Attention:

Taylor Reveley, President of the College of William and Mary  
Ginger Ambler, Vice President of the College of William and Mary  
Marjorie Thomas, Dean of Students at the College of William and Mary  
Dave Gilbert, Assistant Dean of Students for Student Conduct at the College of William and Mary  
Michael Halleran, Provost of the College of William and Mary  
Fanchon Glover, Chief Diversity Office of the College of William and Mary; Co-Chair of the William and Mary Diversity Advisory Committee  
Todd A. Stottlemyer, Rector of the William and Mary Board of Visitors  
Robert E. Scott, Vice Rector of the William and Mary Board of Visitors  
Thomas R. Frantz, Secretary of the William and Mary Board of Visitors  
A Call to Community Action: A Request for Administrative Response to Racial Bias Instances

This call to community action comes to you as a result of a collaborative effort between members of the student body and was written by Taylor A. Mack and Brittney P. Harrington. They can be reached at tamack@email.wm.edu and bpharrington@email.wm.edu.
INTRODUCTION: The Call for Action

As students of the College of William and Mary we are told that the purpose of the Board of Visitors is to advise President Reveley on matters that affect the welfare of the university. Additionally, as students we acknowledge the responsibilities the Board of Visitors, President, Vice President, and Deans of Students have in protecting the welfare of the university. As concerned William and Mary students seeking to eradicate systems of oppression, we are reaching out to the Board of Visitors as well as vital decision-making administrators in an effort to collectively work toward creating a safe campus environment for all students on and off campus. There have been several instances of overt racism that have occurred during the 2014-2015 calendar year involving and deeply affecting William and Mary students. Regretfully, we have noticed administrative hesitation to respond. We are compelled to express to the administration as well as other key players that help run this institution that the College of William and Mary must step forward and make the necessary investments to work to eradicate racism and other forms of oppression on campus. Administrative inaction is forcing some already-marginalized students to fend for themselves when facing bias, leaving affected students feeling psychologically, emotionally, and physically vulnerable and unable to focus purely on academics.

We see where the administration can improve and seek to offer practical, immediate solutions to lead to the improvement of William and Mary’s racial climate. Our solutions stem from our belief that William and Mary’s racial climate is repairable, but we acknowledge that they are only a step along the way. We believe in order to make necessary progress members of the administration must change the way bias incidents are handled on and off campus. We recognize that discussing racism can be difficult for both the perpetrator and the victim. We also recognize that most instances of racism on William and Mary’s campus do not result from bad intent, but from ignorance, privilege, and immaturity. As concerned students, we have noticed the ways in which members of the administration have prioritized the comfort of perpetrators of bias over support for victims of it. An example of this is the administrative hesitation to name instances of racism as racist and perpetrators of bias (i.e. Sigma Chi fraternity, Sigma Pi fraternity, and Kappa Alpha Theta sorority) being able to choose whether their bias has consequences. Recognizing that using the word racism can be uncomfortable, we also acknowledge that truly progressive conversations cannot happen when our language is dictated by fear of discomfort. All instances of bias should be used as a teaching moment – for that to happen, perpetrators must be made aware of what they did wrong in a truthful way.

We understand that unless one has experienced bias incidents or micro aggressions it is hard to grasp how damaging they are. To help leaders in our community understand this better we have attached letters from current students and alumni explaining times they have experienced racism, witnessed racism, and why campus leaders must step forward. Below you will also see policy recommendations that can provide an immediate response to bias while we work toward collective cultural change among students and administrators.

The time to act is always now.
SOLUTION 1: ZERO TOLERANCE

A zero tolerance policy is a policy that prescribes a mandatory course of action for specific behaviors or actions. The purpose of such a policy is twofold. It sends a message to a community that certain behaviors are not, under any circumstances, tolerated. It also provides an institutional answer to the “what do we do now?” question that is often asked after a bias incident takes place that is not a prosecutable hate crime. When bias incidents occur and there is no institutionalized way to handle them, the result is a scramble from administrators to respond and minimal accountability from the offending party. In the College of William and Mary’s Mission Statement, the following paraphrased goals are among those listed as being necessary to fulfill the College’s promise: “attract outstanding students from diverse backgrounds,” “prepare students for… public leadership,” “instill in students an appreciation for the human condition, a concern for the public well-being,” and “address specific problems confronting the Commonwealth of Virginia, the nation, and the world.” William and Mary’s increasingly diverse student body is commendable, however to support the growing number of minority students on campus, the College must enact policies to protect them from bias and hold those responsible for bias incidents accountable. If the College truly seeks to prepare students to lead and address problems confronting our state and world, it has a responsibility to interrupt patterns of oppression and displays of bias in its community.

The proposed William and Mary Bias Zero Tolerance Policy would classify bias incidents as a student conduct violation to be dealt with through the already-established student conduct process. When a party is accused of a bias incident, they will go through the student conduct process. Recognizing that people are accused of bias who did not commit an act of bias, accused parties will be able to appeal to Franchon Glover, Chief Diversity Officer and chair of the Task Force on Race and Race Relations, to explain why the conflict did not arise from bias. If there is not a preponderance of evidence showing that a bias incident did not occur, the matter will be resolved through the student conduct process. The student conduct process can be reviewed in a flow chart attached to the end of this document, or in more detail at this website: http://www.wm.edu/offices/deanofstudents/services/studentconduct/honorcodeandstudentconduct/studentconduct/process/index.php

In William and Mary’s published information on the student conduct process you will see that more likely than not, a student conduct violation will result in a warning, community service, or education on the offense. The goal of the William and Mary Bias Zero Tolerance Policy is not to punitively punish students who commit acts of bias out of ignorance and innocent intent. The goal is to ensure students know that bias incidents are a violation of student conduct expectations that are in place to ensure a safe campus for all students. The secondary goal is to hold students accountable for the impact of their actions and provide the education necessary to ensure a similar incident does not happen again.

Because this policy proposes that bias incidents are added to behaviors that are considered student conduct violations and that reports of bias go through the long-established student conduct process, this policy is an immediate step administration can take to relay that it takes bias incidents seriously.
SOLUTION #2: BIAS RESPONSE TEAM

The College launched its first Bias Incident Reporting System in the fall of 2007. The system allowed students to report “any hostile behavior that is directed at a member of the William and Mary community because of a person’s race, sex (including pregnancy), age, color, disability, national or ethnic origin, political affiliation, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status.” This system was eliminated in 2010, and the current College bias definition is “a negative opinion or attitude toward a group of persons based on their race, gender or gender identity, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity/national origin, or disability.” Bias incidents, identity-motivated actions that are a step below hate crimes, are not criminal offenses. For victims of bias, perpetrator accountability and education are a significant part of the healing process. However, they are not the only part. Whether a perpetrator of bias is found guilty or not, a victim who is hurt deserves to have access to support from community members trained to know what bias looks like and how to prevent it.

A Bias Response Team (BRT) is a team of community members who respond to incidents of bias by supporting students who are targets of or witness bias incidents, refer students to available campus resources, promote dialogue and facilitate mediation between parties, and advocate for new or amended programs, initiatives, and policies that will promote a more inclusive campus community.

A BRT acts as a first response team when dealing with reported bias incidents. Additionally, in working closely with appropriate administrators, students, faculty, task forces, and organizations, a BRT plays a key role in accessing perpetrators of bias not to punish them, but to educate them and ensure additional bias does not continue. A BRT is not a crisis intervention body, but a first line of support and information for community members who need care and direction in a time of hurt. When experiencing bias, additional and specialized support is necessary for victims who may be hesitant to report an incident because it is not a hate crime and they fear not being taken seriously. Having a BRT at William and Mary communicates a strong message. It tells our community that bias is a real problem that impacts people on campus and that the school takes it seriously.

Many public Virginia institutions and other institutions ranked similarly to William and Mary have some kind of bias reporting system and/or response team. Vassar College, University of Chicago, Northwestern University, University of Richmond, George Mason University, University of Mary Washington, and many others all have such programs in place. William and Mary prides itself on being the first. In this regard, we are behind. The creation of a BRT to support students who experience bias, one of the more common ways oppression manifests on campus, will give students support they need and put the College on par with its peers.
Student Conduct Process

1. Incident report is submitted to the Dean of Students' office.
2. Case administrator meets with the college of William and Mary.
3. Student can choose administrative hearing resolution or administrative hearing.

Warning: Cases may be resolved only via administrative resolution or administrative hearing.

All students found responsible for a violation have the right to appeal. Also, victims of crimes of violence.

Less Serious

Hearing Board

Student Panel

More Serious

Committee Hearing

Appeal

Administrative Hearing

Resolution

Information Received

Investigation if necessary

Office of the Dean of Students
Personal Narratives From William and Mary Students and Alumni
*Not all contributors included personally identifying information. If you are interested in being put in touch with a particular contributor, please contact us.
Dear Administrators,

My name is Erica West. I am an American Studies & Public Policy double major in the Class of 2017. I proudly call Northern Virginia—specifically Alexandria, Virginia—my hometown. I am involved in more clubs, societies, organizations, groups and collectives on campus than I’d care to name. I have a strong support network of friends, acquaintances and associates here at William & Mary, and when I refer to this place to my friends back in Alexandria, I call it “home”. On paper, I am no different than most other students here at the College, except for two key facts: I am also an unapologetic queer black woman, and I am apart of a growing population of students strongly urging that the College take action on rectifying the racial climate here at William & Mary.

When I arrived on campus Fall semester of 2013 as a bright eyed and eager freshman, I had very little knowledge on the concept of race. I didn't read critical race theory for fun, I knew maybe a handful more about black history than some of my non-black counterparts, and I was torn about whether or not affirmative action was still necessary in the “post-racial America” I in some ways believed I lived in. But what I did know was that over the course of that same freshmen Fall 2013, I was told by a white counterpart that “black women were only pretty as long as they looked white”; it was non-too subtly suggested to me that I was at William & Mary *only* due to affirmative action, and not because I was debate captain of my state finalist high school debate team, in the top 5% of my graduating class, or in five different honor societies, among other accolades; and perhaps most disturbingly, peers in my own freshman hall were confused why I was offended after they told me of a “Colonial Bros and Navajos” (I’m sure the play on words is obvious here) mixer between a sorority and a fraternity. With the College’s problematic history involving Native Americans insofar as our own charter speaking to “proselytizing to the natives”, the lack of awareness, the disrespect, and the plain old ignorance in that particular case is disturbing to say the least. All of these unsettling racial motivated experiences occurred in just my first semester at the College.

The most recent events with the fraternity and sorority racist mixers are just another checkmark on the growing list of racially motivated microaggressions that have permeated William & Mary since I arrived—from the incredibly negative outcry online by mostly Caucasian students post the Michael Brown verdict and the events that stemmed from it, to the regular amounts of disdain student activists on this campus endure just for speaking out on these issues—and I’m sure existed long before my academic class was even a thought. I recognize that a major part of the College’s donor base and active alumni are people who were involved in Greek life. I realize that Greek life in and of itself is not inherently bad—it fosters leadership, cultivates logistical acumen and in the best cases can provide a positive social outlet in an area that quite frankly can be lacking in that department (all the students here are painfully aware that Williamsburg, Virginia is not a major or even medium sized city). That said, the College must do better. It is misleading to boast on the William & Mary website at the start of each semester about our “most diverse applicant pool ever”, with the knowledge that the proper structures are not in place at the College to ensure that those students of color—should they be chosen to attend this prestigious institution —will be safe, comfortable and fully supported. People of color at this school are not just here to pad the statistics, ensure the College continues to receive federal funding and score touchdowns—we are living, breathing entities who deserve an environment that uplifts us and
does not pander to the people and school sanctioned organizations that thoughtlessly tear us down. Getting in the door is hard enough—there are more than enough academic studies and overflowing prisons to back that up—without having to fight for respect when you actually enter the house.

But this letter is not meant to be a spit in the eye of the College. It is meant to be an honest and constructive critique to ensure that this university can live up to what it often claims to be—One Tribe, and also be a leader in higher education on issues of race going forward. All of the requests made by the student collective are valid—one oppressed group’s narrative is not singular, but rather a cacophony of voices rose together for acknowledgement. Perhaps the most important request is the first—to call racism what it is. It is a loaded word. It is a scary word. It is an uncomfortable. But sugar coating the issues will not solve them, and will ensure that racial issues are a thorn in the side of the College for much longer than they need to be.

At the end of the day, the administration must look at the bigger picture. America is diversifying, and rapidly. Already, institutions that we would like to consider our peers—most of the Ivies for instance—have lost a Caucasian/white majority in their student populations. As the years go on, the fact is more students of color will walk these hallowed grounds; will stand in academic buildings their forefathers built, but were denied access to, and will demand not just often self-selecting, and insular spaces for dialogue, but multiple seats at the table where people stop having conversations and start taking action. Address these issues now and the people in that future—those bright, overqualified students; those well off, successful alumni—will be more than willing to support this institution financially, physically, and politically. But continue neglecting these issues, continue sugar coating the truth, continue pandering to the current majority and neglecting the needs of the rest? William & Mary will be in deep water, and those waters span much deeper than endowments.

In closing, I say: stay relevant. Engage in deep listening with the people who are banging on the door, and genuinely take to heart what we suggest. Do not be afraid to be dynamic. If the College of William & Mary is to remain a first class, world renowned, influential educational institution then it must behave like one—and that behavior does not entail the present mindset of “business as usual”.

Sincerely,

Erica West
Class of 2017
To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Ebony Lambert. I am a junior here at the college, a psychology and Africana Studies double major with career goals and research interests that lie at the intersection of psychology and education. I hail from Petersburg, Virginia—an area that differs greatly from Williamsburg—though I was raised in the Southside of Richmond, Virginia. I am one of three children, and my parents were nothing if not devoted to us. My mother is a janitor, my father a warehouse manager.

I attended public schools from kindergarten through my senior year in high school, and I graduated from high school at the top of my class. I did not attend the best schools during my K-12 career, but I always worked to ensure that I was making the most of my education. I graduated from my high school with a 4.2 GPA. I am and have always been, for all intents and purposes, a good student. I have always worked hard, but I work especially hard here, and for the most part I've enjoyed receiving my education at this institution.

I say all of this to establish credibility, and an identity for myself. I want to make sure that my narrative speaks to you with a vibrancy that words on paper usually cannot convey—I was an English major, you see, in a past life.

Let me start my narrative by saying that, for the most part, I feel physically safe on campus. I am a young Black woman from Petersburg, Virginia—an area that differs greatly from Williamsburg—so I know what it means to be uncomfortable in my environment. I do not feel that way here, at least not in a physical sense.

But I want to make sure that it is understood that I do feel threatened in other ways. As I’ve said before, I am a young Black woman who was raised by good people in bad neighborhoods. I am a minority at this institution in a multitude of ways—and I knew this would be so even before I arrived on this campus in the fall of 2012. And even though I moved in with transfer papers ready to be signed and dated if I felt the slightest bit uncomfortable in my college environment, I never really expected to be reminded of my status as a minority and the stigma that carries virtually every day.

For me personally, the rose colored glasses through which I first viewed the college disappeared with time as my denial dissipated, the way many coping mechanisms do. I had not been here two months when several drunken White students yelled the word “nigger” out of the window of their SUV at my friends and I as we walked back from a party at 1:00am on a Saturday night. (I use plain speech here as time has not diminished my memory of the incident or the devaluation that was laced in the word—I do not believe that it is my place to do so here either.) It was not even a full week later when a friend of mine, another young Black woman, was called a “jiggaboo” while standing at the bus stop. But as pained as we were, we tried to ignore these incidents. Focused on our work, stuck together in our—profoundly diverse—friend group and ignored the outside world. But ignoring ignorance and bigotry does not make it any less likely to find you. My freshman year flew by in a blur of intense course loads, amazing friendships and memories, and microaggressions. It is hard, unbelievably so, to try to maintain a balanced, healthy life when you are constantly battling threats you do not understand, that almost always take you by surprise. Bigotry wears many faces, however, so I was constantly affronted by people I counted as friends. People I had dinner with everyday tried to pet my afro as if I were an animal, told me I was not really Black if I could not sing, sat in classes with me and argued
that slavery had, in fact, enhanced Black life in American society. But this was freshman year, I thought, and people would learn. Things would get better.

And in some ways they did. Sophomore year I came back more dedicated to my work and my, now very small, friend group in ways I’d never imagined I could be. I didn’t have time to notice a racial climate on campus—how could I do so when I was working so hard to prove that I could make it here, when I had fallen head over heels in love with my GPA? I had tunnel vision so narrow I could barely see my face staring back at me in the mirror—most often, all I could see were my dreams of the future.

But junior year I came back after doing a fellowship at a university in Ohio, and I was too tired to be in such a consuming relationship with my grades. My family was going through major changes, my mother was sick, I had two jobs, and all the hard work I’d done meant nothing to me in light of all the work that was to come. I was no longer the same person I had been either my freshman or sophomore years—I was an infinitely more intelligent, albeit more assertive, young Black woman who had worked hard all her life, watched her parents work hard all their lives, and now was too tired to believe in the goals she had set for herself in the beginning of her college career. And given that we started this school year off in the thick of the Mike Brown story, I was angry—but I tried not to bring that with me. Because the negative experiences I had had my freshman year here had been outweighed by the rosy glimpses I had gotten of campus during my sophomore year. And so I came back tired…but relatively peaceful. Complacent.

That is until the conversations started. I do not think White Americans, due to our country’s history, have ever really truly had to face the reality that their lives, their very existences, seem to hold a higher level of societal value than the lives of Black Americans. This is a truth, a reality that I and my two brothers and my five nieces and nephews grapple with every day. But if you have not had to face the animosity that stems from having your entire race be viewed as problems, as bothers, as headaches, well before they are humans well then, there are certain things you can’t really understand. You can sympathize, surely, but you will have great difficulty empathizing and people of color understand this, I think, on some level. What we do not understand is how quickly people jump to justify the rash actions of people who work to criminalize, degrade, and destroy the lives of Black and brown people on a daily basis.

So when people began to, rather loudly, discuss the fact that Mike Brown deserved to die lying in the street for 4 ½ hours, my patience began to dwindle. And it continued to do so when Tamar Rice, a 12 year old Black boy, was shot as well as when the Eric Garner decision was returned and White students just kept saying that criminals deserved whatever force was used against them, and that they didn’t understand why Black folk were being so sensitive when they gunned each other down in the streets anyway. Combined with social media posts that further devalued and poked fun at the Black existence (“Guess what’s not faster than a speeding bullet? Mike Brown.”), and professors commending me for how ‘articulate’ and professional they found me to be, the semester was a rough one, to the say the least. Every day my mother called me to see how I was doing. And every day I spoke to her of the intensity of my desire to withdraw, to transfer. I did not come to school, I often told her, to educate White students about how not to be racist, nor to plead with them to value me and my people. I came to be my best thing, as one of my favorite poets says, to learn and to value life and love in a way that only education can awaken in you. My mother, angel that she is, understood this. But she encouraged me to stay and finish out the little time I had left—it was a close thing. I honestly almost did not make it.

Fast forward to this semester. To racist parties and vandalism and a silent administration with a very, very vocal student body. We as students, all of us on both sides of this issue, are
tired. Political correctness is a very visceral pain in our ass and we, none of us, have the time or the energy to dance around societal, cultural, and political issues that exist well beyond campus limits. Discussions need to be had, mandated. Action must be taken, and swiftly. For we can no longer allow our complacency to prevent us from acknowledging the fact that, contrary to what some may believe on this campus, in this city, in our society, and in the world, BLACK LIVES MATTER. They have value. They are beautiful and they are meaningful and they are important and THEY HAVE VALUE. If you take nothing else from this letter, please hear me—a young Black female—saying that I will not rest until it is apparent that you and your administration and your students and your donors and your faculty and staff believe in the value of Black lives as well.

I share my story here, relay this information, to make sure that my reality, and that of the other Black Americans on this campus, is respected and validated. It is a constant struggle for students of color to find peace and inclusion on a predominantly White campus, but that struggle is made even more difficult when we are not even sure if the people with power on campus value our existence on a fundamental level, let alone our presence at their institution. I have seen the list of requests made by Taylor Mack and Brittney Harrington and I ask, as a concerned student of color, that you incorporate them into your current policies and procedures regarding racial issues. For when the rights of any student are violated, we must act as a community to ensure that justice is restored, and that the students know that they are valuable members of this community. To do anything less would not only deviant from the TWAMP norm, but also the value system and morals upon which—as many, both past and present, seem to have conveniently forget—this nation was founded.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best,
Ebony A. Lambert
Today Saipriya Rangavajhula died. She is the third suicide in the past year. The fourth since my sophomore year. She was Asian, just like me. Just like Steven Tran. When I first heard the news I was angry at our school for failing yet another student. One thing that always stood out to me during the mental health campaigns at our school was that they were so white. We really need to address the stigma across cultures because when 2/3 of the suicides are Asians there is an obvious problem there. There is a problem that isn’t addressed by the SA and AMP’s efforts towards stopping the stigma. I remember my experiences with the counseling office. (To begin with, they are severely understaffed. It’s ridiculous that we can’t get face-to-face help after 5 and that we can only schedule appointments two weeks away.) I felt so out of place and unwelcomed there. In Chinese culture, mental illness is not thing. My parents love me but they literally do not think mental illness is real. We’re told to work harder, to focus on our studies, and our messy lives will straighten out. Going to the counseling office felt like betraying my culture and admitting defeat. It felt like I whitewashed myself and as a punishment I became weak. I remember going to a meditation mindfulness session. I was in a room full of white people listening to a white guru tell me about my Buddhist culture. It felt ridiculous. I felt fake. As a person of color, when I see over and over again that the image thrown at me in relation to depression is a white person, it tricks me into believing that I am immune from it. The image of depression in my mind is a white girl, occasionally a white boy. It is never an Asian face. As a consequence, when there is a depressed Asian we don’t pick up the signs because we aren’t expecting it. This needs to change! We need to address the stigma across cultures. Depressed Asians, Blacks, Hispanics- they exist and we’re failing them. That’s why the first emotion I felt was anger. Now… I don’t know. My friends are crying and I want to be there for them. I’m not going to tell them these thoughts. They’re hurting more than me. But I just want you to know because you can do something about it. Fund the counselling center and make us talk about mental health. Make it so all the different groups on campus talk about mental health. We can’t stop the stigma until we change the image.

Dear Board of Visitors,

There is no good way to begin this letter. I have a lot of emotions that are all jumbled up in a mess. I’m a female Asian American student who’s been involved in the Asian culture clubs as well as AMP. As an Asian-American student, I don’t experience racism like the black, latino, or muslim students here do. For them it’s ignorant but loud and popular posts on yikyak (and facebook) aggressively denouncing their humanity. For me it was always a feeling in my gut that something felt wrong. I had white friends. I had Asian friends. But they were separate. I felt that with my white friends I could talk about music and we shared the same sense of humor and yet I still felt at home with my Asian circle even though I knew that besides our heritage, we had nothing in common. Balancing between the two was tiring. I know I deserve better than having to constantly choose between expressing my interests and embracing my cultural background especially since I had everything in high school. In high school, the non-Asians knew about the basics of our culture. They were eager to eat kimchi and hotpot with us. We Asians felt comfortable enough that we didn’t have to aggressively bunch up in our own safe space. I’ve since read up more about the history of race in the US but even to freshmen me it was very apparent that the racial climate at William and Mary was bad.

FRATERNITIES

It is obvious that there is something wrong in the fraternities and it’s very frustrating to see that Greek life seemingly gets away with everything. As a woman I still remember vividly
the Sigma Chi letter and the feather-tickle-on-the-wrist punishment that followed. The administration didn’t take away their house- the members themselves were too embarrassed to live in it. My best friend had boyfriends in various frats so I’ve heard stories. The vice president felt comfortable enough with his frat that he hit his girlfriend in front of all of them during a formal. Another official was suspended from the school because he raped multiple girls. For hazing, the pledges had to say “whale” every time a fat girl walked into the room. This year some rushes felt comfortable enough to call every woman who walked in the house a “slut.” I remember when my friend broke up with one of her fratboys, we went back to the party and I will always remember these words- “who is it?” “It’s just ----- and her fat friend.” It was late so I called my friend in California and cried to her on the phone for 4 hours. The sun came up and then I called my mom and cried on the phone for another 2 hours. I remember two weeks later at an AMP event where I was getting one of the free snacks another fratboy from a completely different frat looks at me and asks, “Oh is that all? Or are you going to eat more?” I had just spent the summer losing my freshman 15 and I was feeling pretty good about myself. I had never in my whole 20 years of living been flat out called fat. The last person to say I was chubby was a 14 year old when I was 14 years old. And here I was, a semester after the Sigma Chi emails, after the rape investigations, crying to my mother because although I knew in my head that I was so much more than solely my body, I felt that I was a nameless accessory and the only way I could receive worth was to be skinny and thus fuckable. This is unrelated to race, yet completely related to the school climate. There is a group on campus that fundamentally does not care for the humanity of others. After that disgusting letter the school gave them a “tsk tsk, child”. Of course they learn nothing. Of course they’re going to think that they can get away with anything. Of course they’re going to throw racist parties. They don’t think women are fully people. Of course they don’t think Blacks and Asians are fully people.

When I first heard about the parties, I felt like it was sort of my duty to spread the information to the Asians. Interestingly though, none of them were surprised. Apparently PiKA has been throwing ‘Vietnam’ parties for a while. I also remember another frat hosting a Communist themed mixer, which can go many directions. It’s interesting how that party managed to fly under the radar without too much of a backlash. I think it’s because of the irony that on the same weekend of the parties, AMP was screening Dear White People, a movie that describes what happens when a group at a predominately white institution hosted a racist party. A lot of students walked out of that movie feeling good that at least our school wasn’t bad enough for that to happen until the next morning when news about our very own racist party spreads.

I feel really bad for the men of color in fraternities. Some seem to think that if they aggressively hate everyone else that it would make them whiter. Some are very insecure. A lot are very cool. A lot aren’t actually very involved in their fraternity anymore. I know a Chinese international student. Let’s name him Lenny. Well, everyone in the frat calls him Renny. At this point he goes by Renny on his Instagram handle. I always felt like it was so heinous since English is his THIRD language and he speaks it flawlessly and yet this antiquated mal-informed pre-WW2 Japanese/Chinese confused “Oh Asians can’t tell their R’s from their L’s” joke persists. There was once a fratboy who tried the same shenanigans with me. My friends were there but said nothing. How can you say nothing to that blatant racism? I ended up writing a two-page “letter” about it in my creative writing class. I know three men of color that think black women are dirty and ugly and that the only girls that anyone should date are white girls. I know a few guys that, like freshman me, have a group of Asian friends and a group of White friends.
AMP

AMP itself is not bad. However, it is evident in looking at the respective budgets for AMP and SA and CSD that our administration really does not care for the cultural clubs. Being on both a culture club and AMP, I know that there is tension between the two organizations. It’s a very one-sided conflict. AMP is a giant that blindly and thoughtlessly steps over the rest of the clubs. They get the best time-slot for reserving rooms for events. They ferociously book all of Sadler every other weekend. AMP literally competes with itself when it comes to events. The remaining cultural organizations now have to fight over each other for the open slot in commonwealth for their only cultural event of the semester. AMP is the reason SASA had to host expressions on a Thursday this year. Seniors couldn’t have their parents watch their last show ever because AMP reserved commonwealth for every other Friday and Saturday.

They also get significantly more money than the cultural organizations. I remember SASA makes all its members pay $12 and sold tickets for $12 in order to pay for the catering to their sole event of the semester. Meanwhile, AMP spends a few thousand dollars on passport prizes for each event. The next AMP event we’re planning has $500 sectioned off for prizes alone. I understand the need for drinking alternative events, but it’s almost insulting to say that we care this little about cultural diversity. The CSD has flaws. It’s understaffed and underfunded. Then again, it feels like the CSD doesn’t fit into the school’s values until it’s sent to handle some scandal. When cultural showcases cost money, it’s difficult to encourage people outside of that culture to participate. Dancing and food are the easiest ways to start learning more about another person’s culture. When there’s a monetary deterrent to attending the most basic, shallow, easily accessible part of someone’s culture, how can we as a greater WM community be expected to come together for anything deeper?

OTHER THINGS

I guess there are other things here and there. In the Computer Science department it is always awkward how much hate the Chinese Computer Science professors get. We know they’re only getting criticized for their accents. However, the professor with the thick German accent and the professor with the thick Greek accent gets none of this criticism. The Chinese students all recognize the racism but we don’t talk about it with the other students.

I also remember going to the Road to Richmond interest meeting the day after the racist parties where President Reveley was talking about how a lot of the departments were getting moved out. He started listing all the departments in the building and saying whether or not they were getting moved. He forgot the last two. They were Africana studies and Gender Sexuality Women’s Studies. It’s hard to feel like the administration cares about us sometimes.

REQUESTS-

Something needs to be done about the frats. In order to rush there needs to be some sort of workshop on treating people like people. There needs to be yearly workshops to refresh them on treating people like people. They need to be more strictly monitored. They also need to actually be punished when things like this happen.

-Apologize for those parties
-Fund the CSD (center for student diversity)
-Fund the cultural clubs
-Set up some system to allow free cultural events with free food to encourage people to learn more about other people at the university.
- Hire professors that come from more diverse backgrounds. Hire more Asian-American professors.
- Create an Asian American studies major to create an institutional space to learn about issues facing Asian-Americans. The course and teachers are already set up. This literally just needs to become a department.
- Hire more staff for the counseling center. Hire a more diverse staff.
- Work with Asian American student leaders to try to address the issue of mental health in our community.

Thanks for your time.
Board of Visitors:

Here at William and Mary we have several mottos including "One Tribe, One Family" and "Those who come here belong here" As a member of the William and Mary community, I have grown to put my faith in these mottos truly feeling as though I've found a home away from home. Unfortunately, my perception of the William and Mary community was tarnished due to recent racist actions by William and Mary students. I am writing this letter to call attention to these inappropriate actions and to request that there be consequences to prevent discriminatory and offensive acts from happening in our community in the future. Additionally, I am asking that, after being made aware of racist events on campus, the administration respond to these campus events in a timely manner. I sincerely hope that action can be taken to ensure that members of the community do not feel unrightfully alienated and to uphold our value in community.

Thank you,

Ashley Jones
President Reveley,

I came to this institution to learn and I continue to be here for that purpose. As per the liberal arts model, I believe in a holistic education. This means more than fulfilling GERs. It means that we, as students, learn everywhere we go and with everything we do. What are we meant to learn from the administration’s inaction? It teaches us only that racist actions and attitudes are permissible.

Ever since the article addressing Greek parties was published, I have been hearing solipsistic and ignorant comments across campus. Ranging from “what’s the big deal?” to “now we can’t throw a Mexican party because it’s ‘racist’”, these comments signal the deep lack of understanding and compassion permeating our campus.

The administration must lead by example. Polite public statements are not enough. Policies regarding consequences for racist behavior must be formulated and strictly enforced. Moreover, addressing the issue of ignorance with obligatory programming is essential.

As an ally for and a member of a number of underprivileged groups, I am constantly struggling to be seen by the school and my peers. Just as an example, during my freshman year, my cultural identity was met with “I didn’t know Latinas were smart enough to get into William & Mary”. While activism and self-advocacy has been extremely valuable to me, I am not here primarily to teach, but to learn. The administration is responsible for providing a welcoming educational space. To achieve this, you must teach by example.

Juliana Santanna, Class of 2017
To The Administration of the College of William and Mary:

I am a black female student of the Class of 2018 at the College. While I am honored and appreciate the education that my dream college is providing for me, I cannot neglect the racial climate that is accustomed to the College. There has been no instance where I’ve encountered direct racism, however I am a firm believer in the phrase, “What’s done in the dark comes to the light.” By this, I am referring to comments posted on the app known as Yik Yak. This app is for, but not limited to, college and university students, and is only accessible to academic institutions by geographic location; thus William and Mary students would be the main contributors to the William and Mary page on the app because they are the highest population on the main geographic campus. On Yik Yak, anyone within close parameters of the College can post anonymously about whatever they’d like.

Dating back to Thursday, December 4th, 2014 at 9 p.m., a DIE-IN was organized through student initiative to spread awareness about police brutality and racial injustices following the highly anticipated verdict on the Michael Brown case. This DIE-IN was a form of peaceful protesting, in which William and Mary students (of all colors) were invited to march into the Earl Gregg Swem Library’s first floor and lay on the ground silently. The 4.5 minutes that students laid on the ground represented the 4.5 hours that Michael Brown’s body laid on the ground after he was murdered. Directly after the DIE-IN took place, Yik Yak was literally booming with activity. There were many comments that referred to the protestors as “stupid” and “unintelligent” because they felt that evidence was the ruling factor in the case and that race played no part in the death of Michael Brown.

Referring back to the phrase I quoted earlier, what hurt me the most in this scenario was initially shocking. The very fact that I had never felt direct racism on campus made me realize that I was being naive to what was right in front of me -- microaggression. My fellow peers utilized a mask through Yik Yak to hide behind and express their true feelings; all of which enraged me and most of all filled me with despondency. A struggle of mine after seeing these harsh and racist comments that degraded the black community, was understanding the other side of the spectrum. I asked myself over and over again, “Why do people still think this way?” Why do people really believe that I am incapable of what they can achieve, and that the only manner of my acceptance into a prestigious institution was due to a color slate that needed to be filled? In times like these, emotions run vigorously and all we can do is try to educate and spread our feelings rationally with responding to these comments. However, after you see a splurge of racism on your college’s feeding page, the easiest way to disconnect is to exit the app and move on in a desensitized manner because it’s nothing new. There has always been racism, and there will always be racism. I just ask for action and support so that people understand that racism is not tolerable anymore.
On December 4th I realized that this world was not as progressive in the way I had imagined it to be. The emphasis on cultural diversity that once attracted me to the College of William and Mary was present, but not thoroughly appreciated by all. It’s funny how these events occur and can momentarily make us feel hopeless, which is something no human being should have to suffer through. I wish that my peers of white race and privilege could truly understand the struggle of living a double-conscious life. I’ve been raised with the lesson that being exceptional is my only option for success as a black woman. I have to work twice as hard to get half of what is given by society to people with the white privilege. I hope that the administration of William and Mary reacts more quickly to instances of racial controversy on campus, because when this does not take place it sends out a message to the student body that talking about racism is not important. I can see in the light and very clearly that race is a recurring issue that is hidden in the dark and consistently neglected.

Sincerely,

DeLauren Davis

DeLauren Davis
Class of 2018
The College of William and Mary
To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Keaun Barrett, a junior at the college and a Government major. My experience at the College of William & Mary has been one with many ups and downs. I love the institution, but from time to time have experienced micro aggressions and subtle instances of racially motivated acts. It is my duty as an African American male on this historic campus to make those instances known and voice my concerns of racial intolerance.

During my freshman year, a couple of my friends and I were walking at night back to our dorms. A white truck drove by us and yelled the word, “Niggas!” We were all shocked and utterly disrespected by the blatant act of racism on the campus we call home. The intensity of the word and the history the word carries with it were evident at that moment and remains to this day.

More recently I have been subject to subtle acts of racism when questioned about my work ethic and achievements at the college. I work at a Starbucks off campus and time and time again I get expressions of disbelief when I say I attend William & Mary. My colleagues come to this Starbucks often including some of my professors. A Caucasian female student responded with, “Congratulations,” when I told her I was currently attending William & Mary. She is a peer of mine at the College so why was such a response warranted? I perceived it as a failure to acknowledge my own accomplishments at the College and the obstacles I had to bypass to get there. Her facial expression told a story of shock and disbelief, which is often the response I get from others that do not know me. I have even been asked if I was jokingly, “slave labor” by a professor because of my work ethic at Starbucks. Have then been asked why I did not get a “real job” like my fellow colleagues during the summer. My work ethic to support and aid my family is no laughing matter and it was perceived as such during these inquiries. These are daily issues that I must face as a man of color and of a lower socioeconomic status than most of my peers. This does not mean that I want those issues to be rubbed in my face by members of my college community.

As a strong presence in the African American community on campus, I want as my peers do to be understood and acknowledged as like human beings with a common goal. This is not a difficult request to have or strive toward. I hope that change is on the horizon for William & Mary, because I would hate to see it let racially motivated stigmas and actions deter more people of color from attending.

Thank you,
Keaun Barrett
I am proud to call myself Mixed. As the son of an immigrant father from Morocco, I spent a large portion of my childhood assimilating into American culture. At first, my assimilation was out of necessity— it’s hard to make friends at Kindergarten when you’re speaking a jumble of English, French, and Arabic. But as I grew older, assimilation became about survival. I grew up in a country consumed with post-9/11 Islamophobia, and my tan skin, curly hair, and Arab middle name marked me as a target. I saw my father, an accomplished chef and well-known supporter of the DC area Moroccan community, get cursed at, demoted at work, and harassed by law enforcement and citizens alike. His crime? He dared to coexist in the same space.

Entering college, I came to understand how baffling I would be for many of my classmates. I didn't fit neatly into the social construct that is race; therefore, I was treated as a threat, a challenge, or a mysterious anomaly to be dissected, piece-by-piece, tearing apart the inherent ambiguity that comes with being Mixed. I may have expected these reactions, but that certainly didn’t make them any easier.

When discussing my experience with racism at W&M, there are countless stories I could share. I could talk about the hundreds of introductions that were followed up with the question “So, where are you FROM?” They would often get angry if I answered “NoVA,” as if I owed them an explanation for my perceived otherness. “No, where are you REALLY from?” I could talk about the worried glances that were thrown my way when I forgot to shave. I could discuss the casual use of racial slurs I often overheard on my way to class. While I wish these were examples of isolated incidents, these were daily occurrences.

Though a couple years have passed, one such experience remains particularly vivid in my mind. My professor and I were chatting after class at the Mason School of Business. It was the end of the semester, and I had developed a friendly rapport with him. During the conversation, I mentioned briefly my heritage and how I didn’t identify as white. He stopped me, looked me up and down, and with a disapproving look on his face he told me, “You need to stop saying that. You’re white, look at you.” This educated white middle-aged male professor at a prestigious university just decided he knew who I was, where I came from, what I felt, and what I was allowed to be in one glance and two short statements. I wanted to scream at him. I wanted to sit him down and explain intersectionality and passing privilege, systematic racism and how I benefit from his perception of my race. I wanted to outline in detail the times when I wasn’t perceived as white, the anxiety and fear that come from never knowing how others will perceive you. I wanted him to experience being the Other for once.

Luckily, I learned a few things at W&M. The most important thing I learned was that I don’t need to justify my existence as a Mixed person to anybody. It has never been and never will be my responsibility to do so. His comments and actions speak to his ignorance, not the validity of my lived experiences— and certainly not the authenticity of my identity. So I simply smiled, shook my head, and said, “Goodbye, professor.”

Adam Labriny, 2013
Letter of Testimony

To whom it may concern:

This letter is to attest to direct racial prejudice and micro aggressions I have seen on this historic campus. It is already sad enough that events of this semester and last, such as 7th Grade Sketch Comedy’s “Tigger’s in Paris,” Sigma Pi and Kappa Alpha Theta’s “Gangsters and Golfers” mixer, and racist responses following #BlackLivesMatter events on campus have even occurred. However, these large events are not the only signs and warning flags of racism in the college community. I have a personal experience that occurred only this past weekend and it reminded me of how many smaller scale things go on that no one really hears about. This past Saturday evening, I was in the elevator of my dorm, Jamestown North, with my boyfriend, who is also an African American, and we were traveling up to my third floor dorm room. When we get to the third floor and the door opens, there is a group of Asian descent people, approximately 5 males and 1 female. Immediately one of the gentleman storms away in disgust, saying, “Oh no! I am not getting on there with them, not those people”. I froze in shock trying to grasp what I just heard with my own two ears. Then, the only female of group shouts after the frustrated gentleman once my boyfriend and I exit the elevator, “Hey “Bob” look, they are getting off, we do not have be close to them, come back please”. “Bob” then runs past us and says “oh okay, good!” and proceeds to board the elevator. Needless to say, I was quite frustrated and astonished. I never had the thought in my mind being the year of 2015 that someone would refuse to ride the same elevator as I or anyone who looks like me.

I expected a much better sense of community when I chose to get my higher education at William and Mary and now am fairly disappointed. Because I do not want to spend any more time on this problem, I am voicing my opinion now so that actions can start to take place with the right people involved.

Candidly, Vanessa Gray
For some black students, just moments after stepping onto the brick walkways of The College, they are inundated with an overwhelming sense of otherness and invisibility. For others, they bear the burden of being one of a hand full of black students in their classroom unwillingly chosen to be the spokesperson of an entire race. In order for W&M to fulfill its ideals we have work to do.

On November 17, 2006 the William and Mary Board of Visitors approved a statement of diversity. “We are committed to establishing justice.” Is justice admitting underrepresented students without having the infrastructure to ensure their success and timely graduation? As a student I have seen many of my black peers leave. I never knew why so many left, but as an alumnus I would like to see The College enhance the resources and support systems to increase retention and graduation rates of black students. It is not enough to solely provide access to a certain number or percentage of a population. Admission to The College must be complemented with proper resources and equal access to those resources.

“The College of William & Mary strives to be a place where people of all backgrounds feel at home[.]” There has been countless incidents where students are moved to rally for birth rights, then they are terrorized in their HOME for doing. The College must provide all students with adequate diversity and cultural competence training. An online training should be required for class registration each semester for students. For clubs/organizations every member must attend a diversity/ cultural competence training before the organization can hold an event. In addition, before a student volunteers in the community the student should also undergo this training. In addition, volunteering students should also be required to have a community studies training to better understand the deep history/memory between The College and surrounding community before entering it to serve.

“[W]here diversity is actively embraced [.]” Often The College proudly displays “the most diverse class yet” in the media, however the percentage of black faculty/staff in each department does not mirror the student body’s diversity. In order to create an authentic environment of inclusiveness at The College of William and Mary we must value diversity. For me this means ensuring that black faculty appointment within various departments is increased. It is important for students to see their truth reflected in their faculty. I am truly blessed to have encountered many phenomenal professors, mentors, and friends during my time at William and Mary. I hope that the aforementioned recommendations can enhance the experiences of new generations of students to come.

Kindest Regards,
J Carter
Class of 2012

Hello,

My name is Mahdi Blaine and I am the President of the Middle Eastern Student Association and the Social Chair of the Muslim Student Association. As a president of a cultural club, I feel that we have a lot of disadvantages compared to larger organizations such as AMP. SD/cultural clubs get very little funding in comparison to AMP and SA & AMP gets priority in booking rooms, which makes it hard to believe that the school makes cultural diversity a priority. Most cultural clubs have showcases that take place in commonwealth auditorium in Sadler and it is a pain to schedule them due various double booking being done by AMP. Personally I feel that when it comes to these showcases, they should be sponsored by the Sadler Center or CSD.

I also feel diversity at this school is very watered down by many people. I have heard on multiple occasions that diversity is more than race and ethnicity. While I totally agree with this, people then say diversity means like a person's favorite ice cream or their favorite pizza toppings. I think that is very disrespectful and dumbing down of what diversity actually means.

As cultural clubs, we like to complain about how we are the victims to this bias system, but honestly there is a lot we need to work on too. There is barely a sense of community among cultural clubs and people barely go to one another's events. We also have many problems when it comes to having actual substantial events that address issues in the regions or cultures that these clubs claim to represent. While there are many problems that are external, we need to remember that there are internal problems with cultural clubs.

Best,
Mahdi Blaine
To the College of William and Mary Community Members:

First and foremost, racism is still an issue that plagues this campus. Whether it is in the form of party themes, conversation, or dirty looks. It is still present and it still hurts. The students of William and Mary talk heavily about how diverse and welcoming they are and yet, myself as well as others have never once felt welcome at this institution. Something needs to change.

The letter that this is attached to outlines a list of solutions that could put William and Mary on the path of acceptance, respect, and racial progress amongst the students. It is up to you, The Administration, to heed these solutions and bring them into fruition because the students can only do so much.

As one of the African American students on this campus, I have faced a number of trials because of my skin tone. In my freshmen year, I was stopped by the police and questioned because I “fit the profile”. I had the misfortune to “attend” a “brown bag” party early in my college career. A “brown bag” party means that if your skin is darker than the bag you aren’t allowed inside. One time, while going to order food at one of the tribe square restaurants the owner told me, “You need to go stand in the colored line,” he claimed to have been joking, but it wasn’t a joke to me. This is unacceptable. I chose to come to William and Mary because of how welcoming and understanding the students appeared to be at the time.

I implore you, The Administration, to seriously look at the solutions proposed. When you make your decision, I hope you look to these letters for guidance.

Truly,

CS
February 3, 2015

President Taylor Reveley
Board of Visitors
The College of William and Mary
Williamsburg, Virginia 23188

Dear President Reveley and Board of Visitors,

The College of William and Mary is included on the short list of prestigious universities in our country. Despite the rigorous educational standards that are well respected by educators, employers and the general society, there is a notable undercurrent of racism and cultural insensitivity that is permitted within the confines of the College. As a leading educational institution, it is imperative that the College institute a zero tolerance policy regarding incidences of racism to secure the safety of the student body, and create an environment of accountability for those that wish to act in a racist manner.

Although the College has governed student behavior through its “self-determination” and “honor code” policies, discrimination cannot be governed or eradicated in this manner; thus, instituting a zero tolerance policy means treating incidences of racism in the same way that the College addresses under age drinking and other student conduct violations. In these cases, the Dean of Student Conduct is notified and mandatory meetings between the student and the administration are required. These solutions are tailored to the specific occurrence. This stronger policy of accountability can strengthen the code of student conduct, thereby sending a clear message that racist behavior or cultural insensitivity activities will not be tolerated at the College.

As an alumni with direct familial ties to several other alumni and a parent of a senior at the College, I am closely aware of many incidents of racism that have involved various Greek organizations on the campus during my tenure and during the years that my child has been a student. Some recent events that have raised concern include: the 7th Grade Sketch Comedy’s “Tigger’s in Paris”, “Sigma Pi and Kappa Alpha Theta’s “Gangsters and Golfers” mixer; and racist responses that followed the BlackLivesMatter event. I am also aware of how the College handled an incident in 2014 involving my child when it was reported that an unknown student wrote a racial epithet twice on their dormitory bulletin board. Despite the passage of almost three decades, these occurrences are still prevalent on campus and the official response appears to be the same.

Until recently, I have remained silent, hoping that my alma mater would see the value of a diverse student body. The College needs to inform the student body that they will not condone student participation and engagement with racist or culturally insensitive parties/events that occur both on campus and off campus. In addition to the creation of stronger policies, the College should consider engaging in mandatory education and programs to change the culture of
the campus body to ensure that all students feel welcomed and safe that are not optional when instances of racism occur at the College.

This issue goes beyond student safety. For the College now has the possibility of being labeled as a racially insensitive institution, which threatens its reputation and recruitment efforts. There is great risk to the College should the administration not develop a more structured response to racist acts committed by students or campus organizations. The recent incidents of racism/cultural insensitivity are not isolated. They were present over three decades ago and they remain the same because organizations and students continue to think it is acceptable behavior. Students suffer few consequences, if any, either socially, personally, or institutionally. Behavior can be altered by new policies but it cannot be very effective without a shift in mindset and accountability. Therefore, College administrative members must work to change their own mindsets of racism and use intentional, correct language with the student body and the offender when instances of both overt and covert racism occur on or off campus.

Many peer Colleges have been called to similar action and rather than wait for a Title IX suit, they have proactively created policies and formed nurturing environments that demonstrate a commitment to protecting the diverse student body. The fact that these racist and culturally insensitive activities are still present at William and Mary is troubling and should be at the top of any agenda going forward.

I am calling on the Board of Visitors to guide all administrators at the College of William and Mary toward a more stringent discrimination policy that protects marginalized students and does not undermine their emotional or physical state. Each student of diversity deserves to live safely within the campus community.

If the College intends on increasing its diversity, the College must first create the appropriate environment and implement the necessary resources for its growing diverse population. Reputational risk to the College is looming in the background if stronger action is not taken by this administration. It is expected by census data that the demographics of our population will drastically change by 2050. With the expected increase of diversity in our national population, William and Mary will have the opportunity to be the College of choice, but may fall short based on its policies that directly impact students of diversity.

As a community, we should remember that students of diversity do not have to enroll at our institution; there are other colleges that can create a more inviting diverse student experience.

As we honor Black history month, the College should be reminded of its troubled history as it relates to diversity and use this moment to make systemic changes in policy. The time to act is now. I hope that the College will live up to its long-standing code of integrity and honor. On behalf of so many students that hold a degree from William and Mary, we are counting on you to act with courage and take the lead in changing the mindset of misguided students. We have racism in our country but it would be wonderful if, as the second oldest College in the country, we can lead the direction for our future society. This means moving away merely from tolerating differences but making the cultural shift of embracing such difference.
I look forward to hearing more on the steps that the College plans to take to address these issues.

Sincerely,

Cheryle Mack  
5139 Amberly Road  
Virginia Beach, VA 23462
Dear President Reveley and Board of Visitors:

I was sad to read in the Flat Hat that students are still showing such an overt lack of sensitivity when it comes to race and stereotyping at William and Mary. In this case, it deals with Fraternal organizations choosing the themes of their parties. I am Class of 1990, and it seems that racial sensitivity has not improved much in 25 years. Although the parties were held off campus and perhaps William and Mary students participating in these events don't see a victim, but the mere fact that stereotyping and pejorative traditions are continuing, makes everyone involved a victim. Perhaps the Pan-Hellenic Council should hold a forum on stereotyping and diversity to emphasize the importance of an anti-racial culture. It is not enough not to be racist; we must speak out when others are participating in what can be construed as racist behavior to create a more empathetic environment, free of judgement and assumptions. How will others view our College after reading this article? As an educator and facilitator of Candid Conversations about Race in my school district, how can I feel comfortable encouraging my students to attend William and Mary? Please consider taking action in this matter. Thank you in advance for your time.

Tina Carter Garfield
Spanish Teacher
Princess Anne High School
February 1, 2015

The Board of Visitors and Administration
The College of William and Mary

To Whom It May Concern:

Few will dispute that the experiences one endures, shapes the person we become. Many too would agree that we send our teens to college with high hopes for the transition into adulthood that will inevitably take place. As a 1996 graduate of The College, and parent of a junior in high school soon to attend college, I am disturbed by the recent racial events at William and Mary, and am in full support of policy implementation to be designed that makes sure racial incidents are discouraged and admonished swiftly.

Now, far removed from my days on campus, I look back at my college experience appreciating the academic rigor that propelled me into my career, but also dissatisfied with the social life I experienced during my four years. I have no horror stories to report, just a lingering feeling of not being part of the social life on campus. It was August 1992 and I, an African-American girl from NY arrived at William and Mary. For me, it was culture shock - the South, but also the separation I observed and experienced of two separate worlds – the “Black” students and the “White” students. I felt strongly in the minority, and no effort was made to include me. That was two decades ago, a reminder of how things were, or are?

Please understand that there is a difference between excluding people based on race, and not being inclusive. I would argue that the latter was and is a problem at William and Mary. I think it’s fair to say that students of color don’t feel included with the mainstream campus. All the more reason they would be offended by racial stereotyped theme parties that are attended by or given by students at the school.

In response to the recent events on campus, I think it prudent and simply the right thing to do to implement a no tolerance policy for actions that are racially motivated. Secondly, it is about time that large efforts are made to include and foster relationships with minority students on campus.

With William and Mary’s long history, we should continue to blaze a trail in education and producing some of the best young adults in the country. That can’t be done if a blind eye is turned towards any discriminatory or racially motivated behavior. We must take two steps forward, not backwards.

Sincerely,

Tracee Jones
Graduate 1996
Dear William & Mary Board of Visitors and Administration,

I am writing to you to address the issue of race at the College of William & Mary. To be clear – I am white, so I have not experienced racism directed towards me. However, I have many friends of many different ethnicities, and so have heard about instances of racism being directed towards them, from the general public in Williamsburg and William & Mary to students and faculty of William & Mary. This includes things like the n word being shouted at some of my black friends through car windows, being profiled by police and being called things such as “brown boy”, to simply feeling treated as an Other and unwelcomed.

I am disappointed in the administration’s response to events such as mixers with themes that promoted the use of racial stereotypes and where costumes that evoked racial stereotypes occurred. The administration responded nearly a week after the events occurred. While I understand that it takes time to investigate and respond to such matters, the administration being quiet when events such as these occurs does no one any favors. Even if the administration is working on investigating such events behind closed doors, it matters that the administration says something immediately after such events occur.

Most of the responses to such events have included encouraging dialog and engaging with each other in a civil manner, yet incidents such as these continue to occur. I’ve seen many great events, especially ones occurring this January, surrounding the issue of race that have encouraged dialog and I hope to see those continued. However, I feel that many people who participate in events like these racist mixers are not people who go to these events because they don’t care. I would like to see more effort by the administrator to involve students who do not usually attend such events and dialogs to get involved. I would like to see a diversity requirement added to the curriculum and have multiple opportunities available for students to engage in diversity in a way that they normally wouldn’t.

Additionally, I am disappointed by the lack of racial diversity of the faculty of William & Mary. According to statistics published in the Flat Hat some time ago, 80% of William & Mary professors are white. I would like to see the same efforts directed at diversifying our student population directed towards our faculty. Professors of various ethnicities, nationalities, sexual orientations and gender identities all have different experiences and perspectives that are needed in William & Mary’s academic environment.

Finally, I would like to see that William & Mary is as invested in the lives of its diverse students as they are using diversity as a marketing device. All of William & Mary’s students matter, and minority and diverse students deserve to have their voices heard and their lives respected in this institution.

Sincerely,
Noella Handley, Class of 2016
Dear Board of Visitors,

My name is Jessica Ehrhardt and I am currently a senior here at the College. I am writing to voice my concerns with recent events on campus and to explain my own personal experience related to racial insensitivity on campus.

In response to recent racially triggering events on campus, I cannot emphasize how disappointed I am by the insensitivity of students who create and attend these events and how offended I am by the lack of response by administration. This behavior by students is unacceptable and should have consequences. I have yet to comprehend why issues of racism and discrimination keep occurring and I have right to expect that the administration has responsibility to change this.

In my time at the college, I have experienced multiple accounts of racism, insensitivity, and division. Incidents have occurred in classroom, Greek Life, and different social settings. From these experiences, I have never been more aware and focused on my race. As a student from a diverse background, I am proud of everything that makes me a unique individual. However, there have been very few organization and groups here on campus that have positively supported me. I am very thankful for having a source like the Center for Student Diversity, who has students and staff that advocate and care to make sure students like me are heard and supported.

As a William and Mary Scholar, the college has extended to me an academic award that is specific for students who are members of underrepresented groups who would contribute to campus diversity. In being highlighted as a scholar, I expected that my race, culture, and ethnic background would not get in the way of my academic and social experiences here on campus. However, for almost four academic years of my life, I never questioned my intelligence more based on my experiences of discrimination from student and the discouragement from certain faculty in my academic setting.

From my experiences of discrimination here on campus, I cannot help to think, even as a second semester senior, whether I made the right choice coming to this college. I do believe that William and Mary has given me experiences that have changed my life and is a good school, however, we have a long way to go with having our full population to understand and have respect for students of different cultural, ethnic, sexual orientation, and racial backgrounds. Students should not have to think about unchangeable aspects of who there are when they are trying to advance themselves in earning an education.

I think there needs to be a larger response and effort for our campus to have awareness of different backgrounds. Each person has their own unique, diverse background that they bring to the table. We should embrace each individual for who they are, we should be exciting to learn about different backgrounds, and we should be compliant.

The college prides itself on acceptance and understanding. However, in the context of race and diversity, the overall population falls short. I hope you take the concerns of students on campus who are fighting for these issue as a priority. These concerns are serious and important, and deserve to have your full attention and response.

Thank you for time,

Jessica Ehrhardt
To Whom it May Concern
As I am sure the administration is already aware, a group of William and Mary students has come together to raise awareness about racism on and around campus and to call our community to action. It is my understanding that this group hopes to work together with both W&M administration and the Board of Visitors to create concrete plans and observable steps in combatting everyday microaggressions as well as broader cases of blatant and institutional racism. I am writing this letter to show my support of this student collective and its goals. I believe college administrators have the responsibility and the power to listen to, believe, and help their students when they express concerns, as we are now.

In the past several months, we have witnessed problematic statements on W&M social media, backlash to the protests and shows of support for Michael Brown, personal online attacks of black students, and racist party themes whose criticism elicited even more harsh responses and misunderstanding from many students. I believe the College can take more direct stands against racism of these types in several forms:

1. Attempt to raise awareness in the general student body about the racial history of William and Mary, including the College’s deep ties to slavery. While The Lemon Project works to educate students on our college’s history with racism and slavery, only individuals who already have some knowledge will attend their events. A more wholesome education should be directed at the rest of the student body and made more widely accessible. One way to start is by holding a vigil for the slaves who were associated with William and Mary to show respect and acknowledgement.

2. Create mandatory workshops and trainings on cultural sensitivity and respecting diversity for members of Greek life, sports clubs, and other campus affiliated student groups.

3. Publicly acknowledge events on campus in a timely manner, such as the Sigma Pi and Kappa Alpha Theta mixer as racist and unacceptable. As long as the College continues to make passive and broad statements about problematic events (i.e. the extremely sexist Sigma Chi email in Spring 2014), those problematic ideologies will continue to proliferate, create discomfort, and take root in the very fabric of our community.

I have personally witnessed blatant racism on our campus, from a group of students verbally attacking another student solely for their race, to students anonymously making jokes about the tear-gassing of black individuals during protests. Racism is a problem. Administrators of William and Mary have much on their plates, but this cannot be ignored. I ask that you take our concerns seriously and strive to take steps away from what will hopefully someday be our racist past.

Signed,
Rachel Cook, a concerned student
Dear College of William & Mary Administrators and Board of Visitors,

I am a recent alumna of the College, and have been disheartened by recent events highlighting our campus’s problematic racial climate, and by the lack of a robust response to these events by William & Mary officials. I join many current students and fellow alumni in urging William & Mary administrators to explicitly acknowledge acts of racism on campus, to hold the students at fault responsible for their actions, and to make a commitment to promoting racial justice and diversity on campus.

For example, last semester’s #BlackLivesMatter protest received backlash from the community, and already this semester several racially problematic events were held by campus organizations. It is the responsibility of the administration to acknowledge these events and form a response to these and other instances of racism on campus. In addition to responding promptly to instances of racism, William & Mary can make a commitment to racial justice and inclusivity by establishing workshops and dialogues related to racial issues for the campus community, by requiring trainings on inclusivity for student organizations, and by making a commitment to increasing the diversity of its faculty.

It is important for William & Mary to increase trainings and dialogue around racial issues both because of its current racial climate, and because of its history. We are a university located in the middle of a town that celebrates our colonial history while glossing over the violence of slavery. Our college was built by enslaved Black people and actively attempted to Anglicize Native children, and yet we keep this history quiet while celebrating the life of a slave owner and touting him as a beacon of progressive education. In a similar fashion the College holds the requisite diversity sessions during orientation as if checking a box, while not engaging with issues of explicit and implicit racism on its campus.

We talk a lot about the importance of diversity on our campus, but to what extent has this ideal been realized? I double majored at William & Mary, and yet both my departments were composed entirely of white faculty members. In fact, I only had one class taught by a non-white faculty member throughout my education. As the above letter points out, 80% of William & Mary faculty are white. While the spaces I passed through as a white student at William & Mary were welcoming to me, I cannot help but wonder whether certain sectors of the College – and maybe even the majority of it – feel like a hostile and unwelcome environment for Black students. The recent events on campus and the way they have impacted my Black friends at William & Mary seem to prove this theory.

Even when explicitly racist events are not happening on campus, there is still a certain norm established on our campus – a norm that made a former professor in my freshman year feel secure standing in front of our class and telling a story about how she feels uncomfortable when an ‘ethnic looking’ person comes to her door, and even felt secure punctuating that story with a ‘you know what I’m saying’ directed at the class. William & Mary may not have official policies that actively exclude and disrespect Black students, but it still manages to foster an environment where they do not feel welcome and where people feel comfortable expressing racist thoughts and ideas. By not actively acknowledging our legacy and our continued struggles with race, and by sweeping recent events under the rug, William & Mary allows this climate to flourish.
I learned a lot about racial injustice during my time at William & Mary, but none of this learning occurred in the classroom or in official college sessions. I learned it from my friends, from social action groups, and from personal reading. In my opinion, William & Mary needs to do more to educate its students about how to acknowledge and combat racism. Especially at a place with such a dark historical legacy, it is a responsibility of the College to make sure that students do not pass through its walls without developing a critical attitude towards our campus and to the world outside, and becoming committed to combating the ugly parts of our past and our present. This is truly the most valuable learning experience the College can provide to its students, through the form of trainings, lectures, and an active commitment to teaching anti-oppression. Nothing could be more valuable.

Sharon Hartzell
B.S. Chemistry and Environmental Science, 2014
To Whom It May Concern:

We live in a country and time period where racist acts are often excused or downplayed. This is “post-racial” America, one where majority populations can make light of the harmful implications of historical violence by pointing at the racial progress made over the last 100 years. Though examples of this structural violence are prevalent throughout society, I was deeply saddened to hear about the continued presence of such a cancer growing unchecked on the campus of my beloved alma mater.

The recent problematic themes represented by 7th Grade Sketch Comedy’s “Tiggers in Paris,” Sigma Pi and Kappa Alpha Theta’s “Gangsters and Golfers” mixer, and the racist responses following #BlackLivesMatter serve as a reminder of the need for intentional action taken on the part of the campus community to counter-act such racist acts. Though I appreciate President Reveley’s official statement to the student body, it is not enough for administration to acknowledge the need for campus conversation. A task force (as suggested by President Reveley) is needed, and we as students and alumni must see the actions and agenda of that task force made public. I fully support the suggestions outlined by Britney Harrington and other students from this collective and ask that the Board of Visitors, President Reveley, Vice President Ginger Ambler, and other key decision consider carefully the path forward from these events.

I envision a future at W&M where we lead the South in diversity measures, inclusivity on campus, cultural and racial sensitivity, and in creating a safe environment conducive of learning for all our students. This cannot be achieved without directed action including expert-led campus dialogues, increased sensitivity training for student leaders, and accountability for those students who break our campus code.

Sincerely yours in Tribe Pride,

Joanna Weeks
B.S. Biology with Honors | College of William & Mary 2013
M.D. Candidate | Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons 2018
3 February 2015

Dear Board of Visitors,

I am writing to voice my concern of the racial climate on campus and my support of measures to address it.

I transferred to William and Mary last fall as part of the class of 2016 and I already feel invested in this community. The friends I have made are long lasting and the experiences I am gaining will stay with me forever. I am proud to call William and Mary my alma mater.

I am not proud, however, of how many of my friends have been directly affected by the unsatisfactory racial climate we have on this campus. Though I am Hispanic, I do not consider myself a person of color and have not personally been a recipient of racism. Even so, the fact that my friends have been makes me uncomfortable because I am a firm believer that if even just one person in a community is affected, then it affects us all.

Many in the student body feel that the school administration skirts around this issue of race and refuses to directly address it. I would like to see us proven wrong. I would like to see bolder action by our beloved school in addressing the issues that the student body holds dear.

Please know that a student body geared for positive change stands ready to support your courageous action and guidance.

Sincerely,
C. Brontë de Cárdenas
February 3, 2015

To Whom It May Concern at the College ---

As a cis-gender white female, I will not pretend as though I have personally experienced racism at William and Mary. My voice should not be the primary or even a central voice on the Black experience at the College. That being said, I still feel as though I have something to contribute to this discussion.

Last semester I was a part of Bettina Judd’s “Black Gender” class. The course was cross-listed under Africana Studies and Gender, Sexuality, and Women’s Studies, which is my major. This was the first time I have ever taken a class focused specifically on the present-day experiences of Black people in the United State and in my community. It was also the first time that I was a minority in an academic setting. The class drew heavily on student experience and discussion as well as academic and literary analysis. I had the opportunity to hear directly from my Black peers about their own experiences with racism and sexism at the College. I was out of my comfort zone and forced to directly confront the ways that racism pervades the daily lives of Black students at William and Mary. It was eye opening.

Since that course, I have attended events organized by both students and the administration focused on racism at the College and in America. The majority attendees at these events are students engaged in activism and/or have already been thinking a lot about these issues. For instance, at the recent “Confronting Racism at William and Mary: A Restorative Justice Approach” event that was held by the Center for Student Diversity, I felt as though the material covered, while helpful, was repeat information for the majority of participants in the session. These attendees were already incredibly informed about the diversity issues on this campus. These events host important conversations that need to be held but the students who need to hear these voices are not the ones in attendance.

I believe there are ways to reach these students and influence them to consider racism, sexism, classism, able-ism, etc. I have always valued the scope of a liberal arts education that the College offers and I believe that there should be a general education requirement that requires all students to take a course in American/Minority Issues – most likely fulfilled by courses within the American Studies, Africana Studies, or Gender, Sexuality, and Women’s Studies Departments.

There is a difference in considering these issues for a few hours during orientation and confronting these issues on a weekly basis through academic reading, discussion, and analysis. I believe that these American Issues are a subject that deserves just as much, if not more attention, at a liberal arts college as the Performing Arts, Philosophy, Religion, etc. are given. I understand that there has been a re-structuring to the GER system at William and Mary. I also understand that some of these courses are included as options to take to fulfill the GER Requirements – but they can easily and unknowingly be avoided by a student who feels these American Issues do not affect him or her. I believe that while this would be requirement, the concept of a general requirement still offers a student a choice to take a class within something that is interesting to him or her – or at least as interesting as my own experience of having to choose among the biological science courses for by GER 2.

I believe William and Mary needs to continue this conversation and explore ideas and initiatives to experiment with ways we can alleviate the discrimination felt by our students and encourage those who perpetuate this discrimination to consider these perspectives and the
consequences of their actions. A required educational component that makes students consider these American Issues could have an impact. I do not feel it is unfounded within the next five to ten years to institute this sort of requirement and organize the staff necessary.

I believe the attendees of racist-themed parties, the writers of racist/sexist Yik-Yak and Facebook remarks, etc. are mostly ignorant of the harm they are causing. I know my peers are intelligent and caring people; I would hope if truly challenged to confront racism and sexism in the United States and at the College there would be some change in their views and thinking about race, sex, and gender in America.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter.

Sincerely,
Zoë Mitchell
Class of 2015
To whom it may concern,

I am writing this letter in support of the movement on campus for more racial awareness and sensitivity, something I believe is sorely needed. White students still regularly engage in oppression of people of color, whether it be through a racist party theme or small comments about affirmative action and who ‘deserves’ to be here. As a self-identifying white student, I try to stand against this kind of behavior when I see it happen, but when people who host these parties or make racially insensitive comments on social media against essential social activism for equality, I feel that there is not a larger body of authority to support me. I feel that this campus, and every single other campus around the country, needs to be much more proactive about identifying and remediating ingrained racist behavior. W&M does better than some in recognizing the history of slavery and oppression in Virginia, but I believe that acknowledgment needs to apply to today as well—racism is not over in America, and as long as we let things like this happen on our campus, amongst the future leaders of our country, we perpetuate harmful racial attitudes. I implore you to consider the requests laid out in the main letter of this movement. I believe every single one is necessary and would go a long way toward reaching the goals that you hope to achieve with your taskforce. Please take them into consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Maren Hunsberger
W&M, Class of 2015
One Tribe, One Family
Dear Board of Visitors,

I am writing in support of the attached letter. As a white student, I cannot say I have been directly affected by racism on campus. But I have watched as my friends of color have stood up again and again in support of racial justice and all too often, their efforts have been drowned out by apathy and ignorance. To have publically acknowledge their concerns as well-founded and to require student leaders to educate themselves on the ramifications and context of their actions would, in my opinion, go far.

The most I can do is urge you to listen to the voices of others, and to know that they are not unsupported.

Thanks for your dedication to this amazing school and for your time today.

Best,
Meghan Foley
Class of 2016