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## COVER STORY

### BMOC: Big mandate on campus

*College "diversity" activists grab freshmen at orientation-and won't let go until everyone holds the same view / by Lynn Vincent*

Jessica Ashooh, 18, a freshman at Brown University in Providence, R.I., last month attended her new school's freshman orientation. But not a lot of orienting went on. Instead the program focused on becoming "part of the Brown community."

Facilitators, for example, billed one mandatory session on diversity as a meeting that would encourage freshmen "to think about how your experiences at Brown will be shaped by your membership in a pluralistic community." But what it really was, said Ms. Ashooh, was "your basic guilty-racist speech," delivered by Evelyn Hu-DeHart, director of Brown's center for race and ethnicity. "She was almost militant. At some points she was yelling at us."

Brown's orientation program is good, Ms. Ashooh said, "but they don't actually go over what you need to know, like when to buy your textbooks. They need to remember that the primary purpose of orientation is to orient people to their new surroundings. You had to ask for that kind of information."

Freshman orientation used to be about teaching new students how to find their classes, the cafeteria, and the campus bookstore. But today, left-liberal "diversity" trainers have found in orientation programs a ready-made crop of captive and impressionable audiences ripe for reeducation on issues of sex, race, and gender. The basic messages: People of color are victims; whites are their tormentors. Homosexuality is normal; abhorring the behavior is bigotry.

Some freshmen-orientation directors say they are only trying to prevent future student clashes over racism and "homophobia." Others say outright that such presentations are designed to shake the soil from new students' small-town roots, dismantle traditional values they might have brought from home, and—in presentations by hard-left facilitators—help white freshmen own and overcome their inborn racism. "I really want [freshmen] to understand that they are no longer at home, they're not in high school anymore, and a lot of the values and morals they may have had from those experiences may change here over the next four years," said diversity issues coordinator Marcus Newsom of Wartburg College in Waverly, Iowa.

In Massachusetts last month, orientation organizers at Amherst College required freshmen to attend both a diversity presentation and something called "Where's my affinity group?", a discussion in which white students talked about race. In addition, Amherst gay and ethnic clubs screened for new students the film *Blue Eyed*, a taped anti-racism workshop conducted by Jane Elliot, a \$6,000-a-day racial

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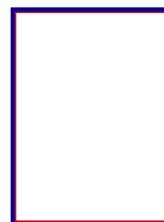
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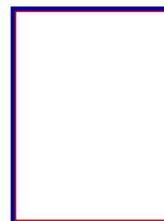
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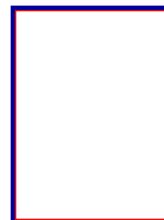
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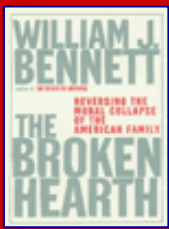


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awareness trainer whose frigid style evokes cut-throat quiz show hostess Anne Robinson of The Weakest Link.

In the film Ms. Elliot divides workshop participants into "blue-eyes" (all of whom are white) and "brown-eyes" (a mixed-race group representing people of color). In the course of an afternoon, Ms. Elliot ridicules, chastises, and humiliates the blue-eyes, while she praises, cuddles, and grants privileges to the brown-eyes. The aim: to "help" whites feel what it's like to be a person of color.

Alan Charles Kors, a University of Pennsylvania history professor and co-author of The Shadow University, calls orientation programs like Amherst's "Thought Reform 101." Some orientation facilitators believe the university cannot be content to educate students, but "must become a therapeutic and political agent of progressive change," Mr. Kors said. "This is a return of in loco parentis with a power unimagined in prior ages.... It is the university not simply standing in the place of parents, but in the place of private conscience, identity, and belief."

A small army of diversity "experts" stands ready to help. Blue Eyed facilitator Jane Elliot is one star in a constellation of highly paid, ultra-leftist facilitators who travel from campus to campus to proclaim diversity dogma.

Edwin J. Nichols, a Washington, D.C.-based diversity guru (who counts as clients the U.S. Department of Labor and the Environmental Protection Agency) charges schools about \$5,000 plus expenses for a workshop in which he teaches students to recognize and combat "white privilege."

Hugh Vasquez of the Todos Institute in Oakland, Calif., is the brain behind Skin Deep, another racial-awareness film popular with college diversity programmers. Freshmen at Virginia's Washington and Lee University this month watched the film, in which minority workshop participants lambaste "whiteness," while white students repent of generational racism.

At public colleges and universities, state money funds freshman indoctrination to school-approved race, sex, and gender slogans: "Not in Our House" goes the Arizona State University diversity motto. And diversity enforcement methods sometimes look frighteningly Orwellian. At West Chester University of Pennsylvania, a "Campus Climate Intervention Team" maintains an "Acts of Intolerance" database, "monitors" the campus for "acts of intolerance and insensitivity," and, if necessary, enforces "escalated sanctions." The school has logged only about nine harassment reports per year since 1991—five were graffiti, the others verbal or written—but that does not deter the "Intervention Team" from its military-sounding mission.

The Milwaukee School of Engineering (MSOE) orientation team subjects its freshmen to "Across the Line" (also called "Crossing the Line"), a diversity-awareness exercise that has also been used at Stanford University and Loyola University of Chicago. Groups of about 25 students line up shoulder-to-shoulder along a line on the floor. A facilitator then reads a series of about 50 statements. Every student who feels a statement is true of him or her is supposed to step "across the line," leaving the group behind. Statements start off mildly enough: "You are from a large city or town." Then they get personal:

"You have participated in racial, sexual, or cultural jokes."

"You are pro-choice."

"You would feel comfortable entering into a relationship with a person of a different race."

"You feel comfortable around persons with a gay, lesbian, or bisexual orientation."

While such introspection is certainly not inappropriate for college-age students, "Across the Line" forces a public "outing" among strangers. The exercise adds an unobvious layer of group pressure to an MSOE strategy that might well be described as "divide and conquer." To ensure freshmen are isolated from any friends they might have come to school with, orientation personnel computer-sort them into random groups.

"Sometimes if students are hanging out with two or three friends, they might feel

their attitudes are not so readily challenged," MSOE Director of Student Activities Rick Gagliano told WORLD. "This way they're in a different environment, forced to expose themselves to somebody else.... This is done without parents around—sort of in a 'safer' environment." The strategy is not new: Mao Tse Tung used it "re-educate" Chinese university students and pry them loose from their parents' political moorings.

Thor Halvorssen, executive director of the Philadelphia-based Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, said thought-reform-style orientation programs are particularly troubling when they are mandatory. "These issues should be discussed in the classroom, openly and voluntarily—not in forums where there are no dissenting voices, and not as the first contact students have with their schools."

Mr. Halvorssen said there is subtle pressure on freshmen to attend diversity sessions, even when such sessions aren't technically mandatory. Denison University in Granville, Ohio, last month held a separate pre-orientation program for students of color. Was it mandatory to participate? Not exactly, according to Denison's website, but if a student's intent was "to simply show up and view the experience in a casual, nonchalant fashion, then this will be at the displeasure of all of us who have taken extreme care to develop a meaningful experience for you. Additionally, we will have to address this matter with you, which is not the most appropriate way to begin this new and exciting journey."

At Michigan State University, freshmen at one residence hall in 2000 signed a pledge that they would "combat hateful actions." Mr. Halvorssen believes such documents may violate constitutional law. In 1943, the Supreme Court ruled that the state of West Virginia could not require all children to salute the American flag. Several Jehovah's Witness families regarded the flag salute as an act of idolatry. The court condemned the flag salute as a requirement because it compelled a student "to declare a belief ... to utter what is not on our mind."

Mr. Halvorssen sees "diversity" pledges the same way: "For the modern American college student, a school's 'tolerance' statements ... constitute a pledge to multiculturalism in the same way that the pledge to the flag is a pledge to Americanism."

Ironically, activists who institute diversity requirements for incoming freshmen claim to be destroying stereotypes and "barriers to community" while they are in fact creating new ones. Like Denison, nearly a third of 278 colleges surveyed by the National Orientation Directors Association offer minority and/or homosexual students a separate orientation program in place of the school's mainstream presentation. At Yale this month, incoming minority freshmen met with "ethnic counselors" to participate in small-group discussions, followed by a reception.

Meanwhile, diversity programmers at some institutions are pushing beyond a one- or two-course requirement toward more aggressive—even manipulative—measures.

At the June 2001 National Conference on Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education, Arizona State University diversity programmers presented a major workshop to representatives from more than 300 colleges. In a segment titled "The Field of Dreams Myth," (subtitle: "If you offer it, they will come"), ASU programmers suggested that merely advertising diversity-related events to students isn't enough. Instead they recommended that diversity trainers form "widespread and ongoing relationships" with students ("help with copy machine" was one tip for kicking off a relationship). Luring students to events using old-fashioned incentives like free pizza and soda is ineffective, ASU programmers said: You can catch more fish with superior bait such as academic credit and attendance-based eligibility for prizes. Finally, attendance alone is no measure of a diversity program's success in achieving inner transformation: Ongoing, "long-term" assessment of students' "personal development" is necessary.

Not every campus that includes a diversity segment in its freshman orientation handles it all badly. Virginia Tech covers diversity with freshmen using "VT Video," a low-key film with Pop-Up Video-style captions. The film poignantly covers everyday racism—a black student related how she'd noticed some white people wiping their hands after shaking hers—and touches on religious stereotypes. "People say Christians don't have any fun," a handsome, young man told an off-camera interviewer. He shrugged congenially and laughed: "I have fun every day." Even the video's seemingly obligatory segments on homosexuality don't ask others to accept the practice.

But that isn't true of other schools. In its policy on harassment, made available to incoming freshmen, Arizona State University labels a student's religious objections to homosexuality as "offensive" and "shocking" on par with supporting Hitler, slavery, and apartheid. At Oklahoma State University, University Academic Services Director Martha McMillian, a 10-year orientation veteran, speaks with freshmen about homosexual men and women. During her presentation, she holds up a magazine with a beautiful baby on the front cover. The headline reads, "Is this child gay?"

Then "a heated discussion erupts, and they're not easy to lead because there is passion involved," Ms. McMillian mused. "I ask, 'What do you think? Were you born with your sexual preferences? Or did you wake up one morning and say, I'm male, or I'm female.' And then they start thinking, 'Well, no, it was natural. It was there.' Well, what would make you think that a gay person doesn't have that same awareness of his or her sexuality?"

Ms. McMillian told WORLD her questions upset freshmen because their religious beliefs are being questioned. "An educated person is taught to be tolerant and open-minded. If you don't put parameters on it, and just talk about openness, acceptance, and tolerance then you can move into gayness and woman's issues."

The University of Pennsylvania's Alan Charles Kors believes such force-fed "tolerance" smacks of creeping totalitarianism. While Americans need frank and open debate on matters such as race and ethnicity, he said, "these are not issues for indoctrination. Indeed, they do not even reflect everyone's chosen intellectual or moral agenda, and free individuals choose such agendas for themselves."

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