“We’re making it our own,” says Kyla Martin ‘15, producer and actress, when describing how Macalester’s production of for colored girls would be different from previous adaptations of Ntozake Shange’s stage play. The work is described to be “passionate and fearless, Shange’s words reveal what it is to be of color and female in the twentieth century.” Kyla discussed how their performance will be different and still resonate with individuals in the contemporary moment: “We’re speaking poems that we think we can speak to.... Times have changed since this production has been created and lots of things have changed socially... That is also interesting but saddening, because a lot of these stories are still relevant to the issues we are combatting today.” Many themes from discussing violences, to loss, pain, reclamation of identities & experiences, and celebration are delved into.

In my nearly four years at Macalester, I have never seen any production with an all Black cast and director. Becky Githinji ’18, Dubie Toa-Kwapong ’16, Gabriella “Gabs” Gillespie ‘17, Kyla Martin ‘15, Marie Johnson ‘17, Maritza Steele ‘17, Megan Britt ‘15, and Niara Williams ’18 round out the cast of eight Black women who volunteered their time and truths to make this production a reality. Kyla states, “We all have diverse experiences and different cultural and religious backgrounds but we are still able to relate to and speak truth to the pieces.” Harry Waters Jr., Professor and Chair of Theatre and Dance, also volunteered his time and expertise to direct.

Students of Color Retreat

On January 24th, The DML held its 2nd annual Students of Color Retreat. This year, over 40 students came together to be in community with each other and to build relationships and dialogue about the ways in which students of color are valued and affirmed at Macalester. Retreat participants also engaged in the ways in which students of color both struggle and succeed in building community with each other on campus.
"Je Suis... : Reflecting on Charlie Hebdo, Islamophobia, and Freedom of Speech"

On Friday, February 27th, the Cultural House hosted its first Fresh Friday of 2015. This event was a collaboration between the C-House staff and the Tapas Series staff of the Lealtad-Suzuki Center. The title was "Je Suis..." and the theme centered around recent events at Charlie Hebdo in Paris, as well as Islamophobia and freedom of speech.

Nearly 40 people attended the event. The event started with a gallery to provide context and points of reflection for the participants. The gallery consisted of a historical timeline of immigration, Islamophobia, and anti-racist movements in France; articles and videos about the issues; photos, tweets, and artistic reactions to the issues; as well as journaling and reflection activities. The second half of the event was all discussion. In addition to discussing the issue itself, the event also aimed to connect back to our own communities and to the United States. The facilitators asked: how is fear lived out in our own communities? How does Islamophobia effect me?

Thank you to all who came! It was a thought provoking discussion, and we hope the event was just the beginning of your exploration of these very relevant issues.
Gender & Sexuality
(By Isabel Ruelas ’15, Vivian Liu ’17 and Errol Phalo ’17)

“‘It’s about having the same social, political and economic rights between the two sexes,’ said 13-year-old Zainab Ale.” Girlguiding, a leading charity organization in the UK working for girls and young women, released a new badge, the Breaking Barriers badge. Aimed at 10-14 year old girls, it teaches the Guides about global issues affecting girls and women such as forced marriage, gender equality, and poor healthcare.

The death of Jessie Hernandez in January by the police has magnified the challenges faced by LGBT youth of color in Denver. Hernandez’s death has amplified the need for police transparency. When gender non-conformity intersects with racism, new aspects must be taken into consideration when trying to navigate one’s relationship to the state.

In Lille, Northern France, Dominique Strauss-Kahn, former head of the International Monetary Fund, is being accused of aiding and promoting prostitution. His possible sentence is seen as a threat to France’s sex industry because it poses the risk of criminalizing the profession. France’s sex industry has a worker’s trade union that is strongly supported by women’s rights group and numerous health and HIV organizations. Activists like Inna Shavchenko and former prostitutes are claiming that women of the profession are being oppressed.

Economic Justice
(By elisa lee ’15, Mitch Paquette ’16 and Abbey Feola ’17)

In line with the continued criminalization of homelessness, the Mayor of San Rafael, California, has “closed a public park for at least a month in an effort to drive away the homeless population.”

Kopplin’s Coffee, a coffee shop in Saint Paul, Minnesota, has raised the base pay for its employees from $9.00 an hour to $12.50 an hour. Employees are now able to make a living wage with less worry about tips.

Gentrification is on the rise across the country, and Minneapolis is one of the leaders in this trend. Grist.org journalist Brentin Mock wrote about gentrification as it relates to sustainability projects in low-income neighborhoods. While things like better infrastructure, more efficient buildings, and bike-paths can positively impact the environment, residents fear that they could drive them out of the neighborhood. Mock argues for better outreach to community organizations to better plan the projects and mitigate displacement.

3,800 oil refinery workers have been striking against violations of existing safety protocols in the oil industry. It is the first national refinery strike since 1980.

21 states have increased the minimum wage (by an average of +$1/hr).
Religion & Spirituality
(By Emma Stout ’15, Grace Zhu ’16 and Andjelka Radevik ’16)

President Obama made remarks at the National Prayer Breakfast in Washington referring to the violence taking place in the Middle East involving groups who kill in the name of Islam. President Obama also discussed the violence and sectarian wars from Christianity’s past and claimed that Jim Crow Laws had more than a specious relationship with Biblical scripture. His remarks sparked both criticism and recognition from the general public.

Turkey’s largest religious minority — the Alevi community — is joining forces with atheists to protest mandatory religious education for students as young as 5. Christians and Jews are exempt from compulsory Islamic courses because Turkey recognizes them as religious minorities. But atheists, agnostics and Alevi adherents are unrecognized and therefore come under the state-sponsored Sunni umbrella.

OSLO, Feb 21 (Reuters) - “Hope for humanity, for peace and love, across religious differences and backgrounds.” More than 1000 Muslims formed a human shield around Oslo’s synagogue on Saturday, offering symbolic protection for the city’s Jewish community and condemning an attack on a synagogue in neighboring Denmark the weekend of February 14, 2015.

Trinity Church Wall Street in New York City is suing Wal-Mart over the issue of gun violence. Church leaders demand that there be greater board oversight of the sale of high-capacity assault rifles in an effort to decrease gun violence. In fact, according to a recent article in the Atlantic, religious leaders across faiths are showing stronger support for gun control.

Racial/Ethnic/National Identities
(By Kyla Martin ’15 and Jinath Tasnim ’16)

Joy Castro, Director for the Institute of Ethnic Studies at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, spoke with the Daily Nebraskan to discuss the importance of talking about race and ethnic issues. The article addresses some of the difficulties about talking about race, why it is important to do it, and also how you start a dialogue about it.

The Sabah and Sarawak governments (two Malaysian states on the island of Borneo) have changed their official forms to no longer include an “other” label in the race column; instead there is a blank space for people to identify what their ethnicity is. The article questions the requirement to identify your race, ethnicity, and religion on forms as well as its purpose and impact. The author then suggests removing the race column on applications where “race has no bearing.”

In January, Islamophobic bus ads began running in San Francisco. The ads were purchased by the Freedom Defense Initiative, promoting hatred against Muslims by equating them with Nazis. An anonymous person has been covering up these ads around the city with pictures of Marvel’s premiere Muslim superhero, Kamala Khan, who became Ms. Marvel in 2013.
ESP Spring Welcome Back Dinner

The Emerging Scholars Program hosted a welcome back dinner for its mentees on Friday, February 13th. The C-House kitchen soon came to life and the mentors’ culinary abilities were put on full display: Sedric McClure (Multicultural Counselor) brought homemade chili and cornbread; Erica Lee ’15 baked muffins; Dan Yee ‘16 cooked some surprisingly spicy fried rice; and Cyrus Hair ’15 and Kaara Vasquez ’17 prepared tacos. Phuong Pham ’16 brought tasty snacks, which included popcorn drizzled in chocolate. During the dinner, we talked about the notion of home. Did Mac feel like home for the mentees? Apparently so, because it wasn’t long before they began to ask about room draw for next year. Every mentee left the welcome back dinner with a full stomach, burning mouth (thanks, Dan), and a better understanding of what places they might call home next year at Mac.

As for my own group of mentees, we decided to binge watch ABC’s Fresh Off the Boat, the first American sitcom to star Asian actors in two decades. The show is about a Taiwanese-American family growing up in Orlando, Florida in the 1990s. We watched the first five episodes of the show. It was interesting to see how my mentees related to parts of the Asian American experience represented in the show. As one of them put it, “It’s funny to watch this as a former fresh off the boat.”

Inspirational Keynote Speech from Dr. Joy DeGruy

Last week I placed an order for Dr. Joy DeGruy’s book, Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America’s Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing. I felt compelled to buy this book because everything that I have understood up until now about the legacy of slavery was transformed (and proved wrong) by Dr. Joy DeGruy keynote speech for Black History Month this year. She made many epiphany-inducing connections between modern society and the past.

Without her straightforwardness and humor, I believe it would have been very difficult to go through the ways in which racism had been justified for thousands of years by western minds. The research Dr. DeGruy presented on trauma showed me that enslaved people never received proper treatment for the hardships and horrors they went through. Most importantly, the social oppression of slavery and the idea of racial hierarchy still shapes the interactions between people of color and white people today.

Dr. DeGruy reminded me that the roots of racism are too deep to be addressed one moment and forgotten the next. She has inspired me to learn more about the significance of this trauma that she spoke about that night. I look forward to reading her book and discovering more about the Black identity that was shaped by slavery.
What to Look For...

- Tuesdays @ 6:00pm: “In the Kitchen With...”
  (C-House, 37 Mac St.)

- Tuesday, March 10th @ 11:30am - (An)Other Story Circle: grappling with the norms and expectations of heterosexism
  (Cultural House, 37 Mac. Street)

- Tuesday, March 10th through March 25th—Women’s History Month events. Look for WHM’s calendars on campus!

- Thursday, March 26th @ 11:30am - Tapas Series: Cultural Appropriation
  (Cultural House, 37 Mac. Street)

- Friday, March 27th @ 5:30pm—Fresh Friday: Consuming Oppression
  (Cultural House, 37 Mac. Street)

- Monday, March 30th @ 3:00pm: The Allies Project Training Workshop for New Allies
  (Register with Karla Benson Rutten)

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