

## **Report to the Class Nov. 16, 2013**

Thanks to the Overall Class of '66, the Princeton Prize in Race Relations is alive, well, and vital. The Prize is in its eleventh year, and is currently awarded in 24 regions across the country. The national board of the Prize consists of some 75 members - the chairpersons of each local committee, several Princeton staff members, three undergraduates, and a number of at large members, including Henry Von Kohorn, Bud D'Avella, Brian Breuel, and Owen Mathieu. Debbie Scott Williams '84, a lawyer from Fairway, Kansas is the current Board chair. She and the Princeton Alumni Council "professional" David Mejias '98 both get high marks for their commitment, energy and hard work.

Eight hundred, one (801) students have been recognized by the Princeton Prize since its inception over these ten years, either as winners of "the Prize", or as certificate recipients. One student winner from this past cycle, Lauren Eclar from Nashville is a current Princeton freshman, bringing to five the total number of Prize winners in the undergraduate body. For the January 2013 cycle there were 517 applications submitted across the country (up from 403 in 2012), of which 83% were complete (i.e., were completely and properly filled out with recommendation by a faculty sponsor.)

Regarding the health of the Prize, a summary report of comments solicited from area chairpersons across the country this past summer reveals a mosaic of experiences. In a few communities committees are having difficulty maintaining the critical number of participants needed to keep the volunteer effort moving forward. This seems to be a particular issue, for example, in Atlanta, Pittsburgh and Chicago. In other areas the committees and the activity seem to be going at full tilt.

Twenty-three regions sent 28 participants to the Symposium on Race that our class sponsored, held April 25-27<sup>th</sup> on the Princeton campus. In addition to the winners, faculty and alumni there were 72 high school student participants from 16 area high schools. Among the outstanding list of speakers at this year's symposium were the new Dean of the Woodrow Wilson School, Professor Cecelia Rouse, and Della Britton Baeza '75, President and CEO of the Jackie Robinson Foundation. A highlight of the symposium was the presentation by Hilary Beard '84 and Michele

Stephenson who created the award-winning film American Promise, which sheds light on the life and trials of African American children being educated in an elite white school setting. The staff conducted a detailed questionnaire/evaluation of the symposium for both participants and guests. Using an E/G/F/P rating scale for each event nearly all of the offerings received marks of E/G in 80% or more of evaluations. “Satisfaction” or better was expressed by 100% responders. Comments used terms such as “loved it,” “excellent”, or (as a consistent comment) “wish it could have lasted longer.” (I think all of us who regularly attend the symposium can speak to how positive this experience is for the participating students, many of whom have seldom, if ever, been surrounded by other bright creative young people who share their passion for social justice.)

Our own winner from the Boston area was Connie Truong, was a bright capable scholarship student from Methuen, Mass who attended Pingree School, an elite day/prep school in Hamilton, the epicenter of fox-hunting country north of Boston. Shortly after arriving on campus she recognized the cultural gulf between herself and most of her schoolmates, the commonality of that experience among most of the minority students, and the barriers to academic success that they created. She systematically went about sorting out methods to bridge those gaps. The student created and conducted seminars, readings, and even produced a film on the subject. She became an officer in several campus activities – the Multicultural Coalition, People of Color Affinity Group, and other groups. She established a collaborative relationship with Professor Peggy McIntosh, a scholar at Wellesley College who is recognized for her studies of racism and barriers to opportunity. Connie is now a freshman at Wellesley and plans continue this work as an academic pursuit.

One of our certificate winners who is now a college freshman recently wrote to Eileen and me, announcing his participation in a fund-raiser being conducted by himself and team-mates on the Amherst College lacrosse team to benefit a tutoring and college prep program for disadvantaged New York high school students.

These are but two examples of the numerous anecdotes around the country of what students have accomplished before and after being recognized by the Prize. They indicate to me that the Prize is selecting the right students for the right reasons. Very recent events with racial significance that continue to stain the pages of our

national news have been stunning – the George Zimmerman decision, the Supreme Court ruling to repeal sections of the Voter Registration Act (which have already been followed by new voter restriction statues in eight states), and the exposure of the conversation in the Miami Dolphins locker room. These all should serve to make us proud that Princeton, through the commitment of the Alumni Council, and our class, is helping these young people to chart new courses and set better examples for their communities, and perhaps, as they assume roles of leadership, for the larger society.

If classmates would like additional information regarding submitted projects, just let me know. Thank you.

Owen Mathieu