

Common reading provides common bond

The Common Reading program at Elon University has come a long way since its inception in 1992. Starting with the simple goal of nurturing a richer intellectual community, the program has become much more than students' first official college reading assignment.

College is a major transition for freshmen. Although the entire freshman class shares the common bond of being part of the Elon community, the Common Reading Program brings the class together through the shared experience of having read the same book.

The bond created shows not only that there is a true community on this campus but also that the Elon community is one that cares about the world around it. Almost all the books the committee chooses are set in a place far different from Elon. This opens students' minds to the world around them and stimulates critical thinking about their places in the world.

The Common Reading Committee is entrusted with the task of selecting the book for the coming year. Instead of having a committee of professors from one department, the committee is made up of professors, students and staff from across campus. This setup ensures the book they select will stimulate meaningful, intellectual conversation throughout Elon's campus.

The books selected by the committee are intended to encourage critical thinking that would not arise from casual on-campus interactions. As freshmen learn more about their newfound independence as college students, the chosen books seek to challenge students to consider how their individual actions affect the world around them.

The selection process starts two years before the book is assigned. Although anyone in the Elon community can submit an idea, the final decision is made by the committee. This decision is important because freshman academic programs are often based on the selected book.

The programming related to the common reading strives to stimulate a deeper intellectual discussion. The author of the book often comes to campus to speak to students. Additionally, related events consistent with the books' themes are often scheduled throughout the year. In the fall of 2013, author Conor Grennan did four different question-and-answer sessions involving more than half of the freshman class. He also led a lecture that was attended by about 1,400 people from various General Studies classes.

William Kamkwamba, the author of "The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind," will be coming to campus September 2014 with the director of a related film called "William and the Windmill." Related events are scheduled to coincide with their visit. This shows that the

common reading book itself is just the beginning of a yearlong conversation about broader global themes.

Having the author of the common reading book visit the campus in person does more than help kick-start academic programs and stimulate intellectual discussions. Adding a human aspect to the book shows students that books can be read, discussed and challenged in intellectual conversation.

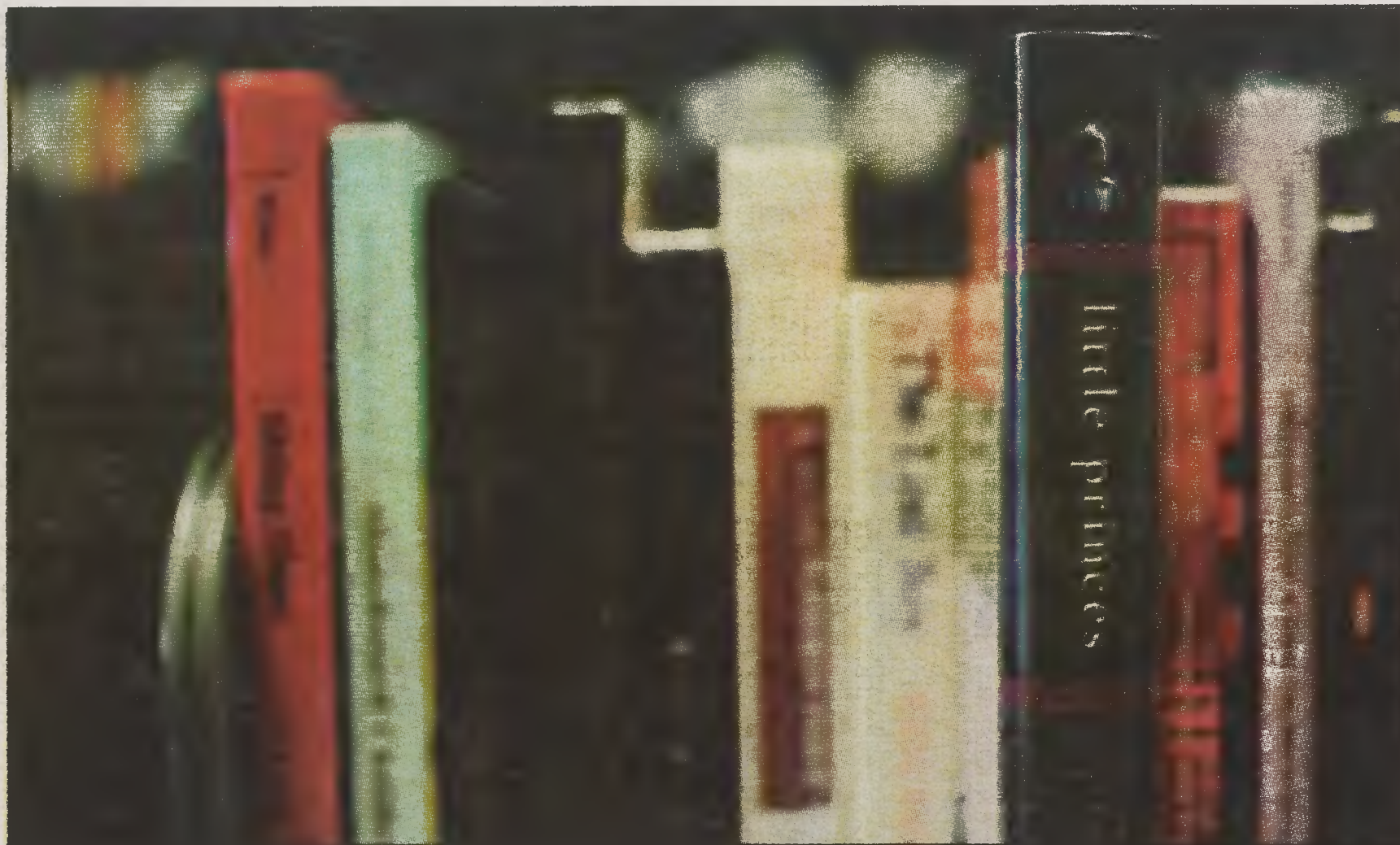
It should be mandatory that common reading selections be incorporated into the "Global Experience." As "Global" classes vary depending on the instructor of the class, the common reading should be a binding component of the first-year experience.

As a campus that seeks to foster global citizens, Elon has chosen many common reading books that have challenged

students to look at the world through someone else's eyes. This is a truly an invaluable skill for college students to have, for they will encounter many different beliefs, opinions and ideas throughout their college experiences.

The program allows Elon to create a strong platform from which many different intellectual conversations and unique academic programs can spring.

The Letter to the Editor from April 16 regarding "Lasting effects: sexual assault on college campuses" included an incorrect link. This is the current link: www.elonpendulum.com/2014/04/letter-to-the-editor-a-response-to-lasting-effects-sexual-assault-on-college-campuses/



"Little Princes" by William Kamkwamba was selected as the common reading for the Class of 2017.

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