



EDITORIAL

Against the New Housing
Price System

Often, it seems as if a new policy decision by the College administration is well intentioned but was not properly thought through, particularly in the impact it might have on the student body. The new housing price tier system, recently unveiled by the College, is a perfect example of this. It has the potential to cause much harm to our campus community, while also does not seem to have any actual benefit besides increasing College housing revenue.

There is a principle of common experience at the College that I worry the new pricing system endangers. With the requirement to live on campus for our first two years here, a community is created of people who not only read the same books, but who live in the same buildings, and eat the same food. A special kind of unity is created, one that really brings together our small, close-knit community, and which is so solid that it is kept together even after people begin to move off campus Junior year. As of now, the differing quality of dorms does not hinder this campus cohesion: if someone complains about rats in a dorm, there is sympathy, as anyone could have ended up there. Likewise, jealousy over good dorm conditions in the suburbs only goes so far; it is simply taken as a privilege of having spent more years on campus, and as a sign of luck in the housing lottery.

However, with the change from flat rates for housing to ones based on income, I worry that this cohesion could be damaged. If someone's housing condition is determined by how much they are able to pay for a dorm, there is not a sense that everyone is on the same boat: on the contrary, there is a sense some paid for a much nicer educational experience than others. The argument that the difference in prices is too small to cause this kind of socio-economic stratification is ridiculous: if someone already has difficulty affording college, which many Johnnies do, every dollar counts, including the \$400 between a Chase double and a Gilliam split double, without even mentioning the \$2,550 that will divide some residents of Paca. Students already sometimes go to ridiculous lengths to save a few dollars on expenses, it is perfectly reasonable to presume they would do the same if they needed to on housing, and the divide between those that do need to save, and those that don't, would grow much more visible.

There are also many issues that are (Cont. on Page 2)

ALL COLLEGE SEMINAR HELD ON
DO THE RIGHT THING

Seminar Scheduled to Commemorate Martin Luther King
Day, Saw High Tutor Attendance

This semester's first All-College seminar was unusual in two ways. First, it was not hosted by the SCI, who has traditionally hosted such events, with organization instead being lead by Assistant Dean Robert Abbott. Secondly, the seminar was on a film, a medium which has not been discussed before at an All-College seminar. The movie, Spike Lee's 1989 *Do the Right Thing*, shown at 4 pm on January 12th, the day of the seminar, with the actual conversation occurring at 7:30, in the place of a lecture.

The screening, which was attended by several dozen students, as well as a handful of tutors, was slightly delayed by audio problems in the FSK, but after moving to the Hodson Room, the remainder Lee's beautiful, chaotic, poignant and thought-provoking work was shown. The seminar itself was slightly better attended, although many students who came to watch the movie did not come to the seminar. Instead, a large number of tutors turned out for the discussion. There were enough people to split the participants into three groups, led by Abbott, tutor George Russel and tutor emeritus Jonathan Tuck.

Russel began by asking an opening question that informed the conversation for all the groups, focused around the statement made by da Mayor which gives the movie its name: What does it mean to do the right thing? Groups then split off, with each seminar leader asking another opening question. The seminar ran for an hour and a half, with participants congregating over coffee, tea and snacks afterwards to continue discussing the film.

Abbott explained that this seminar was intended to commemorate, and spark discussion about Martin Luther King Jr. Day, which took place the following Monday. "In the past few years, the dean has ended up asking the SCI to have their second semester all-college seminar on texts that had something to do with slavery or the civil rights movement. This seemed like an uncomfortable arrangement since the SCI should be able to have two all-college seminars every year on whatever they decide. Also, last year, the president formed a committee of staff, faculty, and students to plan an event around MLK day. I volunteered for this committee and my contribution was to hold a Tuesday night seminar on a poem by Gwendolyn Brooks, 'The Chicago Defender Sends a Man to Little Rock, Fall 1957,' but only a few students attended. The then-

dean and I talked this over and decided to have a separate all-college seminar on a Friday to give the event more prominence."

The College does not commemorate Martin Luther King Jr. Day, a holiday created to honor civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. shortly after his assassination, as part of a general policy not to respect religious or civil holidays. "'We don't recognize any of the holidays, it just so happens that long weekend often coincides with a holiday. I just really value that. I feel like at the college should honor any individual's practices, and as an institution, we should be pretty careful to remain open and neutral... I think about this in terms of Herodotus. Particular cultures are important, because they're a way to understand what's universal... I want people to be able to be themselves in the classroom and out at the college, but we also need to say, this place would come apart at the seams if we're improperly recognizing some individuals and not others," explained Abbott. "At the same time, we have found ways to use the occasion to do something that is good, that is harmonious or consonant with what we're doing at the college anyway."

The choice of seminar subject was proposed by Xena Hitz, a tutor. "Ms. Hitz suggested discussing the film, *Do the Right Thing*," said Abbott. "I thought this was an excellent suggestion for many reasons. The film speaks to everyone; it asks the viewer difficult, pressing questions about race, community, history, and violence, without giving easy answers; it puts Martin Luther King Jr. in conversation with Malcolm X. There are a number of reasons I thought it would be good for a seminar. And for all those same reasons, I saw this all-college seminar as continuous with conversations that develop out of reading works on the program e.g. by Tocqueville, Twain, Melville, Conrad, Lincoln, Douglas, Washington, and Du Bois, among others...Human freedom is at stake; I can think of few things as serious."

Holding a conversation on a film posed a new challenge, but one that was successfully met by most participants in the seminars. In the seminar that I participated in, the conversation hovered in generalities at first, before plunging straight into a thorough and interesting analysis of cinematographic choices, of the role of characters, and of the (Cont. on page 2)

This Week in Seminar

Freshman:

- 1/18: Thucydides: Peloponnesian War, VII; VIII, 1-6, 45-end
- 1/22: Thucydides: Peloponnesian War, IV, 75-end; V, 1-26, 84-116; VI

Sophomores:

- 1/18: Dante: Divine Comedy, Purgatorio XIX-XXXIII
- 1/22: Dante: Divine Comedy, Paradiso I-XVII

Juniors:

- 1/18: Hume: Treatise of Human Nature (see official list for selections)
- 1/22: Hume: Treatise of Human Nature (see official list for selections)

Seniors:

- Essay writing Period

Friday Night Lecture:

Concert by New York Polyphony, 8 p.m. in the FSK

Upcoming Events:

Friday 1/19

- 5 p.m., Mitchell Museum: Sampling a Sampler Sampling Exhibit opening

Saturday 1/20

- 11 a.m., Studio Theater: Careers in Law Alumni Panel
- 9 p.m., Boathouse: Pajama Waltz
- 9 p.m., McDowell Great Hall: Pangaea Lunar New Years Party

Wednesday 1/24

- 2:30 p.m., Hodson room: Hodson Internship info session
- 4 p.m., Conversation Room: Eams Power of Ten film discussion.

FIRST MEASURABLE SNOW IN TWO YEARS COVERS CAMPUS: Two Hour Delay Implemented

By the time this writer exited Mellon for the first time On Monday, January 15th at 11:30, he saw the snow which had started in the morning had picked up once more, and a thin layer was beginning to accumulate on the grass, although not yet in paved areas. By the time he returned to campus around 2:15, the snow had not stopped, and it began sticking even to warmer brick and asphalt. Speculation began, buzzing around campus from eager freshmen to weary Juniors: will they cancel seminar? Do they ever even do that?

When classes ended for the day, the snow was finally great deal of frolicking going on, and a few snowballs being tossed around. After receiving a tip-off that a big scoop might be found on back campus, your writer continued down towards the creek to find Johnnies whizzing down the hill on sleds, trash can lids, cardboard, garbage bags, and their own backs. The enthusiasm of a child before a snow-day in 3rd grade was in the air, and everyone was feeling it. Walking along, this writer crossed paths with a very enthusiastic Johnnie who perfectly summed this up: “It’s snowing, it’s snowing!” he repeatedly declared, while giving energetic hugs to all who went by.

By the 7:30 seminar time, there was no news about any delays or cancellations, although the snow continued to fall as the campus made its way towards Mellon and McDowell. During seminar, however, an

Housing (Cont. from Page 1)

less obvious, but likely to cause problems likely not foreseen by the College administration. For example, this new pricing system would make housing selection far more fraught. If there is higher demand for the cheaper dorms, as I suspect there will be, there may be less affordable housing available for people lower on the list, who may be penalized and have to pay more, perhaps even more than they can afford. What happens if someone can only afford a Group B double, but when they get their chance to pick there are only Group A doubles and split doubles left?

Likewise, this causes a problem for dorms set aside for specific purposes. In the past, Spector has been designated as a quiet dorm, and one floor has been set aside as an alcohol-free floor. Would people who prefer quiet, or to be further away from alcohol, have to pay extra for that? It is wonderful that the college tries to accommodate these needs, but it would be a shameful undermining of what they seem to be trying to accomplish to have access to them determined by price.

The reasoning given for this change in housing pricing is that people “have been asking for it.” I would like to ask who these people are. I have not met a single student who speaks in favor of this system for reallocating housing. The argument that many other institutions price dorms this way is also a bad one, since many small liberal arts colleges do not, and that something being done by other institutions has never been a reason in itself for St. John’s to do something.

I suspect the true motivation for this change is not to respond to some swell of student requests for this system, but a desire to raise housing prices without upsetting people as much. At some level, I understand this; prices need to be adjusted for inflation, even though they are already very high. However, if this way of raising prices is likely to cause harm to our Polity, I think the decision to implement this system should be reconsidered.

email was sent out by Aly Gontang, Vice-President of Finance and Operations: “The Annapolis Campus will be opening at 10:30 am on Tuesday, January 16, 2024, to allow facilities staff time to clear parking lots and walkways – and to allow time for staff, students, and faculty to travel safely to campus.”

Gontang explained that this decision was made according to set College policies. “When we are experiencing or expecting inclement weather, we usually coordinate early in the morning to determine road conditions, how long it may take to clear parking lots and walkways, and if there are any other operational challenges to opening on time. We try to coordinate between 4:30am-5am to have facilities or public safety staff check on campus conditions – so we can post a notification no later than 6am by campus alert, email, and website update. In the case of [Monday’s] weather, with the extremely poor conditions we monitored into the evening last night (some of us were driving home late after work after 8pm) – and with the forecast of alternating freezing rain and snow combined with low temperatures during the ‘rush hour’ when most are driving into campus – we posted the notice last night following many of the county schools and agencies.

When we expect inclement conditions – just to also call out the wonderful dedication and care of the Bon

Seminar (Cont. from Page 1)

between the events on the screen and pressing concerns about communities relevant in our own lives.

Abbott said that in his seminar, he also found success in the challenge of discussing a movie. “I really love film. Scott Buchanan, one of the founders of the program, thought film was going to have a place in the cannon. One of my worries about this seminar is that we would treat the film simply as a text, and only discuss ideas. I feel like my seminar didn’t fall into that, which was nice... it was much more about the way ideas were represented through the film and the character who speak about them. It was much closer to a discussion of the film as a film.”

Coming away from these seminars, and into the discussions over coffee and tea, many participants expressed a wide range of thoughts sparked by the movie. By providing a space to reflect on race, discrimination, representation, identity, violence and resistance, and community, the seminar provided a place to touch on many matters that often don’t come up in day-to-day classes. The conversations begun that night, however, are still very much alive as this paper is going to print, at least amongst those who attended that seminar.

El’ad Nichols-Kaufman

An interview for this article was conducted by Meliha Anthony for the Communications office. We would like to thank Communications for helping us with our reporting, and Anthony for supporting journalism on the Annapolis campus.

Aphorism of the Week:

“Does it make sense?” Says an American. “Does it become a word?” Says a Korean.

I am clearly the one who is making sense, but who is the one making the word?

Appetit staff - the dining service staff will oftentimes nearby accommodations or even stay overnight find in available residence rooms, that are separated from students, to ensure food service remains on time.”

This delay, however, did not mean that classes were canceled. While operations delays are determined by the Gontang, academic delays are decided by the Assistant Dean, who instead sent out an email saying that class cancellations would be determined by individual tutors, who could best determine whether they could safely reach campus.

The possibility of classes, however, did not stop students from celebrating the snow with Johnnie passion. A massive, all-campus snowball fight developed on the quad after seminar, with this reporter being targeted for repeated pelting by a frequent Gadfly and Collegian contributor who often goes by his somewhat vulgar initials. After this spirited combat, this writer set off on a walk with someone rather special into an Annapolis transformed into a silent, white mirror of itself. While the following morning, classes resumed as usual, (albeit with some confusion as to whether they would begin at 10:30), the spell cast by the snow on this campus will be fondly remembered for years to come.

El’ad Nichols-Kaufman

ABOUT THE ST. JOHN’S COLLEGIAN

The St. John’s Collegian is the weekly newspaper of St. John’s College Annapolis. We work to bring quick and timely coverage of important events going on, to help develop a more informed student body. If you’re searching for more in-depth investigations and reporting, as well as essays, art and culture, check out the Gadfly, our affiliated publication, which is published once every three weeks.

Want to submit an article? We always need more writers, whether for opinion or reporting! Submissions for news articles should be between 400-600 words, while opinion should be kept short at 350 words. Just email eanicholskaufman@sjc.edu with your article, and we will work to get it in print! Longer form articles and more in-depth exploration of ideas should go to the Gadfly, which accepts submissions at lbriner@sjc.edu.

Contributors for this issue:

El’ad Nichols-Kaufman, Editor

You may have noticed this edition only has one contributor. This, to put it mildly, is a problem. Not only is it better for the College to have a diversity of view represented instead of just my ramblings, but it is also not sustainable for me: I cannot write a full edition of the Collegian every week. If you want to see this paper continue to exist, and to continue to bring up to date news reporting to the Polity, please send in some submissions! You can write about anything: enrollment trends, tutor retention, crazy moments in your seminar, intramural games. Just write. The Polity needs everyone to pitch in if we are to remain engaged and well informed.

