister university in Xi'an, spent a semester at City of Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College in England as a Fulbright Exchange Teacher and served two-and-a-half years as a Peace Corps volunteer in Kenya. These many experiences have helped Bob to internationalize his own courses and to support the growth of such initiatives at JCCC over the years.

Featured below, with minor editorial changes, is an article on Mr. Perry that appeared in the Daily Nation, *the largest circulating Kenyan newspaper. Its author is the newspaper's education editor, Samuel Siringi, a Kenyan journalist who was an Alfred Friendly fellow at* The Kansas City Star *in 2008.*

SATURDAY NATION • August 2, 2008

US teacher who misses hoisting of Kenyan flag

Volunteer's sojourn almost cost him his life but can't wait for the day he'll return

By SAMUEL SIRINGI, In Kansas City, USA

Robert Perry first visited Kenya when he was 19 – and fell in love with the country. So, when an opportunity to become a Peace Corps volunteer beckoned 18 years later, he took it up quickly and ended up teaching at Sameta High School in Kisii. His sojourn in Kenya nearly cost him his life during the 1982 coup attempt. Yet his love for Kenya remains undiminished 24 years later. He left Kenya to return to his teaching job at Johnson County Community College, but is now planning to bring his family back "to see the place that became a memorable home for me."

Very patriotic

"I still feel very patriotic to Kenya … I really miss the raising of the national flag, which we used to do at school every Monday and Friday morning," he told the Saturday Nation this week. Speaking over dinner at the Kansas City home of Frank and Peggy Zilm, a couple that is visiting Kenya in November to offer architectural advice to Bomet's Tenwek Hospital, Perry said that during the post-election violence in Kenya [in early 2008], he spent many sleepless nights on the Internet monitoring the situation for fear that the country would degenerate into a failed state.

"When I saw that the violence had spread to Kisumu and Eldoret, two areas I knew well, I got worried that people I knew and dealt with would become victims of the mayhem," he said, throwing in Swahili words in his speech.

He remembers how his first experience in Kenya, together with his colleagues, proved to a shock of Kiswahili language teaching. As a teacher, he found himself being taught using a "direct method" by instructors at the Lugari Farmers Training Centre in 1981.

"Our tutors started speaking and teaching us in Kiswahili before we knew anything about the language. They wanted us to listen and imagine the images contained in their speech. They only gave us a book on Kiswahili at the end of the training. It was the most difficult way of learning yet it turned out to be the best in imparting basic, functional knowledge of the language," said Mr. Perry who still speaks good Kiswahili.

37 – Mr. Perry's age when he came to Kenya as a volunteer teacher

He says of the 1982 coup attempt, when he escaped death narrowly after being hounded from a bus on Nairobi's University Way, as each passenger was forced to display a national identity card: "I felt so helpless that I thought my volunteer job had led to my death." He remembers that the then national broadcaster VOK had announced that the situation was calm only for the bus he was traveling in to be

caught up in the deadly violence.

"There were suggestions that our bus cancel its trip from Kisii Town to Nairobi. But I think we were assured that the route was safe, which gave an impression that the coup attempt had not disrupted normal activities," he said.

Now 63, Mr. Perry plans to return to Kenya to witness the aftermath of the January post-poll chaos. He says the violence reminded him of the coup attempt. Mr. Perry, then 37 years old, was among a group of 40 young American volunteers who had come to Kenya to teach under the Peace Corps programme. The programme was established in 1961 with the purpose of promoting world peace and friendship. Under the arrangement, interested countries and areas receive U.S. citizens willing to serve, often under conditions of hardship, by training manpower. More than 187,000 people have served as Peace Corps volunteers in 139 countries.

On Christmas Day of 1981, then U.S. President Ronald Reagan wrote to Perry: "The spirit of voluntary giving is a wonderful tradition that flows like a deep and mighty river through the history of our nation. When Americans see people in other lands suffering in poverty, they don't wait for the Government to tell them what to do. They give and get involved; they save lives."

Mr. Perry still keeps notes and pictures taken in Kenya.

As Sameta Secondary School, Mr. Perry taught English from *Form One to Form Four.* He also taught the general paper for the A-level class. At the school, he introduced a yearbook, *The Sametan*, a publication that published contributions from teachers and students.

Inspire students

He persuaded the headteacher, Mr. David Motanya, to fund its publication, while he looked for a printer in Kisumu. He still keeps two editions of the publication. The publication was meant to inspire students into journalism and further education.

Mr. Perry also introduced a new form of student assessment. Under the system, he administered continuous tests for students, which were rare before. But he says the standards of education in Kenya were high. "I was stunned by the rigour of exams in Kenya. Students study in a second or third language (English) and are tested on it only for them to pass well," he says. He remembers students sharing a few textbooks and being taught many lessons each day. "Our school had no electricity while classrooms were not spacious," said Mr. Perry, adding: "My students in Kenya were the best that I taught in my career."

In his photo album are copies of the Daily Nation. One of them is the August 25 edition when President Moi had been nominated as the sole candidate for the presidency under KANU. The headlines reads: Yes it is Moi: Wananchi give their verdict."

Another edition from January 22 is headlines: "Midika on new theft charge." It reported how then Nyando MP Onyango Midika, sentenced to four years two days earlier, was returned to court on another charge of stealing Sh210,000.

Mr. Perry remembers the beauty of the Maasai Mara and Lamu Island, which he visited during his period in Kenya.

Before leaving for Kenya, he had taught at Johnson County Community College in Kansas between 1978 and 1980. He still teaches at the institution. He first visited Kenya in 1965 when he was 19 years old and spent the summer in the country and partly in Uganda.

"I was struck by the sense of hospitality and gentility of Kenyans. They were wonderful people who welcomed me to their homes and social places all the time," he said.

Another trip

"My time in Kenya was special. I need to make another trip to take my wife (Carrie Gallagher) there so she can also have a taste of the experience I had while there." Since he left the country, Mr. Perry has kept in touch through reading local newspapers on the Internet and through former colleagues at Sameta. One of them was Mr. Alfred Kisubi, a teacher, who later moved to the U.S.

"I often ask him to help me understand what is going on in Kenya."

Afterword

Alfred Kisubi – referred to at the very end of the article – was one of the very earliest foreign exchange teachers at JCCC, spending the 1985-86 school year at the college. He and Bob had taught together in Kenya, and with support from JCCC and Carolyn Kadel in the Office of International Education, Mr. Kisubi came for the year. Early initiatives such as those that brought Alfred Kisubi to JCCC have since blossomed into a broad array of programs that have provided opportunities for many JCCC faculty to travel abroad, to bring in scholars from many corners of the globe, and to add significantly and genuinely to diversity in our curriculum.

In closing, it may be interesting to observe that following his year at JCCC Alfred Kisubi stayed on in the U.S. to complete a doctorate at UMKC and he is presently Distinguished Professor of Human Services and Multicultural and Global Education at the University of Wisconsin. Among the many new courses he has developed is one titled *Globalization in Human Services*, and Dr. Kisubi has taken a number of groups of faculty and students to Kenya and Uganda over the past decade.

JCCC Collection Focus
Contemporary American Indian Art

Bruce Hartman
Executive Director
Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art

Since its dedication in November, 2009, the college's Contemporary American Indian Art installation is the most visited collection site on campus for all docent-guided educational tours. Its location (immediately adjacent to the Nerman Museum) and diverse cultural content virtually assures that schools request a tour of this area, as do numerous other groups when scheduling museum visits. And, as the Regnier Center hosts innumerable events on both the first and second floors, many campus visitors casually tour the installation each day or evening.

Contemporary American Indian Art brings to nine the number of permanent collection focus areas on the campus, places where students, staff and visitors can encounter art during their daily activities. The Regnier Center houses the three newest installations — contemporary painting (first floor), contemporary American Indian Art (east wing, second floor) and contemporary Latino Art (west wing, second floor).

The American Indian Art Focus Area was envisioned when the college decided to initiate a collection, as a consequence, we began collecting works in mediums not previously acquired — beadwork, textiles, glass, metalsmithing, and basketry. With funds specifically allocated for art in the Regnier Center, JCCC began acquiring contemporary American Indian art more than three years ago. Most recently, donors Mary Cohen and Dean Thompson have each gifted important works to enhance the installation.

Approximately 50 works of American Indian art – spanning a diverse range of cultures and geography (extending from the Pacific Northwest, to the Southwest and Plains) – are on permanent view. The collection showcases a variety of mediums – clay, beadwork, glass, textiles, sculpture, basketry, painting, and photography. And, a range of ideas and content are presented within the American Indian art installation. Self-guided tours of the collection are possible with the aid of interpretive labels which include the artists' biography and provide insights to each work.

Ultimately, the installation celebrates the extraordinary accomplishment and vitality of contemporary American Indian artists. It serves as an invaluable educational resource for students, faculty, and visitors, as well as furthering the college's diversity initiatives.

The overwhelming popularity of this installation has resulted in plans for *Collection Focus • Contemporary American Indian Art* to expand to the east wing of the Regnier Center's third floor. Once complete, JCCC's emphasis on contemporary American Indian art will establish our campus as a regional (and national) destination for students, scholars, collectors, the general community – and perhaps most significantly – American Indian artists and visitors.

Lakota artist Tom Haukaas holding his recently completed Economic Conundrum cradle, 2010, beads, hide, cloth, Collection Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art – JCCC, gift of the Barton P. and Mary D. Cohen Charitable Trust

Collection Focus: Contemporary American Indian Art, installation view, Regnier Center, 2nd Floor, Johnson County Community College

Kenneth Williams, Strength to Overcome, 2009, beads, ermine skin, horse hair, metal bells, deerskin, cloth, satin ribbon, human hair, 21.5 x 10.5 ", Collection Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art – JCCC, image depicts Runs Medicine a relative of the artist

Campus Climate Survey

by Lisa Cole

What is campus climate?

Climate represents the atmosphere in which learning takes place at Johnson County Community College. Climate represents how students feel included and respected on this campus. The ODEI office administered a campus climate survey to students who have completed 15 or more credit hours. The survey was conducted through the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA as part of a national survey. The Diverse Learning Environments (DLE) Survey was administered to examine the degree to which JCCC integrates diversity in their environments to achieve key student learning outcomes. Our ODEI's purpose was to establish a set of baseline measures to analyze the current cultural climate in which students learn at JCCC. Once we analyze the data provided by the students we can begin to develop conversations, presentations and programs around topics identified as concerns for students.

Why is campus climate important?

The campus atmosphere in which students learn is extremely important to their success. In extreme cold weather plants die very quickly or the ground is too hard for seeds to penetrate the soil. Established plants die and new seeds never grow. On cold uninviting college campuses where students are not able to penetrate and connect with faculty and staff, they tend to be unsuccessful and leave. In hot humid climates everything burns up. Plants can become sun scalded or sunburned, their vital water and nutrient levels necessary for proper plant growth evaporate. Protecting plants from exposure to too much sun is essential to maintain a healthy plant. Over exposure of students to only one cultural and one way of thinking can impede their success and drain them of their desire to achieve. When one culture receives all the attention, it devalues all other cultures. All students can be valued at JCCC and have a right to learn in an environment that respects all cultures and backgrounds. Students can be successful in a culturally diverse environment that enhances growth.

What is Cultural Diversity?

Cultural diversity is more than racial classification, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation. Cultural diversity encompasses the whole range of human experiences including, but not limited to age, gender, racial classification, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic class, physical disabilities, national origin, geographical location, political orientation, physical size and appearance. These factors influence the cultural experiences and backgrounds of individuals and groups. (University of California, Santa Barbara). These influences affect student success. When students don't connect and feel a sense of belonging, their desire and ability to succeed decreases.

What was included in the survey?

The survey included 58 base questions that included general information, diversity, inclusion, and engagement. Below are samples of some of the questions:

- To what extent have you experienced the following with students from a racial/ethnic group other than your own?
- Please indicate how often you have experienced the following forms of bias/harassment/discrimination while at this institution.
- How often at this institution in the past year did you:
  - Ask questions in class?
  - Seek solutions to problems and explain them to others?

We included two additional modules of questions: Classroom and Community College Students' Transfer Pathway. The classroom module gathered information about the climate in diverse classrooms at JCCC. It examines issues of inclusive pedagogy, student– centered pedagogy, and learning outcomes. The community college module assesses community college students' transfer navigational behaviors, organizational transfer culture, and perceived barriers to transferring to a four-year institution.

The survey was submitted to more than 9,000 students with over 15 total credit hours. We look forward to analyzing the data we receive from the students' input and participation. We are confident that the data will help the ODEI design programming that meets students' needs.

Why did the ODEI administer a campus climate survey?

The survey helps gather data that will aid in providing the best possible learning environment for our students.

America II

by Carmaletta M. Williams

Blue stars
Red stripes
Rifles firing in broad daylight

Look to glory
Head for home
Children hungry and all alone

Pride in patriots
Long may we hail
Too many young men locked up in jail

Angels of mercy
Sent from above
Mothers and children left without

Love
Thy neighbor
Love
Thyself
or else

Few survive

Drive by shootings
Drive through food
Moving too quickly to be any good

Homeless people
living under a bridge
Don't ever forget about Ruby Ridge

Or Ruby Dee and Ossie telling us
The Truth

Cold and coatless
Scavenging for food
No sense of self – can't be any

Good
For nothing

Bombs exploding
Brick and mortar fly
By church crosses

When did religion die?

Babies in the Daycare
Thought to be safe
Anguished parents wring their hands and
wait

for news of death
And dying
Assisted

Malcolm murdered
like Martin and Jack
Better have somebody watch your back

Welfare's over
No one adopts
Wrap babies in plastic and

Drop them in the
Trash
Talk
Trash
Walk
Trash
blowing in city parks

Gangsters rappin
Hoodlums die
Mothers close their eyes and cry

Where did I go wrong
My God
I washed and fed and worked
day and night
out of sight
out of mind
out of time
out of life
But I tried
to do my best
For my family
tree

uprooted
and blown across
oceans and
Time

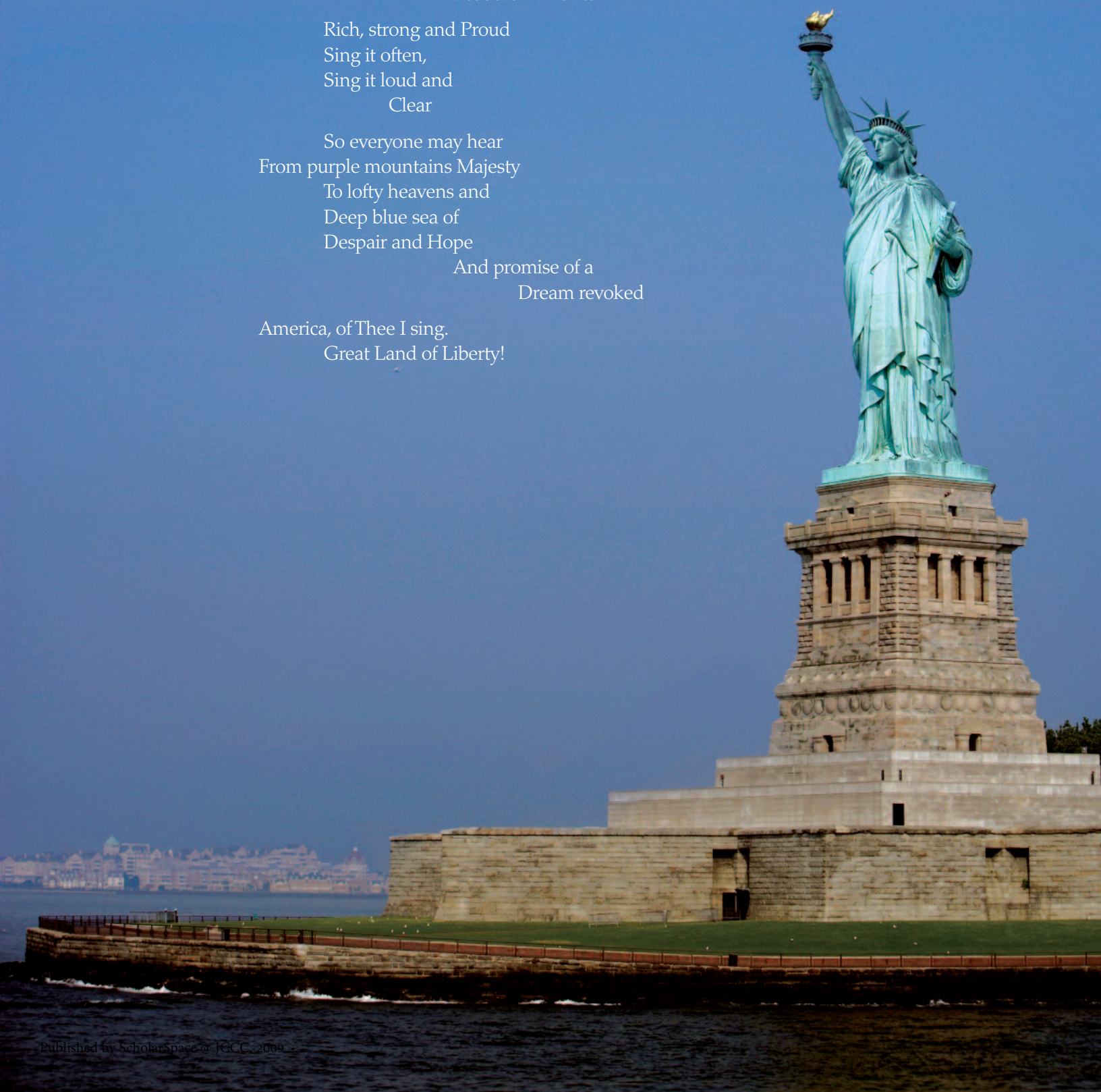
to a land
now mine
To have
and to
Hold

Til Death do us
part
of the whole plan
to save man
Kind
of like a
Vision of
Beautiful America

Rich, strong and Proud
Sing it often,
Sing it loud and
Clear

So everyone may hear
From purple mountains Majesty
To lofty heavens and
Deep blue sea of
Despair and Hope
And promise of a
Dream revoked

America, of Thee I sing.
Great Land of Liberty!



Intentional Connections=Student Success program at JCCC.

Many VOICES – One Community **www.jccc.edu/ODEI**

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