



# THE HILL NEWS

## Saint Lawrence University

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### **EDITORIAL: MULTICULTURAL SENSITIVITY SPEECH OPENS EYES**

Walking over to Dana Tuesday morning after attending the FYP Multicultural Sensitivity lecture delivered by Phillip E. Walker, I thought about what was said. As I walked through a puddle and my socks met the wetness through cracks in my soul, I searched through my own life peaking at my own multicultural interactions.

There were plenty that came to mind. I saw step relatives. I saw friends, acquaintances, travelers and characters from all eras of my life. But more specifically, I recalled an afternoon spent at the beach of Lake Michigan the summer after seventh grade.

We'd go down to the Lake quite often during the summer once the water was safe enough (there were days when the life guards posted up pollution notices) for us to swim.

After about an hour on this one afternoon, we noticed a weird group of people walking along the tree line farthest from the shore. They were Hispanic I think. Or maybe Mexican. Immediately, a friend of mine laughed at them. And we all started to laugh at them. No sooner were we screaming at them and ducking under the water when I realized something was wrong. I never said anything. I just joined in. I realized that night how it must have made the family feel, especially the kid who was our age.

In his speech, Phillip Walker talked about racism among many other related issues such as communication blocks, cultural understanding and more. During FYP Seminar, we discussed sensitivity and understanding. We talked about the definition of racism. It seems so vague. Could you define racism?

We laugh at ourselves when we hear a joke about being French if the French man in the story is the first to fall off the roof rather than the Polack or the Brit? Should it disturb us that a part of our identities are being laughed at? Or is it simply shallow humor? That line is sometimes hard to define.

Walker mentioned intimidation and groups. He talked about the guy who didn't speak up when his friend cracked a racial joke, how at first one is ostracized for what he or she believes, though it may be opposed to their peers, one may never break down the "walls of communication."

Yes, the wall of communication. One may fear leaving their group to let in somebody different, or they may not want to leave their group to try something with which they are not familiar. Thus, the walls stay up and are never broken down.

On Campus, there are many communication blocks between various groups. But the blocks aren't all cultural blocks. In my eyes, they are the very blocks I observed in high school. Ya know, the "she doesn't use the same lunch box as us" crowd.

Some people complain about cultural cottages on Campus. They claim that those people are closing themselves off from the rest of the community and that they are not making an effort to integrate. Is there a reason they might not make an effort? Could it be mutual?

People share their cultural heritage together. It is natural to spend time with people with whom you feel the most comfortable. It just so happens that for the majority of minorities on SLU Campus, those groups stand out a bit more.

The only way to understand others is by making that extra effort.

People complain that Phillip Walker's strategies in dealing with cultural differences were obvious. His tips were far from obvious for each and every one of us. I ask myself many questions throughout the day regarding cultural sensitivity. Hearing that speech was the first time in many years that I really looked at myself in the mirror to see just how I view life and those around me.

I think that many people stopped to think about themselves and how they see others. Of course, there will always be that sleeping crowd in the audience or that group of six or seven people who can't stop talking amongst themselves even for one hour, that same group of people who will never break outside their walls, wake up and learn. *Warner Boutin, News Editor*

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