

## SL101 Book Hits Close to Home

DEREK PAYLOR

A fair-skinned black woman with a short-cropped natural and freckles smiles invitingly upward towards the reader of the cover she graces. She looks pleasant enough, smiling as she is, until one glances right and sees the question she poses to her admirer, who is taken unaware by her loaded and not-so-innocent inquiry. Dr. Beverly Tatum's 1998 national bestseller entitled Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? And Other Conversations About Race brings an uncomfortable topic to America's schools and a generation still segregated at the lunch table.

Why Are All... makes an interesting read for its direct discussion of race relations in America from the viewpoints of a virtual rainbow coalition, admittedly focusing mainly on blacks and whites. Claiming to "explain the development of racial identity," the author acknowledges her bias in her statements as an African-American woman as well as her wealth of knowledge from personal experience being a part of the community. Trying both not to alienate her mainstream audience as well

as, to use the popular jargon, "tell it like it is," the author makes statements seen as uncomfortable and "racist" to some while appearing to others to be bringing the gospel to heathen ears. As part of the integration of juniors into the NCSSM community, most juniors are getting their first taste of racial and cultural diversity. To question why the SL101 curriculum makes "Why Are All..." required reading is a common response for most of them.

Many seniors wonder why the book wasn't assigned to the 2005 class instead, since the issue of cafeteria segregation was an explicit concern. Last spring, the issue of where the black kids sat was on the forefront of school debate. A speaker during an Alt Day assembly addressed the student body on the importance of racial diversity among a student body. During his speech an impromptu student-initiated public forum caught many by surprise, where issues such as gay and lesbian tolerance on campus and whether Asians should be considered a minority in college admissions arose and were haphazardly discussed. The most heated topic of discussion was about The Unicorn Grill and the proportionately large amount of black

students who dined there. Accusations of "self-segregation" were thrown alongside offensive statements such as the unforgettable "black people are scary." Some lamented how it always falls on the white person's shoulders to encourage diversity while a group of black people, coincidentally sitting together in one section of the auditorium, defended themselves against a barrage of student attacks and indelicate and accusatory questions.

After it was all said and done, things returned to normal. Non-blacks sat in The Grill for a day or two before slowly migrating back out, and the television in that room remained solely to its original admirers.

So, with this being an issue of last year, why are juniors discussing our unsavory meal-time segregation in their SL101 classes? To someone who didn't witness the tension-filled forum last year, does Tatum's book impact the juniors as it would the seniors if it were an SL201 assignment or even summer reading? The eagerness to read the book is not reflected in the junior class, with a large majority of them bragging about not reading the book very similarly to how seniors slacked on The

Future of Life. A noticeable amount of juniors do not feel any obligation to read the book as those who sat through last year's discussion would. For many juniors, this book is simply a preachy sociological account from a know-it-all fiery colored woman. Many juniors ask with legitimacy why black kids are getting all the attention (The answer being that since there is a physical barrier- the grill walls- the "segregation" is more noted. The groups of Asians and whites sitting relatively exclusively with each other each day doesn't draw the same awareness).

Those who come across the book should read it, whether they agree with all that's said or not. The point is to prompt discussion outside of the pitiful fifty-minute block it is constrained, a great excuse to have when breaking the ice at that new racially

diverse table you plan to join, unless you're one of the few who read the book and agree things are better as they are.

The junior class seems to do a better job at this integration-thing than last year, but that's maybe because of the current black junior drought. On many occasions, people not of the African Diaspora have been spotted eating inside The Grill, and not simply to prove a point as last year. The usual Grill frequenters are seen in the main section of the cafeteria as well, although this migration might be unintentional due to the grill being suspiciously locked several days in a row at dinner time. In any case, Dr. Tatum's book is floating about, and I suggest you give it a serious thumbing through. Cultural dialogue is one of the top reason Science and Math is way cooler than "your old school."

## Nicaragua

TAMZIN MITCHELL

The Central American country of Nicaragua has faced many problems in the last hundred and fifty years: uprisings, US takeovers, dictatorships, corruption, natural disasters and more. For years workers have struggled daily to ensure that their families have enough to eat.

Now, US trade policies are making it even harder for workers to get by. Free Trade Zones, designed to draw American businesses into Central America, spawn factories that undercut farmers' prices and pay workers far less than they ought to earn. An average Nicaraguan factory worker earns less than \$2.50 each day.

As globalizations stretches its tentacles of businesses and machinery, developing countries such as Nicaragua struggle to keep up. The national debt is so great that it will be nothing short of a miracle if the government is ever able to repay it.

The United States has reinvented the Nicaraguan government, rigged elections, illegally funded extremist groups, and rejected International Court rulings in favor of Nicaragua. Now, the U.S. is pushing for an agreement that will devastate workers nationwide, as well as U.S. workers. The Central American Free Trade Agreement will cause the opening of more and more factories in Central America, drawing jobs away from the United States.

Because the United

States is so powerful and Nicaragua is so poor, the government has no choice but to agree to CAFTA. An agreement will make conditions harsher for all but the rich, but a refusal would ultimately lead to national bankruptcy.

Throughout Managua, Nicaragua's capital, an "American" can witness sights that he or she has never seen before: children selling water, candy, or turtles; armed guards on street corners; streets and streets of houses built from scraps of tin and wood, plumbing so bad that one cannot flush the toilet paper. These are everyday sights, ones that citizens have seen every day of their lives.

Primary education is mandatory, but it is not public. Over a million school-age children cannot afford school. Instead, they spend their time begging for money until they can find a job, any job. One little boy says that he wants to earn enough money to buy a pair of shoes.

Health care has suffered even more than has education. In all of Nicaragua, there is only one government-supported program for mistreated children. Clinics do not have the funds to buy supplies or pay doctors. Water goes untreated or exported, and only 66% of citizens can boast access to potable water.

Nicaragua's future will not change for the better anytime soon, but there is still hope: community schools are being built, independent international groups are offering support, and the people are finding a voice to support their thoughts.

## Bruises, Scrapes, and Sprains- Oh My!

TAMZIN MITCHELL AND CAROLINE FRYAR

The student body of NCSSM arrived in mid-August for the new school year. Bright-eyed and smiling, they looked to be the very image of health; in the bloom of their youth, they had strong young bodies and smiling, handsome faces.

However, two months into the school year, a significant portion of the student population has been reduced to a group of shuffling, bruised, "injured people." One cannot walk across campus, eat a bagel or write a Stentorian article without seeing a classmate on crutches, wearing an orthopedic boot, or limping - too busy, proud, or used to injury to visit the clinic.

But what is the cause for this disconcerting change in the student body? Why are so many people injured? A school-wide calcium deficiency, perhaps, not enough milk in the PFM? No, our culprit is IM soccer.

Intramural sports are an excellent way for students who do not have the time or

skill to play a varsity sport to get fresh air, exercise, and a break from work. However, a large proportion of injuries received from sports are a result of IM games. In addition to various scrapes and bruises, other injuries inflicted upon the student body by this menace include sprained ankles and wrists, pulled muscles, and, scarily, various eye injuries. "Last year... we had some major, major injuries," said clinic nurse Sharon Evans. While the benefits of intramural games outweigh the risks, beware! The next wrapped wrist or limping leg might be yours.

However, Coach Brian Gonyeau, who runs the intramural program, reported that he had not filled out any injury reports this year as a result of IM games. Nurse Sharon Evans agreed with his sentiment, that injuries seemed to be more serious last year.

Partially as a result of IM Soccer, NCSSM's cross-country team has been knocked askew by this season's injuries. There have been several pulled muscles, hurt ankles, hips and a back,

enough injured knees to put an entire ski slope to shame, two stress fractures, and a ruptured plantar fascia.

As many of the runners add shin splints and sprained ankles to their résumé of wounds, the promise of a long streak of wins is diminishing. At one point, six out of the original top seven runners on the men's team were injured, and thus unable to run. Although things have improved since then, both teams are far from attaining their potential level of success. This string of impossibly unlucky injuries is referred to, half-affectionately, half-begrudgingly, by the team as the "Kennedy Curse," evoking the tragedy which stalks that renowned family. Just as the Kennedys fell when on the cusp of achieving greatness, so has our school's cross-country team.

As the year progresses, hopefully, we will be able to restore the student body's health - and limbs - and become a cast-free school once more.