

Inside Westlands Gate



Teach-In

Biology faculty member [redacted] representing the General Committee—organizer of the Teach-In—was one of the opening speakers on the North Lawn.



Pictured left to right: [redacted] '71 and [redacted] '71; [redacted] '88; President Michele Myers; [redacted] '06; [redacted] '05.

President Michele Myers cancelled all normally scheduled activities at Sarah Lawrence on Thursday, April 8, so the College community could participate in a special event, the Teach-In on Racism, Bias and Exclusion.

Prompted by reports of campus incidents of ethnic and religious insensitivity, the Teach-In was organized by the General Committee, comprising the president and members of the administration, faculty and student body. The Teach-In began with a gathering on the lawn north of Westlands, before participants dispersed to one of 27 morning seminars,

an extraordinary choice of presentations led by faculty from virtually every academic area, as well as administrators and alumnae/i guests.

For many, a panel of alumnae activists—[redacted] '71, [redacted] '88, [redacted] '89 and [redacted] '71—was a highlight. [redacted], an attorney, reflected not only on the currents of campus unrest that led to the student takeover of Westlands in 1969, but on the sense of community that endured among the many student groups that were making demands of the College.

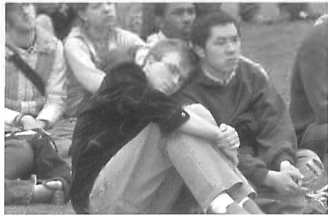
“While people had ideo-

logical differences, it didn't prevent conversation and respect,” remembered [redacted]. “We knew it was extraordinary that people had the ability—and, more importantly, the desire—to understand what other students were doing and thinking.”

That desire was almost palpable throughout the Teach-In, which concluded with a slate of afternoon discussion groups around campus, and a final open-mike gathering on the misty, rain-slicked north lawn. [redacted] '80, history faculty member and director of the Women's History graduate program,

implicitly reminded the community that the real focus of a teach-in isn't the teacher: “If we're much better at teaching about race than learning about it,” she said, “that's part of the problem.”

Student senator [redacted] '05 exhorted the crowd to examine the often fuzzy “liberal” label that hangs about the Sarah Lawrence education, in an effort to discover why being “liberal” does not by definition preclude insensitivity. Through a litany of drolly rhetorical questions that sifted aspects of modern life, he demonstrated the impracticality of drawing a



single, irreducible meaning for “liberal.” “Are you automatically liberal if you’re comfortable with diversity?” he said at the end. “Can you still be liberal if you aren’t?”

“I think the answer to all of these questions is that we shouldn’t have to answer them,” he said. “It’s the term we need to re-evaluate, and the expectations that come with it. If everyone of us on campus were stretching ourselves every day to be the most dynamic, developing, sensitive human

beings we could be, we’d never hear the term ‘liberal’ again—because we’d have created a place and a community far beyond what that word could define.”

Challenging, thought-provoking and instructive, the Teach-In was acknowledged as but the first step toward a greater inclusiveness, openness and understanding, at Sarah Lawrence and in the society beyond the campus.

The Teach-In’s ultimate success would hinge

on “constant community self-assessment,” said ██████████ ’06, chair of Student Senate in 2003-04. “Real education in this country and in the global context has to consider race, class, gender and religious practice as real influences on every facet of social and private life,” to be learned not through books, “but through real and constructive dialogue.”

Read President Myers’s opening speech at the Teach-In on page 2.

Director of Diversity and Community Engagement position created

The College has begun a search to fill a newly created position, director of diversity and community engagement. Responsibilities of the post will include remaining in close contact with students and student groups regarding race, diversity and identity issues, and coordinating a committee to address issues of racism, bias and exclusion. “While new diversity initiatives will be coming from a number of places on campus, it’s great that the new director will be based in Student Affairs,” said ██████████, associate dean of student affairs. “The focus of the position will include both supporting students of color, and engaging *all* students in dialogue about identity, oppression and inclusion. We’re excited about having this additional resource.”