

Intercultural Happenings

Office of Intercultural Affairs

Spring 2012

As an exercise at the beginning of leadership training, we ask our students to write a reflection piece about their goals for the year. *We call it "Beginning with the End."* This process helps us to identify what is important in our lives, the steps we need to take to achieve our goals, and the ways we take ownership for our own successes and challenges. Many of our student leaders have written: "By the time the academic year is done, I want to have made a difference at Stonehill."

We are so thankful for the determination, motivation, and passion for diversity and inclusion that has been demonstrated at Stonehill this year. The student community created structures for addressing bias incidents, faculty engaged in meaningful conversations throughout the year about supporting diversity and learning, alumni have become involved in making Stonehill a more inclusive community, and staff have been active in programs and opportunities to learn more about diversity.

Though we all know that "it gets better," our community is embracing that it never *just gets better*. Together, we make it better. We have to **choose** to make our community better, our classrooms better, our programs better, our residence halls better, our interactions better and our lives better. ***What is the Stonehill you want to see?*** What does that Stonehill feel like, look like, behave like, and breathe like? Let's begin with the end. Let us identify the ways in which we must work together, celebrate together, and seek to create a more just and compassionate community for all.



THE DIVERSITY TASK FORCE: Why Diversity?

Though there is a challenge in defining, specifically, what aspects of diversity we seek to measure, there tends to be consensus around the benefits of living, working and learning in a community comprised of diverse opinions, experiences, ideas, and beliefs. From the Diversity Task Force:

"Stonehill College students, faculty and staff benefit from a diverse living and learning environment because sharing differences in ideas, experiences, and beliefs help us shape our own perspectives. As a community of teachers and learners, diverse perspectives prepare us as scholars and practitioners in a global society. With diversity our classrooms, residence halls, programs, athletic fields and courts, and dining commons transform into practical opportunities for engagement. These formal and informal exchanges foster self-awareness and an awareness of others. By interacting with people from backgrounds different from our own, we learn how to distinguish fact from fiction, truth from myth, and personal from theoretical. Together, we expand our knowledge and understanding of politics, economy, culture, faith, equality and equity, justice and injustice, and put these lessons into a global context. We need diversity in our classrooms, our residence halls, in our leadership programs, on our athletic fields and courts, and in our everyday lives. Diversity heightens our curiosity, develops our compassion, and engages our minds."

The Task Force is co-chaired by Maryann Perry (Director of Human Resources), Liza Talusan (Director of Intercultural Affairs), and Laura Uerling (Director of Institutional Research and Planning); Committee chairs are Craig Almeida (Dean of Academic Achievement), Anne Mattina (Associate Professor of Communications), Dan Monahan (Dean of Admissions and Enrollment), Eileen O'Leary (Assistant Vice President for Finance), Brendan Sullivan (Director of Intercollegiate Athletics), Steve Beauregard (Assistant Vice President of Planning), and Michelle Tineo (SGA Diversity Chair, class of 2012). ***Thank you for your leadership and your great work!***

Interviewed: International, Interracial, and Interreligious

On Thursday, January 26, 2012 the Office of Intercultural Affairs sponsored the annual Interviewed panel on international, interracial, and interreligious adoption, dating, and marriage. This event featured the personal stories, experiences, and reflections of members of our Stonehill community. Our panelists were **Holly Boyle '12**, **Shelley Sandler Leahy**, **Associate Director for Academic Services**, **Grace Hazelwood '15**, and **Christopher Wetzel**, **Assistant Professor of Sociology** who courageously volunteered to share their personal stories and experiences of living in an international, interracial, interreligious adoption, dating, and marriage. The following are excerpts from the stories they shared with the Stonehill community.



Holly Boyle '12

“To me, my relationship is just like everyone else’s – it’s two people who love spending time with each other. I really feel blessed because I met such a wonderful guy who loves me in return. At the end of the day, there are cultural differences, but for me, they are just further opportunities for us to learn about each other as well as ourselves. We work on it together. Yes, we do receive negative remarks from time to time, but they do not change the way we feel about each other, and isn’t that what relationships are all about? It shouldn’t matter that my boyfriend’s Chinese and that I am Italian, that my boyfriend’s Asian and that I am White. We love each other, and that is all that should matter.”



Grace Hazelwood '15

“Sharing my story in front of my peers was an honor because it is not something I go around telling people normally. It was really interesting to hear other kids comment and share stories about their own adoptions as well. Growing up I didn’t know anyone else who was adopted in my town but here there are so many who know what it is like. It is easy to forget that other kids are adopted too and it was fun answering each others questions about culture, family life, and how being adopted has impacted all of our lives. Sharing my story in a large group of strangers was fun and it made me realize what an opportunity I have been given in life.”

***If you would like to participate in a future Interviewed panel and share your story, please contact:
Office of Intercultural Affairs (x1409) Janice McGovern, Office Manager***

GOOD LUCK, JACQUELINE!

It is with lots of good wishes that we say “Hasta luego!” to our Assistant Director of Intercultural Affairs, Jacqueline Guzman. Jackie has been with our office since July 2010, and she has been an incredible friend, mentor, teacher, advisor, counselor, organizer, and “sister” to us all. Jacqueline came to us directly out of her graduate program from the University of Connecticut, and immediately became embraced by our Stonehill community. She actively coordinated leadership trainings and workshops, advised the DiverCity Festival planning committee, and taught the first year “Leadership Through Diversity” class. In addition, Jacqueline’s thoughtful research, theory based modeling, and practical application of identity development led to the creation of Stonehill’s women of color discussion group: R.I.S.E. Because of Jacqueline’s skill as a facilitator, her commitment to fostering an inclusive community, and her working knowledge of theory, R.I.S.E. has become a foundation for many of the women of color on our campus. Jackie has brought love and life into the office, and we will fondly think all the wonderful ways she made us all laugh, cry, and feel welcomed at Stonehill. Jacqueline, we wish you the best in Connecticut, and we are a better community because you were here with us! Come back to visit any time! *(please!!)*



CONFERENCE ON DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Elizabeth Hayden '76, Trustee

As a Trustee, it is always exciting to be on the lower campus and to see Stonehill in action. On February 17, 2012, I had the privilege of attending the Conference on Diversity and Inclusion at The Martin Institute.

David Embrick, PhD, in his keynote speech made me question our society's understanding of diversity and multiculturalism. Many of us have been taught multiculturalism since pre-school; we have moved beyond the middle school's International Night of tasty cultural specialties; we have learned to be politically correct; and we can even cite the virtues of diversity and multiculturalism. But, are we savvy enough to dig beyond shallow words, beyond paying lip service, to honestly search our core being for truth? Can we give depth and meaning to the concept of inclusion? A take away for me is that we all need to seek truth, within ourselves and in our daily actions from campus cafe to corporate boardroom to create a better world.

After the serious remarks of Dr. Embrick's research on pervasive racism, it was then time for some serious fun with Kilusan Bautista. "Thought provoking *edu'tainment*," was on tap. Through hip hop, poetry, movement and active participation, Bautista called for us to recognize the multi-layers of culture that imprint us. In peeling away these many layers of self, our "universal self," embodying understanding and compassion, is actualized. We discover our true humanity. *Wow!*

Attending the Conference was wonderful. Seeing Stonehill students, faculty, and staff together seeking knowledge and understanding to create a better world fills me with hope. I hope we all discover our common bond of humanity through acceptance of God's unique gift of personhood. Let us grow to appreciate the word "diversity" as part of "The Word."



Alanna Melendez '13 The session that I took the most away from had to have been Universal Self by Kilusan Bautista. His powerful words on the meaning of the universal self, made me think about my upbringing, how I see myself, and the way others see me. He made me think about where I come from and what I love and hate about it, all while thinking about those individuals or life experiences that truly impacted the who I am today. He truly made me realize what it means to experience my own universal self. It was a moving and powerful experience that I am so grateful to have experienced.

Annie Griffin '13 When attending the RISE and MOSAIC session, it was amazing to listen to the different stories that the students told. Each student had their own story that truly helped them become the people they are today. Many of the students who spoke during this session were my friends. I was able to find out so much more about them that I had not known before, simply by sitting down and listening to their story. After each person went down the line talking about their story, it made me realize even more that everyone has their own struggles and progresses at different times of their lives. Every person's story is their own and does not define them yet does make up a part of their past. While sitting there, I was so proud as they each told their unique stories.



The Conference on Diversity and Inclusion is an annual event held in February. We hope to see you next year!

A special thank you to Prof. Corey Dolgan for his support of the conference and for hosting Prof. Embrick!

BEST BUDDIES: SPREAD THE WORD TO END THE WORD

by Annie Griffin '13

Best Buddies is a non-profit organization that provides friendship opportunities for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. I first got involved with Best Buddies my sophomore year here at Stonehill. The first event that I went to was at the HOPE (House of Possibilities) called Saturday Night Live. The event was for the buddies, so that they could each get up and perform if they had the desire to.

When I first walked in, all of the buddies were so happy and welcoming. You would look at them and realize how lucky you were to even be in their presence. So many of them faced challenges on a day-to-day basis that I never even had to think about. I realized how truly blessed I am. They didn't care the color of my skin, my height, my weight, my religion, all they cared about was that I was there and with them. When I go and volunteer with the buddies, I forget about all the little problems. Never have I left the HOPE House without a smile on my face. My buddy Dan Bivins has taught me so much. One of the biggest things that I will take with me is that there is no limit to what myself, and the other volunteers with Best Buddies are capable of.

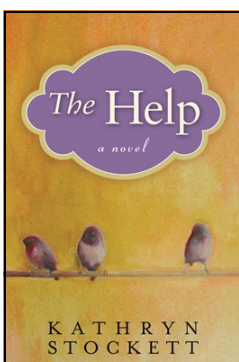


The Spread the Word to End the Word campaign was created to end the use of the R word "retard/ed". During that week at Stonehill we held different events on campus to spread the word. Dan, my buddy, one of his classmates and his professor discussed as a panel the impact of the R word, along with other topics. During the Spread the Word week we also had a social justice fair, where many of the social justice groups at Stonehill came together to share the issues that they are trying to fight against. Finally we finished our Spread the Word campaign with a big party at HOPE where all Stonehill students were invited to get to know the buddies!

MULTICULTURAL BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP

On February 15, 2012, a group of Stonehill faculty, staff, and students gathered to discuss the book, *The Help*, in a program created by the Office of Intercultural Affairs. Called "Lunch with 12 Strangers", this book discussion group provides an opportunity for members of the community to come together through a shared experience. Participants share thoughts on the book, experiences, and bring in personal stories to the discussion. Reasons for participating vary, but many expressed that it was nice to finally put some names with faces in our community!

*"What I had learned from this time in our history was mostly from an Afro American History class in high school that talked about historical figures important during this Civil Rights Movement. I had a fantastic history teacher who held nothing back and really felt that I knew what the movement was all about. However, what a history class doesn't always do is personalize the era in the way that a novel like *The Help* can. Being able to connect to people and their stories. Connecting with a character like Skeeter who was kind of stuck between how she was raised and what she knew was not the right way of treating people."* — **Lucia Darling, Budget Manager**



*"The discussion was moving because one woman had shared how the book brought back many memories from her own childhood and her grandmother being a maid. While reading the book I never really thought that there are more than likely people reading *The Help* who are going to be moved far more than I was/am. But after this lunch I saw how there were some people from the South sitting at the table, that had many memories resurface and there were people who lived in the North who weren't directly effected by what was taking place. But they were moved by the others around them and by the material that was brought up by the information in the book."*

— **Sarah Brassington '15**

BLACK HISTORY MONTH CONVOCATION

On Wednesday, February 1, 2012, the annual Black History Month Convocation was held to celebrate the beginning of Black History Month. This year's speakers included **Tania Williams '12, Kadeem Jeudy '12, Frank March, Resident Director of Boland Hall, Priscilla Dodoo '12, and Terrell Diggs '13.** Each speaker talked about their heritage, their family influences, and the ways in which they celebrate their Black heritage and identity.

Kadeem Jeudy '12

"There was that one time, or many times where I was called out by my peers because I said this "like a white person", or "that like a white person." There were times too where I was openly dismissed because I wasn't held to the black standards that my peers had tried to set. Two thoughts had come to my mind. Everyone knew the environment in which I came from, so why judge me based on that?...I felt like I wasn't given a fair chance, but I accepted it, and thought that the experience was only going to make me stronger!"

Terrell Diggs '13

"Each chance I get to do something like this, I love to take full advantage of it. just so other's could see where I come from and have a better understanding of not only my challenges, but other's as well. Everyone has challenges in life, and I appreciate times like this for myself and everyone else to learn about challenges within other backgrounds. I like this type of opportunities because I get to voice out my strive for success through these challenges, and the more I speak of success out loud, the closer I feel I have come to it."

Tania Williams '12

"Sharing at the Convocation felt like I was venting...it gave me a release, let me speak my mind knowing that it would not only make me feel better but also possibly help others to be more open minded. I also think it gave some people a new look on things. Another great thing about the convocation is the fact that I was able to hear other stories and was able to see that it happens to other people and not just myself, let me know that there are other people that I can talk to."



From left to right: Frank March, Tania Williams '12, Terrell Diggs '13, Kadeem Jeudy '12, Priscilla Dodoo and Randall Phyll.

ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH CONVOCATION



Thank you to Prof. Karen Teoh, Prof. Irvin Pan, Chauncey Velasco '12, Min Kim '12, and Audrey DelRosario '13 for their participation in the Asian Heritage Month Convocation!

Like most commemorative months, Asian-Pacific Heritage Month originated in a congressional bill. In June 1977, Reps. Frank Horton of New York and Norman Y. Mineta of California introduced a House resolution that called upon the president to proclaim the first ten days of May as Asian-Pacific Heritage Week.

In 1992, the official designation of May as Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month was signed into law. The month of May was chosen to commemorate the immigration of the first Japanese to the United States on May 7, 1843, and to mark the anniversary of the completion of the transcontinental railroad on May 10, 1869.

At Stonehill, you can learn more out Asian Heritage by joining the Asian American Society, taking classes related to Asian and Asian American experiences, or participating in Intercultural Affairs programs!



Asian American Society with artist Bren Bataclan

Anthony Rapp: Actor, Singer, and Ally by Silvana Vivas

Written by Silvana Vivas '13, an ALANA-A Sister and writer for *The Summit*.



Anthony Rapp, the actor best known for playing the role of Mark Cohen in the rock opera *Rent*, spoke at Stonehill College in March at the Martin Institute. Our Catholic liberal arts college was a stop on Rapp's tour as a speaker where he promoted his memoir *Without You: A Memoir of Love, Loss, and the Musical Rent*. The event was hosted by Stonehill's Intercultural Affairs Office, in conjunction with an alumnus who has donated money intended to specifically go towards LGBTQ-related events, Liza Talusan, director of Intercultural Affairs, said. Talusan introduced Rapp to the crowd of Stonehill students, Bridgewater students, and other local communities gathered in the Martin Auditorium. Rapp got settled on a wooden stool on stage, and began to tell his story of his involvement with *Rent* since its beginning in 1994.

Rapp said he knew he was going to be a part of something big from the first day he worked with the cast and heard the song "Seasons of Love." He said his next epiphany came after hearing "La Vie Boheme" because it was so "brazenly outspoken with such joy" and that it was something different to hear "political language in a song that was so catchy." The song touches upon people living different walks of life, with a special shout out to "people living with, not dying, from disease."

Rapp dedicated a large chunk of his talk to Jonathan Larson, the writer and composer of *Rent* who died suddenly and unexpectedly in 1996 before the show had officially debuted in its current form. Although the auditorium was ringing with laughter at Rapp's anecdotes earlier on in the night, there was only silence as Rapp described performing the musical in its entirety in front of Larson's family and friends shortly after his death. Before allowing time for questions, Rapp ended by emphasizing the significance of *Rent* in reference to Larson, who had written the musical as a response to experiencing the deaths of close friends due to HIV/AIDS, and other social and political injustices.

From an LGBTQ standpoint, *Rent* features multiple identities. It is an amalgamation of gay, lesbian, transgender, and straight characters becoming a family in the midst of hard economic times in New York City, while also struggling with the reality of the AIDS epidemic. Although audiences are blessed to have such an honest musical with a positive message about life, what is more moving is Rapp's persisting dedication to the musical and its cause. Although he's been a part of it for over a decade, he still finds joy in the end result that comes together from Larson's vision. What makes the musical so timeless is the fact that taboo topics were made public, and more importantly, real. Larson was able to open up a discussion and create a platform for future conversations about issues in the LGBTQ community.

"As a straight white man, [Larson] was moved to say something," Rapp said.

Within the Stonehill community, many of those topics are still taboo. Sexuality, and the underlying hardships that come with not following the norm, are often only touched upon at the surface level at the College. As an ALANA-A Brothers and Sisters Leader, I appreciated Rapp's advocacy work in talking about his own personal experience with such a revolutionary work of art. And, it is a reassurance that there are others fighting for causes that don't necessarily affect them directly.

While Rapp came out to his mother when he was only 18, it wasn't the struggle that it is for many teens in the LGBTQ community. Yet he speaks as an ally, representing those who identify similarly to the characters in the musical. Rapp's career, and what he told of Larson's, served as a reminder to those present that one doesn't have to "identify" as something to be a part of it, or defend it, which is often the perspective that many members of the Stonehill community fail to see. My hope is that Rapp's explanation of the importance of *Rent* for youth inspires the sense of alliance in those who feel moved to continue to improve life on this campus, and the world.

INTERCULTURAL HAPPENINGS: Our Blog

Surf over to www.interculturalaffairs.blogspot.com to read more from these posts:



TAKING CHANCES by Jacqueline Guzmán: “ In our office we talk about the importance of creating personal connections. Of putting the person before the issue, and learning from each other through dialogue. I see how much I have learned from students, staff and faculty through personal conversations.”



HOW WE LOOK by Liza Talusan: “*One thing* I hope my children, and all children of color, *can tell just by looking at me* is that being brown is a blessing. It is beautiful. Being brown does not mean we are suspicious. Wearing a hoodie does not make us suspicious. We are people. We have futures.”



ABS REFLECTION by Thomas Noah '15: “One of the activities we did for the training was to draw the idea Image of an ABS leader. One major characteristic my group's little ABS leader had was being open-minded. We drew him with symbols coming out of his head. A globe, a peace sign, a gay pride flag, and the cross and other religious symbols. I have always been an open minded person, but since I've been at Stonehill and involved with the Diversity program and ABS, my mind has been expanded.”



A STONEHILL EXPERIENCE by Prithak Chowdhury '15: “Diversity, social justice, inclusivity, and leadership are pretty big words for me. I probably care for them, but I still have to figure out why. But what I do know is that I have learnt *it's not the differences in a person that really matter, but it's the person who matters more than the differences.*”

“WHAT’S UP?” and “CHIPMUNK!” by Emily Chang ‘15

Emily Chang is a member of the Class of 2015, and a student from Taiwan.



“What are you getting from Dunkins?” a friend asked me early in the semester.

“Umm... I would like some *jelly chipmunks!* They are the best!”

Of course, I said “*chipmunks*”, but I actually meant “*munchkins*.” This is the type of awkward mistake that happens all the time here in the United States. Though I am a US citizen, I spent sixteen years growing up in Taiwan, a small country east of China. I love both the United States and Taiwan, and both countries have shaped who I am today.

Growing up mostly in Taiwan, I speak both Mandarin Chinese and Taiwanese, a dialect that we usually speak with the elders. Since half of the world speaks English, all the elementary school students in Taiwan are required to learn English. However, if you want to speak and write in real English, you will need to go to extra schools and do extra work. Because I knew I wanted to study in the United States, I worked much harder on learning English than my friends. I started listening to American music when I was eleven by watching MTV. I watched American movies and TV shows just hoping to improve my English speaking skills.

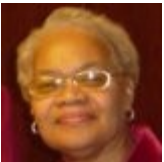
Two years ago, I finally got a chance to start my dream of studying abroad. I went to a tiny boarding school in Waltham, MA and started to realize how different life was in the States. First of all, the *Chinese food* here in the United States tastes nothing like food I grew up eating. Second, public transportation in the United States is not as easy as in Taipei City, and it is nearly impossible to get around without a car. Third, in the U.S., when you run into some of your friends, you say, “What’s up?” The first time someone asked me “What’s up?” I thought he was asking me something up in the sky, so I looked up. ***I actually looked up!*** Some days, it felt like people were speaking an entirely different English language!

It is fun to have the opportunity to live in both cultures, it lights up my life and makes me see the world with a greater depth. I identify both as American and Taiwanese because both cultures taught me how to live as a person and how to respect one and appreciate differences.

DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE AWARDEES



On Sunday, April 29, 2012, the Diversity and Social Justice Awards were presented at the Student Life Awards Ceremony. The Diversity and Social Justice Award is given to a member of the community who has demonstrated consistent and impactful change in efforts to shape a more inclusive environment. Congratulations to our four recipients! Below are brief excerpts from their award presentations given by Liza Talusan, director of intercultural affairs. (*J.Khubchandani, C. Hirsch, and M. Tineo*)



Jean HamlerDiversity at Stonehill has changed shape over the past years. Programs and participation are experienced by students all across the college, and we have begun to make an institutional commitment by creating opportunities to influence policies and procedures. Faculty, staff, students, and alumni are beginning to collaborate to change the climate of inclusion. However, the early years of diversity at Stonehill was an uphill battle. At times, it must have been isolating and frustrating. Yet, the growing success we have experienced in the past years are simply the beams and bricks that were made possible because of a strong foundation that was set before us. ***And, that foundation, is Jean R. Hamler.*** Because of her work, her dedication, and her belief in the promise of Stonehill – a promise that is being realized, one stone at a time, Stonehill is becoming a more inclusive place because of her.

Caitlin Hirsch

When I first met this student, she was shy, reserved, walked around campus with her head lowered. She was quiet, unsure, and didn't quite fit in. This student, however, found her home with others who accepted her, believed in her, and affirmed her identity. As a sophomore, she took leadership in PRIDE, and as the group transformed, so did she. She organized a "Speak Out" on the quad, openly talking about support for our community – the LGBTQ community. On that day, a rainbow flag was flown on the quad as public support of the gay community. ***And so it began.*** Soon, an alumnus came forward to financially commit to LGBTQ programming on campus to support the efforts of our students. Within a year, PRIDE went from a quiet group to an activist organization that hosted film screenings, debates, Safe Space Training, ally development workshops, RA training sessions, and panel discussions. Under her leadership, PRIDE became one of the leading student groups to commit to social change on our campus. Caitlin Hirsch, in your four years here, you have helped our community understand issues affecting and impacting the LGBTQ community, and it is my pleasure to award you this Stonehill College Diversity and Social Justice Award.

Jasmine Khubchandani

I've been inspired by this next student since the moment she stepped on this campus. And, quickly, we asked her to start telling her story. From the first Women's Month Convocation to Asian Heritage Convocation to Academic Development Day panels, this young woman found her voice and made sure we all heard it too. She helped raise our awareness of inclusion in the classroom and served as a driving force behind institutional change for diversity. She has served as an ALANA Sister and as a Co-Coordinator, a choreographer for the Bollywood routines at DiverCity, and one of the most well rounded people I know. She has been instrumental in leadership trainings and workshops, and has helped our conversation with religious and faith diversity inclusion here as well. ***Jasmine Khubchandani, our campus is a better place because of you.*** Our students feel more included, our classrooms feel safer, and our community feels more welcoming. You bravely shared your stories of identity, life, love, and hope; and you created space for others to do the same. It is my honor to present the Stonehill College Diversity and Social Justice Award to Jasmine Khubchandani.

Michelle Tineo

When I think of powerhouse students who have helped change the shape of diversity at Stonehill, I think of our next recipient. This student served as an ALANA-A Sister for the past three years, two of those years as a Co-Coordinator. ***When I think of ABS, I think of Michelle Tineo.*** Her courage, tenacity, commitment, and belief in creating a community where every single person feels they have a responsibility has driven her work. The personal nature of the work means that you bring your whole self, every day, to making change. She has inspired and empowered others to keep up the work. She has served as a big sister to the ALANA community, the voice of the students on the Diversity Task Force, and an effective collaborator as the SGA Diversity Committee Chair. It is my pleasure to present our final Diversity and Social Justice Award to Michelle Tineo.

THE FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS by Neeraj Dev Varma '15



Neeraj Dev Varma is a member of the Class of 2015, an international student from India, and an active member in the Asian American Society and Diversity on Campus E-Board.

I'm Neeraj Dev Varma, an International student at Stonehill College and I'm from halfway across the world from the beautiful country of India. A freshman in the class of 2015, this is my first year in the United States of America — a nation I only heard about in the papers and watched on the screen. If you thought India was exotic, let me explain to you that America to us back home is what the big city is for a village boy – massive, epic and happening. And now here I am for four full years, and it's been an amazing ride so far!

Needless to say, I've spent all my life immersed in Asian culture and society, which is so different from life here in the United States of America. Trust me, the little things throw me off no matter how familiar I think I am with the lifestyle here. I guess that's how I happened to join the *Asian American Society*, hoping to meet fellow Asians to connect with. My time spent with this club was well worth it; there's so much I've learned about the cultures of fellow Asian nations that I would never have discovered myself!

The one thing I miss most about home would be the festivals. Some of the most popular festivals are Holi (the festival of *colors*), Diwali (the festival of *lights*), Dussehra (celebrated in Northern/Western India), Durga Puja (celebrated in the North-east, i.e. my side of the world!), as well as many other smaller, one-day celebrations. Among those mentioned, Diwali, my favorite, is celebrated in November. Diwali, the festival of lights, is probably the biggest festival celebrated all year round for Hindus, who are joined by Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists and people of many faiths. That's one thing about India – we have people from such diverse backgrounds and faiths that festivals are *shared* by your neighbor, your friend, your teacher, your once-upon-a-time acquaintance and even that stranger walking across the road. We celebrate *everyone's* festivals!

Diwali is the celebration of the return of Lord Rama from Lanka after fourteen years of exile from his kingdom, and the defeat of Ravana and rescue of his wife, Sita, from his evil clutches (this is taken from the *Ramayana*, a famous Indian epic). It is also celebrated for the goddess *Lakshmi*, the goddess of wealth and hence it is also known as *Lakshmi Puja*. Diwali is one of the most anticipated festivals, and the preparations are enormous, regardless of how strong a Hindu you may or may not be. We start out by preparing small earthen lamps (shaped like one half of a walnut shell), called *diyas* that are filled with oil and fitted with cotton wicks. These lamps are placed outdoors around the house – around the garden, on the porch – they are left unlit until it turns dark, when we turn of all the lights indoors and fire up the lamps – the sole source of illumination on a dark moonless night (Diwali is always celebrated on a night of the new-moon, called *Amavasya*). It doesn't end here – the mothers everywhere are busy preparing sweets and food and performing small indoor ceremonies (called *pujas*). People visit each other, exchange greetings and gifts. But it doesn't end here either! The highlight of the night for most people are the fireworks and firecrackers, perhaps the most beautiful way to light up a dark, moonless night!

WHAT YOU MIGHT HAVE MISSED THIS SEMESTER



The "hoodie campaign" — faculty, staff and students wore hooded sweat-shirts to raise awareness of the Trayvon Martin tragedy



The ALANA-A Brothers and Sisters launched their new logo—"making waves" in the diversity conversation



Community service trip to Cradles 2 Crayons



5K to support Schools on Wheels with the R.I.S.E. Group

A FEW FACES OF DIVERSITY AT STONEHILL COLLEGE



Hailey Chalhoub '13, ALANA-A Leader

Do you identify with a particular religious faith or tradition?

I do not identify with any traditional religion. Instead of identifying as atheist, I prefer the term secular humanist, as it has less of a negative connotation.

Could you please list one benefit that your identity affords you at Stonehill?

One benefit of not identifying with a particular religion has been having the opportunity to learn about so many different religions while being able to fully embrace them without necessarily comparing them to my own beliefs.

What is one challenge that you face at Stonehill because of your religious identity?

One challenge that I have faced at Stonehill is the lack of understanding and openness to my religious identity, from both my peers and some of the staff at the college.



Anum Mir '12, ALANA-A Leader

Do you identify with a particular religious faith or tradition?

I identify with Islam, which makes me Muslim.

Could you please list one benefit that your identity affords you at Stonehill?

One benefit is that since not many people are aware about the 'rules' of Islam, it's fun to educate others.

What is one challenge that you face at Stonehill because of your religious identity?

One challenge is the constant staring, although I have gotten quite used to it by now. However, it's always nice to walk around without having people stare at you because of the way you're dressed



Prithak Chowdhury '15, ALANA-A Leader

Do you identify with a particular religious faith or tradition?

Hinduism

Could you please list one benefit that your identity affords you at Stonehill?

I attended Catholic high school in India, so I am very familiar with Catholic traditions. I like that I get to relate my faith to other ways that people understand religion. My religious identity has also helped my personal growth. For one of the first times in my life, I am in the minority!

What is one challenge that you face at Stonehill because of your religious identity?

One challenge is that so few people even know about Hinduism. But, this is also a benefit because it means I get to talk about my faith and my traditions. People would be surprised that I am also active in Campus Ministry and spiritual retreats, but I believe that spirituality is about connecting with all types of people.

Sabina Dhmi '15, ALANA-A Leader



Do you identify with a particular religious faith or tradition?

The religion I identify is Sikhism.

Could you please list one benefit that your identity affords you at Stonehill?

While there are overlaps in the teachings of Sikhism and Catholicism, I have found that during activities there are times I can use my own religion to further understand topics we discussed.

What is one challenge that you face at Stonehill because of your religious identity?

While there are several religious areas for Catholics to pray, finding a close Gurdwara (Punjabi name of our temple) is not very easy. A slight fear of being judged or bullied because of the unfamiliarity of my religion to the majority of my peers is another more emotional challenge I face.

WELCOME 2012-2013 ALANA-A BROTHERS AND SISTERS!



The ALANA-A Brothers and Sisters are a group of students who believe in leading the way for diversity and inclusion. By working within the Stonehill community, the ABS Leaders seek to create opportunities for dialogue, collaboration, education and awareness building. The ABS Leaders host the Intercultural Experience Program, a 2-day pre-orientation program during which issues of diversity and inclusion are discussed. In our current cohort, the ABS Leaders represent diverse ethnic, racial, religious, socioeconomic, immigration and citizenship status, disability, and gender identities, including ways in which many of these identities intersect.

For more information, please stop by our office or email diversity@stonehill.edu.

Back row L-R: Thomas Noah, Min Kim, Prithak Chowdhury, Alanna Melendez, Paul Ataide, Osasu Igbinideon, Annie Griffin, Pam Bardhi, Johnny Joseph, Renee Bernier, Sarah Brassington, Sabina Dhami; Middle: Hailey Chalhoub, Silvana Vivas, Tiffany Tran, Neeraj Dev Varma, Kylie Krause; Second row: Breanne Penkala, Kadian McNeill, Wanny Munoz; Front: Noah Dunn, Patrik Bergabo, Mary Charlotte Buck; Not pictured: Kelley Correia, Julie Kelly, Amanda Egesi, M. Alex Cuevas

Congratulations to Alanna Melendez '13 who will serve as the Coordinator for the ALANA-A Brothers and Sisters

I have been involved with ABS since freshman year, and it has undoubtedly shaped who I am today! Being a part of ABS is like a family. We are all there with a common interest and desire to discuss and learn about the social injustices that exist in and outside of our community. We also explore ways in which to address these issues. I have learned about the true meaning of social justice issues surrounding diversity, as well as other injustices, in and outside of Stonehill. ABS has given me the skills and education to address and educate others about these issues. ABS has taught me that we have the power to change the world, all we have to do it take that first step! *-Alanna Melendez '13*

ABS is my family here on campus. It wasn't a likely first family for me here; I signed up for the Intercultural Experience Program as an incoming freshman on a whim. However, the discussions and activities we did regarding social justice really drew me in. ABS has taught me all about being a successful ally and how privilege does actually have a role in my daily life even though I hadn't necessarily seen it before college. I've learned so much more about who I am and why social justice *matters*, and I feel so grateful to have been blessed with this opportunity. *-Mary Charlotte Buck '14*

ABS is about enriching lives- those of its leaders by the presence and camaraderie of peers who relish in the same opportunities for change; those who we seek to ally ourselves with and represent in a society that doesn't ease up; and those who see us every day or who we speak to when we can, for to them we are a picture of what it means to not just go against the tide, but to fight the tide, by being a ripple in a small pond...by enacting the change we long to see. *-Renee Bernier '13*

For me, ABS is not just a program but also an opportunity to learn about peoples' differences and teach others about them. I feel grateful being able to promote awareness on such topics and apply it to the Stonehill community as well as in my daily life. I truly do feel that I am changing the world. *- Paul Ataide '14*

Many thanks to our fantastic graduate student volunteer, Justin Casey, a Masters Candidate from Bridgewater State University who is finishing up his program in Higher Education Administration! Thanks for all of your hard work, Justin! Congratulations!

DIVERCITY 2012: CELEBRATE! EDUCATE! EMPOWER!

DiverCity has quickly grown into one of Stonehill College's most anticipated yearly events. This year the event outgrew the Alumni Auditorium and was held in the Shields Science Center on Thursday, April 19th, 2012. The room was overflowing with Stonehill community members wanting to share in the night's celebration.

The evening featured a wide array of student groups showcasing their talents through dance, fashion, spoken word, and theatrical performances. This year's DiverCity Festival included performances from Ruckus, Hip Hop Club, Diversity on Campus, PRIDE, Activism Club, WHEN & RISE, Bellies that Dance, Live, Laugh, Love, and many more!

This event could never have happened without the dedication and hard work of the SGA DiverCity Planning Committee. This group of student leaders came together from various backgrounds and experiences to collaborate in planning this year's DiverCity. The committee is comprised of **Michelle Tineo '12 (Chair)**, **Damina Soares '12 (Manager)**, **Prithak Chowdhury '15 (Programmer)**, **Noah Dunn '14 (Publicity)**, and **Kadian McNeil '14 (Manager)**.

This year the committee selected **Celebrate! Educate! Empower!** as the theme of the festival. Celebrate, because we want to commemorate and enjoy the diversity present in the Stonehill community. Educate, because we want to learn from the experiences of our Stonehill family. Empower, because we want to inspire the community to advocate for social justice.

