Diversity does not necessitate separation

by Steven Wolfe

One of the reasons I came to Tufts was for its plethora of opportunities. Organizations such as the Pan-African Alliance, the International Club, Hillel, and scores more are just some of the outlets that provide Tufts with its unique opportunities. And on any given night there could be merengue dancing sponsored by the Hispanic-American Society, a party over at a fraternity, or some flicks being shown by the Japanese Culture Club. Through all these different organizations, Tufts earns its (dare I say the "D" word...?) diversity.

Yet, as a sophomore, I’m realizing more and more how much of a joke “diversity” is, here at Tufts. Everyone can somewhat relate to Freshman Orientation when everyone and their mother shouted “Tufts is Diverse” down our throats. You might have spent the first few weeks exploring a little or a lot, depending on how daring you are. Maybe you went to a frat party, or swung by the I-House. But after a while, you found a niche that you felt comfortable in, and you stayed there. One of the most important things about college is to find yourself and things that you can identify yourself with. However, my gripe is that people are forgetting another important aspect about college: to explore and experience new things.

I have no problem when people hang out with those that they feel comfortable with. But I do have a problem when people limit themselves, and then they won’t hang out with anyone “new” or “different.” And when people start limiting themselves, and only stay within their “comfort zone,” there’s the danger of becoming “cliquey.” This is precisely what has happened at Tufts.

Everyone always pokes fun at the fact that Tufts is diverse, but the truth is Tufts really is diverse. I know when I visit friends at other colleges or go back home on break, I realize how diverse Tufts is, and I appreciate it. But, if you think that I’m imagining the cliquiness, look around campus. I don’t think that I’m the only one who notices who sits in the small dining area in MacPhie, or who’s hanging out at a Sig Ep party. Don’t get me wrong, I think it’s great that all kinds of people can come to Tufts and be assimilated into a comfortable niche, but what it comes down to is that the Tufts community is diverse, yet separated.

One reason why “diversity” is such a joke on campus is that everyone realizes this “clique” phenomenon. There are many organizations on campus, but each organization has a specific following, and once people are associated with a particular group, they rarely explore new ones. This is sad, because here at Tufts we have such an incredible opportunity with so many options before us, but we don’t take advantage of it. Therefore, the whole notion of “diversity” that the administration is so proud of is subsequently defeated, for the frequency that organizations interact is minimal. Tufts’ most lauded resource is going to waste.

Well, actions speak louder than words. My plea is that the Tufts community continue to cherish its diversity but at the same time integrate and unite itself across all boundaries (and groups!). Events are what we, as an integrated Tufts community, make of it. Let us seize this opportunity to bridge our boundaries, and truly be an integrated, diverse community!

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