

## **Race and the Social Honor Code - Minutes (11/20/14)**

### **Discussion Hosted by TIDE and Honor Council**

[begin with moment of silence]

[larger group split up into four smaller groups with one focusing on Customs, another focusing on 'Mutual Trust, Concern and Respect', one focusing on the Multicultural Juror Requirement as well as the possibility of an International Juror Requirement, and one focusing on Student Governance and Plenary - all in the context of race]

[smaller groups come back as a larger group for continued discussion]

- One person curious about mutual trust respect concern group. Group responded that it's most commonly about reasons why people don't confront, often because of the fear that the person being confronted would not respect the victim. Breakdown of trust, concern, and respect. There's also a lack of bystanders to have concern for victim in order to help confront. Clarification that it's not necessarily a problem of victimization, but a concern that it won't be effective, because racist comments are less clear-cut than loud music or plagiarism. People come from different backgrounds and have different sensitivities without realizing it. Some discussion about whether or not it's effective in a small things vs. big things (harder with big things? system in general flawed?)
- One person brought up that without dialogue it's impossible to change anything. If confrontation seems completely ineffective, however, starting that dialogue seems useless. People might also not want to go to Honor Council because that seems to big, and it's easy to say that it's just a little thing and Honor Council feels too serious. What if the thing (like loud music) happens frequently and you don't want to constantly confront? How can Honor Council help in that case? Trial is also a lot of work. Someone else brought up that confronting about racial issues is very isolating. Calling people out, or someone from your customs group is really hard and isolating. When issues come from structural or systemic causes, it's hard to suddenly deal with and take that active action when those kinds of issues have been present maybe for people's entire lives. That person becomes put in the role of educator and justifier in a way that you don't get with other issues. No reason to expect that someone would respect you if you've been dealing with something your entire life.
- However, without dialogue the problem snowballs. If not confrontation, what's a better way to deal with these issues? One suggestion of having more training on confronting on big issues during customs week in order to make people more comfortable and able. Another thought was putting more emphasis on concern, in order to have more bystanders. Also put more emphasis on the receiving end that as a white person, if you're confronted about race, you have a responsibility to listen.

- What might be discouraging people from going to Honor Council? For example, the multicultural juror requirement might make some people feel they're not being understood. Even telling someone you don't feel like you would understand opens up the perspective, although that might be idealistic. Doing that your entire life for different things gets tiring. Hard to have onus on victim to educate. It takes a lot of work to go through with a trial, and balancing that with the likelihood of the jury knowing what's going on, that makes it even less likely to want to go through the process, especially if that happens a lot.
- As a member of Honor Council who cares about these issues, is there anything Honor Council could do that would give the impression that we would get it? Even though there are structural reasons that mean that Honor Council might not get it, is there anything to do so that members of Honor Council would do it, and secondly, how could the perception change? Since there's only one trial people point to about race (Muppets) that's problematic, both because parties got away without doing most of the resolutions, and that it has to be a problem of those proportions. It's so old too, there's no way racist things haven't happened since then. Also, race doesn't need to be main issue - race comes up in a lot of contexts. One person mentioned someone on Council had wished they had more sensitivity training, but there was a diversity training with Qui Alexander this semester, in order to be more aware of diversity that you might not see and how that might change people's way of dealing with conflict. More discussion about various diversity trainings. One suggestion would be to collect experiences about day-to-day life. More compiling of micro-aggressions and people's experiences, that would help understand how background affects how someone comes into a trial process.
- Another person brought up that Honor Council might not be the problem, the culture is the problem, and until we get a change in the culture, nothing can really help. There are people who still have very racist attitudes. One person said that since race doesn't come up very much in customs discussions so they feel that marginalization might not really exist. Someone countered saying that even if you don't feel personally marginalized that doesn't mean other people don't, and it's important to realize that. Even if a lot of people don't encounter race, there are still a lot of instances of racism in the past that affect the agency of people today without being visible.
- Question of agency - it's easier to think about confronting someone when you've been taught that what you have to say is important and that people are going to listen, and that happens a lot more in more privileged settings. Someone asked the person who didn't feel that racism was discussed enough to make racism seem like a problem if they would trust someone telling them that they felt personally marginalized. They replied that they would want to see more evidence that it's a widespread phenomenon. Others responded about how important it is to trust someone's opinion and listen, and to think more structurally. You can't assuage someone's hurt feelings by saying it wasn't

intentional. Be conscious that you're not subtly telling people their experience hasn't happened. Someone shared their background of a high school where people felt that marginalized groups were just trying to get ahead. It's easy to make people feel that you don't trust them - people finding you paranoid, or as Asian and not black or Latino that can make your voice feel denied. An ideal society might be color-blind, but that's not the current reality. Before colorblind can be achieved, you have to be more racially aware. Currently we're privileged at Haverford, so blatant racism might not be as apparent, but it still exists. But being colorblind is dangerous too, because you can't just forget where you came from and don't want to erase people's identities. Race shouldn't affect how you're treated.

- The discussion moved to a discussion about the segregation on campus, of for example faculty and staff, especially staff. Segregation is everywhere, even in diverse places. People don't always look hard enough because they're not used to looking.
- How can we actually change the culture of Haverford? More discussion during Customs, or bring back social justice requirement so it's necessary to get educated, or at least have to listen. It's easy to go through Haverford taking classes that don't touch on race issues and that you don't realize that you're not being exposed. Customs is a place where you're exposed to a lot of different people, so more discussions on race will extend understanding. One person brought up Bryn Mawr's policy of everyone working in the Dining Center, so that everyone has that experience of being in a service position. There's also a lot of diversity in staff, and that's positive to be exposed to. Might make people more polite to workers. Easy to associate staff/service (since they're predominantly filled by minority groups) with low status, and having experience like the social justice requirement but with work on campus might help. However, the ones you really want to get at might not need to work in the first place, and might be deterred from working if DC is a requirement.
- Should there be a clause that explicitly addresses race in the Honor Code, or would that be redundant? You are required to confront if you feel that community standards have been violated, and right now that doesn't work, and you don't want people to have to confront constantly because that's exhausting. What could we do about that? Shouldn't draw the line at race, but other marginalized groups. Some concern about adding more language to Honor Council, but others brought up that it would just be a specific example to raise awareness. But if you have a vague social code, that doesn't allow any issues to be left out. As soon as you make a list of different discriminations, you exclude people. Although it can be phrased as a non-exclusive list. Suggestion for a conversation about micro-aggressions, and a suggestion that if that language becomes a resolution there needs to be a conversation about punitive aspects of accountability.

[end with moment of silence]