



# Multicultural Center Newsletter Spring 2013

## Volume 2 Issue 1

- Pretty Fire Reading

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# Letter from the Director: *Kenza Glass*

Spring 2013

Our second full year of programming in the Multicultural Center (MC) has brought us very valuable conversations and exciting outcomes. With an emphasis on a dialogue based approach to learning about difference, we have begun to understand more about difference in our community and its impact on us as individuals and groups.

One of the important additions to our program is the increase in services for LGBTQIA students. Along with supportive faculty like Dr. Yamaguchi, Dr. Himmanen, and Professor Ortiz, these efforts culminated in an inspiring and eye-opening keynote address by Janet Mock, an activist for gender justice and transgender women. Developing the necessary resources to support the unique needs of LGBTQIA students will be an ongoing process, and we are collaborating with other campus groups such as Out There to ensure appropriateness and efficiency of services.

We also hit the road this semester for ALANA Socials! There are so many great programs happening through the other LVAIC schools, offering the opportunity to meet lots of students at those institutions. Lehigh's Office of Multicultural Affairs took Cedar Crest students to a Black History Month bus trip to Washington D.C., we saw an awesome step show at Moravian and networked at the semi-formal at Hotel Bethlehem. The Multicultural Center works hard to make sure students have access to the support network that exists at Cedar Crest and outside of it.

Look for more opportunities to talk about your own unique identity and interface with people who have different communication styles and worldviews. You can graduate from Cedar Crest knowing you have the highly desirable skills and experience to work in a diverse setting. Everyone is welcome in the Multicultural Center and everyone can benefit from our resources. Whether you are a student, faculty or staff, think about how you can support our mission and be involved with really meaningful and positive work towards social justice.

One Love,  
Kenza Glass





# Janet Mock

## “Be Unapologetic About Who You Are”

-Cedar Crest College, Lutz Center  
Human Rights Week Keynote



*By: Natalia De Jesus Martinez-Colon*

On April 4th, We had the honor of meeting Janet Mock, a human rights activist, who aims to raise the diverse visibility of trans women, travels the country speaking about gender justice. She believes in contributing to media, in an effort to expand society's limited portrayal of womanhood. Through her campaign #GirlsLikeUs she has given many hope, raised the voice of others and made a difference.

She was named one of the Top 13 Women of Color to Watch by the Center for American Progress, the Huffington Post's 23 Inspiring Women Blazing Trails for the LGBT Community, The Griot's 100 most influential people, and was a nominee for a GLAAD Media Awards and the first-ever Women's Media Center Social Media Award. A regular commentator on gender justice on MSNBC, the world has noticed Janet's efforts, too, and we were glad to have the opportunity to learn from her in the hopes that one day, we too can make a change.

An audience of about 50 people sat down and listened, as Janet spoke about the struggles, triumphs and portrayals of trans women like herself. She raised important questions, such as: Why does gender have to define us? Why should she or her "brothers & sisters" be treated differently for simply being who they are? She told us that she started by telling her story. She acknowledges that while it might bring some hardship, telling our stories is also bound to bring curiosities, but also love to our lives. She educated us on how to be true allies and even provided us with the tools to be able to start a change on campus and beyond.

- Don't ask people about their anatomy, use appropriate pronouns and name changes.
- Inform yourself about LGBT identity
- Definition of an Ally means to take action and support people's rights
- Be an activist in your own community

Janet always longed to be herself, which had not been completely possible due to all the whispers back home. She wanted what all of us have, "freedom", the freedom to speak without being afraid, the freedom to be without being harmed, the freedom to be happy. This is why her dream was to move to New York. "Moving to New York gave me that sense of freedom, nobody knew who I was, there were no whispers behind my back. I was just me", Janet said.

She had every reason to feel that way, as injustices towards women like her are still being carried out today, and while she mentions she has been fortunate to be where she is, not all the other trans women she knows have the same opportunities and resources to succeed. She highlighted a few of the obstacles that surround this community everyday:

- Some of the people she knows don't think they will make it to age 30 because of the scary statistics about hatred against trans women.
- For some education is out of reach
- Trans women are held in men's prison cells & are repeatedly raped. There is no respect in the system about how they identify themselves.
- You can still be fired in 34 states for identifying as LGBTQ.

This opened the eyes of many in the audience, who had probably never been aware of the conversation or who had come to learn more. She prevailed on the audience with these words: "Shift your perspective. Stop celebrating trans women in their deaths, instead celebrate them in their lives." She wanted us to take action, shine a light, and support those who we meet to grow and to be who they are, because if only recognized in their deaths, society will never understand the amazing contributions they could have made.

As the talk came to an end Janet left us to reflect, "Be unapologetic about who you are." It had been an informative two hours, but more than that, Janet's voice on campus made a difference.



Pictures Taken By: Cedar Crest College (*Top from left to right*) Bryanne Hornung, Adley Alezy, Janet Mock, Kaiya Primus, Kaylah Baylor, Brielle Wesley, Carly Athenasatos, Brittany Dalbow, Hannah Bernstein. (*Bottom from left to right*) Alexis Malone, Manny Griffiths, Natalia Martinez, Shamara Rodes, Jessica Minor, Solinah Kinney, Nicole Mertz.



# Peer Support

*By: Natalia De Jesus Martinez-Colon*

The Peer Support Program is an informal, private opportunity, available during our office hours for you to speak to someone like you, to assist with any issues you may be having difficulty with in your college life academically or socially. We are here to help you understand your concerns and explore your available resources.

Reaching out for help or guidance on an issue is not a weakness; it is something we all need once in a while. We are here to listen to you, and to make sure that you have a supportive environment here at Cedar Crest College. Our doors are open for you to come speak about life, your latest accomplishments, new ideas, concerns, etc.

The Peer Support Program is yours. Sometimes, just talking about your problem will help. For other concerns, your “peers” receive training and are able to help you problem-solve and refer you to other assistance, if needed.

## POTENTIAL TOPICS:

- Interpersonal relationships
- Dorm life
- LGBTQIA identities
- Educational Goals
- Diversity
- Bias incidents
- Campus involvement



## GOALS OF PEER SUPPORT

Multicultural Center Student Assistants (MCSAs) are trained and dedicated students who offer peer support to other students experiencing academic or social difficulty, particularly as related to identity or bias. Under the guidance of the Director, MCSAs provide personal, confidential support with academic and social issues and refer students to the appropriate campus resources with the goal of empowering students to make good decisions and to enjoy a great college experience.

Stay tuned for more information on some of our other programs that are currently in development!

# Jazz Night Out Celebration

By: Otilia Rivera

On February 19th, The Multicultural Center was honored to have the amazing Galen Abdur- Razzaq Jazz and his band, play Jazz music from the last century, allowing students and guests who attended this event to commemorate Black History Month. Students, faculty and staff enjoyed a nice evening of light hors d'oeuvres, a live band, and conversation.



Harmon Hall of Peace was decorated with white linen clothes, candlelight, and elegant orchid flowers as the centerpieces.

Galen Abdur is originally from Montclair, New Jersey and has attended and studied at Berkley College of Music. He graduated and received his master degree in fine arts and education at Rutgers University. Galen is a talented flutist who not only plays Jazz music but also teaches others about the history of Jazz music. He emphasized how our generation has forgotten about the roots of music. Galen had asked the audience if anyone knew who McCoy Tanner or Tad Dameron and surprisingly only a few people had heard of these talented American Jazz composers. Tad Dameron was considered to be Romantic during his time and Galen Abdur had played one of his famous pieces called, "On a Misty Night." He also played a piece from McCoy Tanner called "three flowers." Galen explained that the one thing that separates us from not knowing about these composers and their music are race and media. We all know who Lady Gaga is but we don't know about real music and where it originated. Galen also touched on the topic

of cultural differences and one thing that stood out was a statement that he made about it. He said, "We all have cultural differences, but we all have the same blood running through our bodies."

In the spirit of Black History Month, the Multicultural Center invited Executive Director, Deb Fries-Jackson, to accept a donation from the proceeds of ticket sales on behalf of the Boys and Girls Club of Allentown, Turner Street Site for girls, which will be used to cover fees for several girls to attend their after school program.

*"We all are custom made. There will never be another you. Listen to music that came before you"*

*-Galen Abdur-Razzaq*



Photo Credit: Whitney Thomas

## Marc Lamont Hill

*By: Adley Alezy*

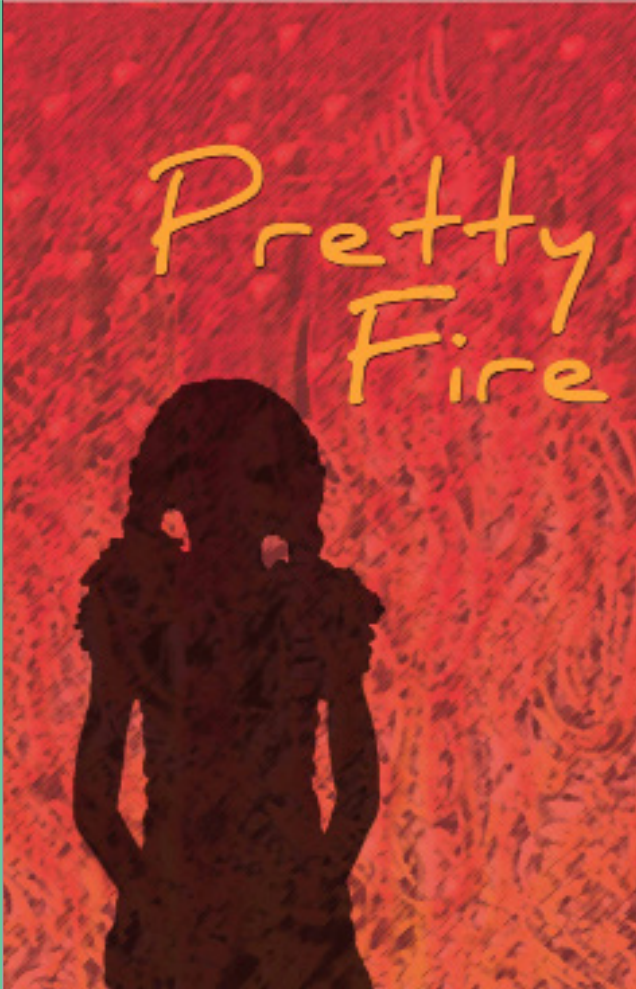
In the spirit of black history month The Multicultural Center got the opportunity to go to Muhlenberg College and listen to Lamont hill speak about Martin Luther King Jr. and his take on the “I Have a Dream” speech.

Marc Lamont Hill, journalist, activist, and professor at Columbia University, spoke about social reform, social justice and social responsibility. For many people the “I Have a Dream” speech was about the end of racism and the improvement of social equality.

Society today has made a great improvement; for example, we have elected for the second time, our first black president, Barack Obama. Yes, this is an improvement but more needs to be done. Hill stated that the “I Have A Dream” speech “was not about a dream. It was about a promise”. It was not a promise that Martin Luther King wanted to fulfill or keep, rather the speech was about the promise that was made to us by our forefathers. The promise our forefathers signed and promised to keep in the Declaration of Independence.

He called upon us to stand up and hold our government accountable to keep their promise. Hill also called upon us to create change, and become the best person we can be in order to contribute to a better society. Who is going to be the next Martin Luther King and stand up for the people? Who is going to be the next Jessie Jackson or the next Rosa Parks? Martin Luther King’s dream has not yet been fulfilled, and the promise must not be broken. Will you help protect this promise?





# Play Reading at the President's Residence

*By: Solinah "Rae" Kinney*

A warm, calming atmosphere, a cup of tea, the company of professors, students and President Ambar, is the sight you would have seen looking into the windows of the president's residence. We had gathered to take part in the reading of the play *Pretty Fire* by Charlayne Woodard. *Pretty Fire* received the LA Drama Critics and NAACP awards for best play and best playwright. This short piece was originally written for a single person performance; a narration of the life of Woodard as told through her child self. I had never heard of the story, but I was looking forward to learning more about another African American author and her story through her play.

The story revolves around two sisters growing up in a close-knit family that venture into the wider world, encountering Ku Klux Klan riders in Georgia, and three generations of a family's struggles and triumphs. She tells the audience about a gratifying change from stories of urban violence and despair. Her parents lived near Albany, her maternal grandparents in the Deep South, where Ms.

Woodard and her younger sister spent long bucolic summers and learned grandmotherly wisdom. From an early age, she was infatuated with thoughts of the South. Disillusionment followed a sudden, rare encounter with racism.

Although the play was meant to be a one-women show the group was able to read the sections in the narrative selected parts such as the mother, father, grandmother, and Charlene herself. Each person was able to become a new character throughout the reading, taking on a new persona each time. There seemed to be a slight hesitation from the students of non-color when taking on the "black voice of the characters but eventually everyone had become comfortable with taking on the various roles.

After each reading, the group was able to reflect on their thoughts and feelings; President Ambar commented on her life growing up in the south and the impact that had on her childhood, while other students commented about topics such as skin tone and racism within the African American community. During this time of discussion, it felt like a safe place; there were no judgments or harsh comments. The time during the reading was simply a place where everyone felt safe to share their stories and thoughts. We were able to learn more about others, and possibly more about ourselves as well.

As I read through the play, I was able to think about my own family, their influence on my life and how I view myself as an African American woman. Just like Woodard, my grandmother and mother have been the two most important women in my life while growing up. They motivate and inspire me to be my best every day. I am grateful for authors like Charlayne Woodard who share their stories with the world in order to inspire other women to speak out and overcome the stigmas of society.





*Demi and Friends at Martin Luther King Monument*

# Celebrating MLK Day

*By: Demi Barzana*

To celebrate the work of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Lehigh University invited the staff of the Multicultural Center to take part in a trip to Washington, DC. The morning began quite early, six am to be exact. The ladies from Cedar Crest joined almost 100 other students from the surrounding areas; this included students from Northampton, Muhlenberg,

and Moravian. For me personally, it is always a pleasure to meet new students outside of the Cedar Crest community.

The morning orientation began just like any other orientation session; general information about the program, where we would be traveling to, and what to expect. The one unexpected aspect of the session was the phrase, "This will be an experimental time." Mostly everyone, including myself, simply looked around the room wondering what this could mean. Soon we were advised to move into our designated areas on the bus, based on the color of the wristbands we had received upon arriving.

After boarding the bus I found myself seated in the back, separated from my group or from any familiar face. An unsettling feeling came over me suddenly, I tried to ignore the thought that this was done because of my race. However, as I looked at the other students sitting beside me, I realized we were all in this together; black, white, male or female.

For about an hour, everyone who was sitting in the back of the bus was treated like people of color used to be treated while riding buses before the Civil Rights Act. We had to pay more for food (we paid with tickets), and we were not even offered everything that the people in the front of the bus were offered. We even had to pay to use the bathroom! After the hour was over, we were done with the experiment and were treated equally. This experiment made me really realize how unfair society was for people of color, even when it was just riding a bus.

When we got to D.C. we were separated into smaller groups and were able to walk around to the different monuments. Even though it was freezing cold, it was very enjoyable, especially since I have never been to D.C. before. My group was able to see all the famous monuments and learn a lot about each of them because my group leader knew a lot about the history behind the monuments. Each monument was beautiful and held so much history, but my favorite had to be between the Korean War Memorial and the MLK Memorial. The MLK Memorial had a line of famous quotes by Martin Luther King Jr. and in the middle was a beautiful sculpture of him. It was such a nice memorial to walk through. The Korean War Memorial was just amazing to see because the soldiers almost looked like ghosts in their rain ponchos. Both were very powerful in subtle ways, and it was one of the things that made the trip so enjoyable.

# Highlights From This Year's Events

Author, Neela Vaswani, PhD, spent a day on campus this November to speak with students about her book, *You Have Given Me a Country* and her career as a writer. Neela demonstrated the complexities of identity and intersectionality through personal stories in her biography including her Sindhi-South Asian/Irish heritage, living in 25 countries as a child, multilingualism, and how poverty, alcoholism, violence, and other issues touched the life of her extended family life. Just as her book was imbued with a sense of humanity and humor, so was



*Sam Tso*

her conversation with students from the Honors and larger campus community when we talked over lunch in the Multicultural Center.

In September, Sam Tso member of the Navajo Nation in Arizona and traditional healer addressed the campus community and students in First Year Seminar, *Drugs: the Good the Bad and the Ugly* with Dr. Jeanne Berk. In Sam's presentation, he talked about traditional knowledge of plants, energy and rituals used to treat and heal disease that was passed down to him from his elders. The alternative therapies Sam offers to native and non-native people are rooted in his spiritual beliefs and an effort to preserve cultural traditions for future generations.



*Neela Vaswani*

Often times when there is conflict, people have no outlet; violence and confusion could run rampant. At the Multicultural Center we have Talking Circles to mitigate that possibility. Based on a long standing Native American Tradition, Talking Circles aims to create a safe space for open discussion and the healing of communities. It also aims to reduce prejudice and foster understanding between cultures to create a safe and open environment for the sharing of thoughts, feelings and ideas.

This year there were a number of Talking Circles, each of them dealt with a different issue, topic, or culture. Here is a highlight of two that stand out.

In the Spring Semester there was the Japanese Cherry Blossom Festival that included a traditional tea ceremony and a discussion on British tea culture as compared to Japanese tea ceremony. The turn out was huge and there was tea sharing, conversation, and the enjoyment of sweets.

Professor Precious Yamaguchi, dressed in full spring yukata with a sakura design and a tastefully tied obi when she presented a traditional dance to the tune of *Sakura Sakura* for our enrichment. After her lovely presentation, participants enjoyed delicious gyoza (with vegan options), sushi, and more good conversation.

A later Talking Circle, which involved much less frivolity and more serious talk, included the director of a neighbouring Multicultural Centre to discuss LGBTQIA issues on campus and how to generate resources to better support our community. Acting Director of Lehigh University's LGBTQIA Services, Kim Ketterer, was kind, helpful, and filled with good humour as she answered the many questions with grace and genuine interest.

*By: Kaiya Primus*



*Dr. Precious Yamaguchi*





# Julian Agyeman

*By: Adley Alezy*

As a society we like to focus on social justice but what about environmental justice? This is a subject that is neglected by society. On January 29, 2013, the Multicultural Center got the opportunity to go to Moravian and hear Dr. Julian Agyeman, Chair of the Department of Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning at Tufts University, speak about environmental justice and “just” sustainability. Segregation in the United States is not only divided by race, age, sex or class. The United States is also segregated geographically. If you look at the way our cities and suburbs are built. The suburbs are more spread out and the city is more clustered. The suburbs have better schools and better hospitals. Where you live can determine the education and the care you receive.

To highlight the significance of culturally responsive urban planning, Agyman argued that the state or city does not accommodate or make changes for the people who live in their communities. One example he talked about, focused on his observation of the benches in the park in London that he helped reform. He noticed that no one who came to the park used the benches in the park. He figured out the reason why the benches were not used were because of the way the benches were set up. The benches in the park were built to accommodate two adults, two children and a dog. When he looked at the people in the park he noticed that a lot of South Asian people played in the park. The Indian people there, were majority older people and came to play in the park in big groups. They didn’t use the benches because one, only two people could sit on one bench and culturally South Asians like to sit in groups and the benches didn’t allow that to happen; as a result people did not use the benches. The benches in the park worked for a population that used to consist of small families that were made up of two parents, two kids and a dog, but that has changed. The area should accommodate for its changing community in order to prosper. The only way to solve this social injustice is to have representation from all community members, but until the proper representation is in place things will not change. To learn more about why he believes “environmental quality is not possible without human equality”, check out Dr. Agyeman’s blog at [julianagyeman.com](http://julianagyeman.com).

# Step Afrika!

*By: Demi Barzana*

On February 13th, the Multicultural Center staff and other Cedar Crest students attended the performance at Moravian College called Step Afrika!, the first professional company in the world dedicated to the tradition of stepping.



What is stepping you ask?

Stepping or step-dancing is a form of percussive dance in which the participant's entire body is used as an instrument to produce complex rhythms and sounds through a mixture of footsteps, spoken word, and hand claps. A person may perform stepping as an individual, but it is generally performed by groups of three or more.

In a room full of energy and music, the performers showed the attendees stepping that is typical to fraternities, traditional African dance, the Gumboots dance, and there was even a competition between the males and females, in which the audience had to decide whose stepping was better. There was a lot of variety and high energy throughout the show and there were no dull moments.

Included in the group of students that attended, was the Cedar Crest College Step Team, who was inspired by what they saw in Step Afrika!'s style of stepping. After the show the captain of the Step Team, Cassandra Bejar, had this to say about the show, "I loved the variety in the show with steps from fraternities to steps from Africa. It all flowed well throughout the whole hour." Watching this performance helped the step team here at Cedar Crest think about different steps the team can do and how to do them in a more creative way.

You did not need to be a stepper to enjoy this performance because everyone learned a lot about stepping and African Dance in a fun way because it was a very interactive performance. The audience was able to participate and some were even invited to the stage to perform steps with them. We all had a blast and this trip was very enjoyable.

In the end everyone learned more about stepping and a bit of the history too. It was a fun, yet educational way of learning about step and I believe that everyone got a better understanding and appreciation of the history of step. This was one of my favorite events during this semester, I hope that in the future maybe Step Afrika! performs here at Cedar Crest College, that way more students can come learn about the stepping tradition and also have a fun time while doing so.



## Learning about the Importance of Intercultural Communication in the Workplace

*By: Kenza Glass*

In March, Judy Sabino, MPH, Diversity / Cultural Liaison for Lehigh Valley Health Network, presented a workshop to students, faculty, and staff on intercultural communication over a light lunch of sushi and subs. Drawing on her many years of experience, Sabino first asked participants to reflect on their own culture and identity, emphasizing that we all come from unique backgrounds. A very important realization is that because everyone has a multicultural background, all interactions are intercultural. To demonstrate the failure of our perceptions which can reinforce our biases, we did an experiment. The audience was given instructions to watch a video and to focus on how many times a sports team passed the ball. We learned that when we are focused on one thing, or have one perspective in mind, we miss lots of other details and the big picture. That's what happens when people jump to conclusions and make snap judgments when interacting with people who may be different from them. The consequence from this behavior, even from well-meaning people, is stereotypes and discrimination. To overcome this human tendency and have successful communication, cultural humility becomes necessary. Sabino defines cultural humility as:



*Judy Sabino MPH*

- Lifelong commitment to self awareness and reflection of who we are from a cultural perspective
- Understanding the assumptions and beliefs that we bring to the intercultural encounters
- Respectful attitude toward differing points of view of colleagues, patients and families

Sabino explained her role as diversity/Cultural Liaison is to help medical professionals learn how to cultivate cultural awareness and how to implement that knowledge when working with patient's in clinical settings. Two important strategies are to be a good observer and also to ask questions. In one example, Sabino explained that a new healthcare facility had been opened Berks County and providers did not see anyone from the large Mennonite community coming in for services, so they reached out to members of that community and asked to meet to have a conversation about why they that community did not take advantage of the health services offered. What providers realized was that they had a fancy new building and parking lot, but did not realize that many Mennonites use horse and buggies, and there was no place to hitch their horses. So, the hospital commissioned a "barn raising" so a shelter could be built by the Mennonites right in front of the new Health Center where horses and buggies could be left. In another example, A Native American man was not getting the medical care he needed until doctors thought to ask him about his beliefs and practices related to illness and healing. The man agreed to get the surgery he needed when the hospital allowed him to make the arrangements he needed to smudge for purification and have access to a traditional healer.

Participants left the workshop with the insight that cultural awareness and diversity are essential imperatives not only in healthcare but also as a business practice. Professionals in public health are charged with bridging disparities in health services and health outcomes at the population level, while businesses recognize that diversity allows for maximum perspective, creativity, and innovation. For reasons of personal growth, professional development, and marketability, everyone should look for opportunities to maximize their cultural intelligence and intercultural communication skills.



# Community





# *Thanks for all your support!*







# CEDAR CREST COLLEGE

## The Multicultural Center

The Multicultural Center at Cedar Crest College is grounded in the shared values of community, equality, and social justice. The Multicultural Center acts as a clearing house for initiatives, programs, academic support, and policies that are directly relevant to diverse student populations on campus.

**The mission of the Multicultural Center focuses on the following key concepts:**

- The Multicultural Center at Cedar Crest College encourages and supports all community members in the development and exploration of their unique individual and group identities by providing a safe and welcoming space.
- The Multicultural Center at Cedar Crest College works toward the retention and success of traditionally underrepresented, underserved populations, LGBTQIA students, and other marginalized groups.
- The Multicultural Center promotes inclusive campus climate through dialogue, awareness, professional development, academic excellence and leadership.
- The Multicultural Center collaborates with every campus office to ensure that all members of the community have access to the benefits and resources offered by an institution grounded in the liberal arts and dedicated to educating future generations of women leaders.

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