What does #1 mean?
Watchdog group says ranking may be misleading

By Tim O’Boyle & Maria Ramos
Senior Reporters

An article in Mercer’s December 2016 issue Viking newsletter explained how the college had “been named the number one military-friendly school among all two-year colleges in the nation by Victory Media, a provider of informational resource material to U.S. active duty military personnel, veterans, and spouses.” The VOICE wrote about the award, too. But what does that ranking mean? How did we earn it? What standards are used to determine the winner?

In a report written by the independent non-profit group Veterans Education Success (VES) titled “Understanding Misleading Websites and ‘Lead Generators:’ A Case Study: Victory Media’s ‘Military Friendly Schools’” originally published in August 2016 and updated in February 2017, VES calls to question the standards and practices used by Victory Media to assign its rankings.

During an interview with The VOICE, Dr. Jianping Wang said that during her candidacy as President for MCCC, a group of veterans approached her with a list of complaints, she promised to address them within two years’ time.

Dr. Wang said, “That was my pledge and we earned that title in one year, so it’s a really really big accomplishment for this college, the hard work and the staff.”

But the watchdog group that protects veterans says in their report that “Victory Media is a private, for-profit company that publishes several magazines (most notably GI Jobs), a website (military-friendly.com/schools) and a list of the annual trustees gala.

Tension builds in faculty contract fight

Months of negotiations fail to end stalemate over pay and benefits

By Kaylin Stafford
Reporter

Students have seen signs posted on faculty office doors and in windows saying, “No Contract, but Still Working” but what do they mean?

The full time faculty members, of which there are approximately 100, worked based on a contract that lays out annual wages and salary increases, and clarifies how many classes are to be taught, how many supervisory evaluations given, number of office hours, amount of benefits and other job requirements. A key sticking factor is that without a new contract, faculty do not receive any increase in pay.

The most recent faculty contract expired over a year ago and faculty union officers and college administrators have been deadlock in negotiations.

Professor of Communication and the President of the faculty union, Alvyn Haywood, says, “We expect that the institution will take care of us as we take care of those who we work with.”

After months of stalled negotiations, Professor of English Edward Carmien, who is the current lead negotiator, says the full-time faculty and administration have moved into a “fact finding” stage.

Professor Carmien says, “In fact finding both sides will have the opportunity to share what they see are the facts of the matter at hand.” The facts in question have to do with college finances and whether or not adequate pay can be increased based on availability of funds.

In protest of not having a contract, faculty are putting up posters and wearing pins to raise awareness of their fight. The signs were used in 2013 during a similar contract fight that included a faculty picket of the annual trustees gala.

“Expect that the institution will take care of us as we take care of those who we work with.”

-Professor of Communication, Alvyn Haywood
There isn’t much information about anyone, with any kind of music to speak of. This means that the radio station, while the other half (22) were aware but disinterested and didn’t listen to it. There were only six students who said they listened to the station regularly even though its primary broadcast range is the bustling streets of NYC, or playing in locations like Central Park, filling the air with music mixing different cultures and times, much like the city itself.

**Student radio station works to build community**

By Griffin Jones

The dominance of radio, particularly college radio which for decades helped promote obscure bands to stardom, has been steadily declining. This has become a huge problem that impacts communities as much as four year schools. While many may know the popular classical station WWFM that plays on campus, the student station, Viking 89, which offers up a variety of musical genres music, from rap to jazz is struggling to maintain its following. The two are working on infusing their music with modern electronics and trap beats for the club scene. This fusion of music both Asian and African, modern and traditional, can really only be called interdisciplinary.

But how did Iwasaki get involved with the koto when his time at Mercer was mostly spent focusing on the piano? After he graduated from Mercer with an Associate’s in Composition he got his Bachelor’s degree from Temple University, and then his Master’s from the Manhattan School of Music. He stayed in New York City and was commissioned by Columbia University for a piece. This led to Iwasaki pursuing the koto at Columbia, sitting in on classes they taught on it and joining the koto ensemble. He also spent a month and a half in Japan studying under a koto master. The training was intense; he says he spent around twelve hours a day under her tutelage. He ate three meals a day with her and her apprentice, making it a personal as well as professional relationship.

The koto has a traditional Japanese sound. It looks like a massive version of the neck of a guitar and is larger than Iwasaki himself. It’s hard to imagine him carrying the massive instrument through the subways of NYC, but he just laughed off this idea saying “Believe me, I’ve seen stranger.” Aside from his work as part of Gemni Hasu, Iwasaki has also founded The Traveling Opera Company, which performed “Innocent Prey” here at Mercer last semester, a work Iwasaki composed the music for. He is also the musical director of Opera-Tunity, which works to bring opera to children. He can be often found alongside his djembe playing partner in subway stations of NYC, or playing in locations like Central Park, filling the air with music mixing different cultures and times, much like the city itself.

**Kento Iwasaki, Mercer grad and pro musician**

By Trevion Anglin

Musician and Mercer alumni Kento Iwasaki gave a lecture and performed music on the traditional Japanese koto instrument as part of the Distinguished Lecture Series on April 12. Iwasaki was introduced by acting dean of the Honors program, Dr. Bettina Caluori. She told the audience “This is the role reversal teacher’s love. He was my student, but today I’ll sit in my seat and learn from him.” A former Honors student and member of Phi Theta Kappa, as well as reporter for the VOICE, Iwasaki attributes much of his current success to his start at Mercer, especially the first class he took here, an English 101 class with Dr. Carol Bork.

He said of it, “I will always remember that class…She said that this class informed how to be successful in other classes.

That’s kind of a really big statement, but it was completely true. It has informed how I write music.” Specifically, he says it helps him switch between his “editor side and creative child side” as he applied what he learned brainstorming for English papers into working up new compositions.

Iwasaki believes the multifaceted liberal arts curriculum here helped him grow, saying “If I didn’t go to Mercer, I probably wouldn’t have become a theater composer. Mercer made me an interdisciplinary composer.”

That interdisciplinary approach has certainly taken hold on his work. As part of the duo Gemini Hasu he plays the koto alongside his partner, who plays the djembe, or African drum. The two are working on infusing their music with modern electronics and trap beats for the club scene. This fusion of music both Asian and African, modern and traditional, can really only be called interdisciplinary.

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No campus daycare leaves gap for parents

By Maria Ramos
Senior Reporter

Every semester it becomes more important for students to keep their grades up, graduate and graduate in the time frame they planned. The difficulty of being a full-time student and working full time in order to pay off school is already stressful, and now add the expense of paying for childcare services for those who are both parents and students.

At the 18 community colleges in New Jersey, 13 have a daycare on campus that serves students, faculty, staff, and the community.

Bergen County Community College is one of the 13 schools that have a childcare center on campus. The students receive a higher discount for the childcare center tuition than the staff, faculty and open public in order to help out students.

Sally Dionisio, Director of the Child Development Center at Bergen Community College says, “We do our best to assist students and their children in order for them to complete their degrees, it’s a good opportunity for students to be able to drop off their kids here at campus while they are taking classes.”

Mercer has realized that child care is a problem for students and staff and faculty members. Dean of Students Dr. Diane Campbell told The VOICE, “We had a meeting and our faculty said that child care was an issue with students, that lots of time we had students who bring their children to school and it seems that they need a way to have somebody to watch their children.”

In fact, in the late 1970’s there was a co-op childcare center on Mercer’s main campus. However, the college only provided the space, the mothers were in charge of the shifts. Professor of Visual Arts Lucas Kelly’s mother was able to finish her high school and Associate Degrees at Mercer County Community College because of this service.

Kelly says, “She and a number of students created a co-op. This cooperative daycare that she participated in was basically a bunch of students who were mothers who needed childcare and couldn’t afford childcare but also needed to go to school. So they essentially traded their time to watch children for time to go to class, so my mother would watch a group of kids while the number of the mothers whose kids were under the watch of my mom were taking class.”

In a survey conducted by The VOICE, 72 percent of students said Mercer should have a daycare on campus, and 60 percent said that if Mercer had a childcare center on campus they thought more people would enroll. But the student were less enthusiastic about the idea if it would result in a tuition hike.

Battle over faculty contract continues as sides are drawn over pay

Continued from page 1

in 2 years. According to union members, as cost of living goes up the expectation is that salaries should go up as well.

A bitter contract negotiation in 2013, which was covered in detail in The VOICE, found that the central disagreement was over a 1.5 percent raise in salary. At that point some community colleges in NJ were getting as much as a 2-2.5 percent raise.

Art Schwartz, Professor of Mathematics and the previous lead negotiator told The VOICE, explains why these seemingly incremental raises matter saying, “For example, if I get a two percent raise and you get a one percent raise, you’d said ‘Oh, the hell, it’s only one percent.’ No, I’m getting twice as much as you. And that will make a difference in 10-15 years.”

Dr. Wang, President of MCCC, says that the college simply does not have the proper funds to give professors such a raise. State funding, which is supposed to pay for one-third of community college fees, actually only accounts for less than 10 percent. Students currently pay over 50 percent of all community college fees. That is why tuition prices are rising each year.

Dr. Wang told The VOICE, “I believe we have in-credibly hard working faculty, dedicated faculty...and they really deserve to get a raise. I want you to give them a raise. But the truth is, as the president of the college, you cannot do things just because you want to, you have to do things that are responsible and that sustain the college. So if you choose just to settle the contract, don’t care how you’re gonna pay for it, then it will do the damage to the future of this college.”

During the current negotiation period Dr. Wang has noted that the college has a $500,000 surplus. She has proposed a “success sharing” option as a means to increase faculty pay. Under such a plan, faculty would get bonuses if more of their student completed and passed their classes.

One faculty member who spoke on the condition of anonymity for fear of job reprimands said, “The idea of ‘success sharing’ is unoriginal. It punishes pressure on faculty to lower standards so they can make more students pass. It also divides pits faculty against one another based on who won’t inflate grades and those who will.”

The same professor continued, “I think the president’s argument would be that the team benefits from overall increased graduation and retention rates so there is no pressure, but the team doesn’t assign grades, individual professors do. Even if they try to ignore the pressure, in the back of their minds they know the more students they push along, the more money they might get. From the student’s perspective that means you can’t count on your diploma to reflect real learning or mean anything.”

A similarly contentious contract fight occurred in 1986. The college administration did not want to give faculty a raise, but it was shown that the college could afford it. Eventually, professors went on strike for three days. Classes were canceled and the school activities came to a halt. With contract negotiations lasting longer than it did in 1986, is there a risk that the faculty will go on strike again?

Professor Schwartz says, at this point “I don’t think the faculty would support a strike.” However faculty have indicated that they may hold a vote of no confidence in the president’s leadership. While such an action does not have any direct impact, it would signal to the college’s board of trustees that protests or even another strike might be the next step.

In a survey of 30 students conducted by The VOICE, 63 percent said they believed professors not having a contract affects students, but on a scale of one to ten, half of those students rated how much they would be affected at the mid point, a five.

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English Professor Jack Tabor says, “What that means for you guys is that we are more tired. We would love to get your papers back faster, but because we are sort of having to run at 125 percent because we have to do this extra amount of work just to literally makes ends meet, it does wear us out. We’re less patient. We have less energy to come up with new things to teach.”

Dr. Diane Campbell, Executive Dean of Student Af-fairs says, “If you are doing what you came here to do, the signs in the windows should raise a flag in your intellect for you to ques-tion what is going on. And if you talk to a faculty member about what that sign means, hopefully as you leave Mercer and go into the workforce, you will understand what that means a lot bet-ter in terms of ‘still working’. We don’t have a contract, but we’re still working.”

Although this process has already been over a year long, professors agree that it will continue to be a long and drawn out process like it has been in the past. The “No Contract, but Still Working” sign are not new. They have been several times in the past when a contract agreement was not made.

Prof. Tabor says, “I think after the contract negotiations, these signs will probably get slid back behind everyone’s desk for the time being because this seems to be the nature of labor, especially here at Mercer.”

John Wills and Mia Mastianianti came to college and spent the day with their grandmother, an employee at Mercer, for Take Your Child to Work day.

The VOICE, “I believe we have in-credibly hard working faculty, dedicated faculty...and they really deserve to get a raise. I want you to give them a raise. But the truth is, as the president of the college, you cannot do things just because you want to, you have to do things that are responsible and that sustain the college. So if you choose just to settle the contract, don’t care how you’re gonna pay for it, then it will do the damage to the future of this college.”

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Student art exhibit opens at Mercer’s Gallery

By Jasmine Santalla
Reporter

On Apr. 12, The Gallery at Mercer County Community College held its third and final reception, the Visual Arts Student Exhibition showcasing dozens of piece across many fields of visual art such as photography, graphic design, sculptures and more.

Laura Callejo Jimenez, a Communication: New Media student, had one of her photographs selected. Jimenez told The VOICE that her one goal was to find something different and goes beyond the surface. This was the first time she’s had any form of visual art chosen for public display.

Jimenez said, “Photographing an old car makes me think of everything that car has seen through many years. For some, this car was a dream years ago, today it is just sitting in a random warehouse area in Trenton.”

Another photography student Lizzie Mayer has had pieces chosen for exhibitions in the past. Her most recent submission is titled [insert title here]. Mayer will be attending TCNJ in the fall studying art history. She works and has interned at The Gallery where she, along with other interns, have been able to create and curate their own shows.

Mayer told The VOICE, “[It’s only for a week] but we get to pick what we want. It can be a show about anything, we just need to find the artists and a theme and do it all ourselves without the help of the director.”

The interns’ most recent exhibit was their first. Mayer says it will be possible to host one more show by the interns if they take what they learned from the first one and plan accordingly. There are already discussions about the next theme.

Mayer says, “[The first exhibit] was just our persona so we just put in random work that we did to see how it would work together. Again, that was just our first show. The next show we were thinking about doing street art, graffiti art, street photography, have a city theme.”

Graphic Design and Advertising major Julia Cook’s piece, Vogue 1963, features a self-portrait as a Vogue Model on a 60’s themed cover. Looking beyond Mercer, Cook is interested in Art and Design schools in Philadelphia, and says her confidence has increased while working on this semester’s capstone project rebranding a company.

“[I]t’s only for a week but we get to create and curate our own shows. Mayer said. “Having the opportunity of publishing some students work is a great idea that motivates professors and students to keep up the hard work seeing some results in a short time.”

The Gallery at MCCC is currently seeking volunteers for the fall and spring semester and is always encouraging students to submit their work.

PHOTO SPREAD | JASMINE SANTALLA

The opening of the student exhibit at Mercer’s Gallery was well attended by a cross section of locals from both on and off campus. Many students who have first had their work on display in the student show have gone on to have pieces selected for Trenton’s Art All Night events and some have gone on to professional careers in the arts such as Photography Major CJ Harker whose work was recently showcased in an exhibit at Mercer’s Trenton campus.
Softball team rides ten game streak into post season

By Jackson Thompson

Mercer’s Vikings softball team finished up the regular season with a win against Ocean County on Friday April 21. They head into the postseason coming off a 10 game win streak and a total regular season record of 32-6. Despite the obstacle of having to rebuild the team on two year rotations, the program has managed to maintain an exceptional level of performance on a consistent basis.

Sophomore catcher Tatum Marshall told The VOICE: “It’s definitely difficult because you create a bond with one set of girls and then you have to create a new bond and then you have to get used to everybody. For life, you’re learning that people are going to come and go and you have to adapt to others and the change.”

When asked how the program is able to maintain a talented roster year after year, head coach Ryan Zegarski attributed the program’s effectiveness to the scouting the athletic department does in the offseason.

“When you do your work in the offseason it makes your in season very very easy,” Zegarski said, adding, “If you recruit and do your due diligence and bring in these student athletes then you should have an easy in season.”

The Vikings begin postseason play on Saturday April 29 against Del Tech in the region 19 playoffs.

Vikings baseball team offers season ending excitement

By Jackson Thompson

In a semester that’s been plagued by sex offenders, rising tuition, and questionable awards, Mercer students may find a bit of solace in a baseball team that has brought real acclaim to the college.

The Vikings split a two game series against third ranked Lackawanna on Sunday April 23, bringing their record to 33-11 and another day closer to the junior college world series.

Freshman Erik Bowren, team captain says, “We’re 45 games in right now, it’s been a long season but were starting to hit our stride. [There’s] definitely a lot of energy in the dugout and we saw a two game series against a ranked team so that was exciting. It’s definitely difficult because you create a bond with one set of girls and then you have to create a new bond and then you have to get used to everybody. For life, you’re learning that people are going to come and go and you have to adapt to others and the change.”

Head coach Kev Kerins says: “As an alumni and former player at mercer I can tell you that mercer is a special place. I myself have used my experiences here to springboard to opportunities that were not available to me out of high school. We are building something unique and special with our baseball program here. Though the playoffs are entirely on the road this season we are hopeful we can continue to bring positive attention and national recognition to the college and our student athletes.”

The team will be wrapping up the regular season on May 4 for their final home game against Anne Arundel, and post season play will begin Friday May 12 at a venue that has yet to be determined.
Revival of arts and economy at the shore

By Jasmine Santalla

What do Abbott & Costello, Danny Devito, and Wendy Williams all have in common? They all hail from the shore town of Asbury Park, NJ just 45 minutes from Mercer’s campus. It’s where Bruce Springsteen got his start and Jack Nicholson grew up next door in Neptune. Since its founding in 1871 it the architecturally and culturally impressive resort town has experienced wide fluctuations in its fortunes. Now, after a decades of struggling AP, as it is commonly known, is in the midst of yet another renaissance. Street art, affordable live music venues, hip restaurants and of course the broadwalk are drawing visitors and reviving a struggling economy.

In the 1970s, Asbury Park went through a steep economic decline. Buildings stopped being built while half way up. Crime rates soared. Shops were shuttered. The VOICE spoke to Mayor John Moor and a number of locals in order to find out more about the fall and rise of the city.

Mayor Moor, who grew up in AP attributes the decline of Asbury Park in the 70s one major problem was the construction of a new school district in Ocean Township in the mid 60s. Asbury Park high school was over filled students from eight districts, so families who could afford to move out, did so.

"It was so crowded, it went on split sessions... Ocean grove [school] was state of the art, it was modern, [the parental mindset was] I want my children to go to a potentially better high school," Moor said.

Gale Swan, who’s been a resident her entire life, told The VOICE, "It used to be awesome, in the 50s-60s. In fact when I was seeing my husband, this is where we used to come for dates. There’s Belmontes, Pascal & Sabines. They’re usually really packed on a breezy summer night," Swan said.

Pam Galatro, a resident of 44 years, enjoyed the Paramount Theatre in its early years seeing movies such as the original Snow White in 1950. But she told The VOICE the beach has always been the main draw.

Tom and Terry Mayer have lived in Asbury Park for six years now partly because it’s affordable but also because of the culture.

"In 2011, there was some risk in living here but we liked the idea that Asbury has a lot of different types of people. It is very multicultural. You name it, Asbury has it. Too much of the same thing gets boring," Tom Mayer said.

Along with a variety of restaurants, Asbury Park’s vibrant music scene maintains its reputation for attracting young people as it has for decades. Kicking off the careers of Jon Bon Jovi and Bruce Springsteen, Asbury Park’s The Stone Pony still sees names like Seether, Dark Star Orchestra, Screaming Females and the Pixies.

Mayor Moor also testifies to the depth of the music scene. As a kid, he says, he “saw every band except the Beatles, and you know why I didn’t see them? It’s because they never came to Asbury Park. We’re talking The Temptations, Ray Charles, The Who. You name them and they were playing at convention hall.”

Moor explains that Asbury is doing better financially now. He believes that this year will be the last year they request any sort of government aid. They’ve come a long way from thirteen million dollars worth of state aid to a low 850k this past year.

“Every year we just keep getting better. We just want to give back to the city. Nobody is looking to use this as a stepping stone,” Moor said.
Whole Foods of Princeton is one of five of the stores in the nation to feature a mochi ice cream bar, so The VOICE staff set about figuring out exactly what we think of the confections. Although there were dissenting opinions, the over-all response can be summed up as “no way, no thanks,” though the staff acknowledges a certain distrust for the pricey Whole Foods brand and a general lack of fondness for cold foods and/or ice cream.

News Editor Tim O’Boyle explained he is not the sort of person who “will bite into a popsicle. I’ve got to savor and taste. I don’t bite.” This perhaps pressed his response to the round, rice flour paste wrapped ice cream balls that come in Easter egg colors and are usually eaten in three to four bites in the same manner as a filled puff pastry.

O’Boyle’s first response: “I think basically, they are gentrified munchkins.” Indeed, the orbs are just slightly larger in size, but identical in shape, to doughnut munchkins.

His second response: “Honestly, when I ate the first bite I knew this would be the first and last time I ever put one of these in my mouth.”

VOICE Opinions Editor, Oscar Trigueros was similarly unenthusiased. He said, “I like anything I put into my mouth to be warm. I’m not a cold foods fan.”

According to her Nov. 7, 2012 obituary in the Los Angeles Times, Mochi ice cream was invented by Frances Hashimoto, a businesswoman and community activist who lived in the Little Tokyo district of the city. The treat has roots in Japanese Daidaiuku. Hashimoto’s husband is credited with suggesting filling traditional Japanese mochi with ice cream. The idea took hold and became mass produced as a Japanese American restaurant staple starting in 1993.

Notably, the one Asian American on the VOICE staff, Jackson Thompson, expressed more affection for the confections. Moreover he was able to explain the pronunciation for the non-ice cream version of mochi is closer to moo-choe.

VOICE co-adviser, Prof. Matt Kochis, likened the dessert balls to his most familiar starting point as an American of Slovak descent, pierogis, but not in a complementary way. He eyed the cornstarch dusted exteriors—used to keep the items from sticking in their case—with suspicion. Each mouthful required lengthy, concentrated chewing to get down and brought discussion to a halt. His response, “You just want to follow it with a glass of water.”

All present noted that the colors of the mochi exteriors did not always correspond to the actual flavors, which were revealed by co-advisor, Prof. Holly Johnson, after they had been tested. Yes, pink was strawberry and white vanilla, but the green ones? Wasabi? Pesto? Lawn clippings? No, it was matcha green tea. This was one of the few flavors the group generally agreed was worth eating.

“My only thing you brought me was a tub of the green ones, I might consider eating them again,” said Trigueros.

Mango also received slightly less hatred than the other flavors. Whereas the black sesame was described by O’Boyle saying, “I imagine it’s similar to what vape water would taste like.”

Trigueros added, “It finishes by dripping down the throat like mucus. It’s like clearing your throat.”

When asked to guess the price of a single mochi ball staffers, adamant that Whole Foods overcharges for everything, guessed from $3 to $5. The actual price is $1.50 for one and $12 for a box of 10. You can select the flavors yourself, so a box of only matcha green tea mochi is easy to come by, however, staffers indicated the price point did not fit a typical community college student’s budget.

In short: mochi = NO-chi.
Social justice efforts that stick

In new era of activism, some efforts doomed to fail

By Jasmine Santalla

Since the election of Donald Trump, our nation has been seeing a resurgence of social justice activism similar to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960’s. Looking back at the lessons learned from the civil rights movement, I see some efforts which have produced lasting change while others have had less staying power. The VOICE spoke to social justice leaders from the 1960’s and today and found a common pattern for what works and what doesn’t where effecting lasting change is concerned.

In separate interviews with The VOICE, Nell Braxton Gibson, a prominent civil rights activist of the ‘60s and Dr. Janice Johnson Dias, current Sociology Professor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice and the president at GrassROOTS Community Foundation, offered their perspectives on what makes some social justice efforts stick and others doomed to fail.

Gibson grew up in the south, living in Texas, Florida and Mississippi as a child. Her parents were professors, activists and members of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Gibson and her sister developed strong mentor relationships with leaders like Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune and Medgar Evers who worked to abolish segregation at the University of Mississippi before being killed by a Klansman.

In the early 1960’s Gibson became inspired to join the Student Movement, which pushed for the rights of African American college students. Living just 60 miles away from where the lynching of Emmett Till occurred solidified her commitment to fight the discrimination and injustice she saw around her. In specific she participated in organized, nonviolent political activism. She and her friends attended mass demonstrations, walked in picket lines, and protested segregation at the Georgia State Capitol during which she was arrested.

Gibson was attending Spellman College in Atlanta when she began seriously pursuing social justice activism. She told The VOICE, “What we did was we had people who came to the movement who took an oath to nonviolence. There were [twelve] points of things they agreed to do and/or not do and one of them was [pledging] real discipline.”

Reflecting on recent demonstrations like the Women’s March on Washington, the March for Science and the airport protests against President Trump’s muslim ban, Gibson sees weaknesses on the methods being applied. “What I think is not working is the fact that the demonstrations are more reactive than proactive. People are reacting to what they hear rather than what the problem really is. I think it’s harder to maintain a movement that way.” Gibson said.

Gibson told The VOICE that mass demonstration is only effective when there is order and accountability. Just as there were people who stepped up to lead back in ’62 outside Atlanta University (pictured above at top). She explained, “[Mass demonstrations] need to be continuous. [In the 60’s] they wouldn’t wait for something to happen and then take to the streets. There would be a plan to keep demonstrations going everyday. That way people would have to deal with the fact that you are out there every day. It would not let people turn away from it, to have that kind of sustained action each day and each week so that at some point the public will have to deal with it.”

In terms of how individual activists were most effective Gibson said, “What we did was we had people who came to the movement who took an oath to nonviolence. There were [twelve] points of things they agreed to do and/or not do and one of them was [pledging] real discipline.” Gibson said.

Though Gibson does not discount the potential uselessness of social media to aid in social justice efforts, she has reservations about its ability to promote the sustained effort and leadership she considers vital to any effective movement.

“I think [social media is] a double edged sword when it comes to work and bringing pressure to bear politically. Say you have people who show up with a gun, or other means of violence; you don’t know who shows up and you don’t care because it’s all about making sure as many people show up as possible,” Gibson said.

Some efforts that have been driven by social media have to have short lived effectiveness, such as Occupy Wall Street and even the overthrow of governments during the Arab Spring. Once the initial goals were met progress was not fully sustained as there were few plans for next steps nor obvious leaders to organize them.

Gibson points to coordination...
The college--

and leadership as crucial in any fight for justice saying, “To those people who are saying nothing will come of it, they are not necessarily wrong, demonstrations are not the only way to go there are number of routes to take. They need to somehow be coordinated, someone needs to take responsibility.”

Campus-wide division leader, Dr. Johnson Dias, a professor of Sociology and president of the GrassROOTS Community Foundation which advocates for the healthy of low income black women and girls in New Jersey says she relies on many of the types of tools Gibson says sustained the civil rights activism of the 1960’s. Dias told The VOICE, “Parts of the [Civil Rights] Movement that relied on collaboration and coalitions across both gender and race were likely more last than those that were too special for education majors to harly built around charismatic leadership which is much more fleeting even though they’re more attractive.”

Beyond leadership and sustained effort what makes social activism work? Johnson Dias says there are levels to what the word “work” may mean. She says that the first step is reaching legislators who have the power to change laws and pass legislation that yields results. Care mirrors the goals of leaders, like Gibson of pushed for specific legal changes to end segregation and Jim Crow laws.

“If it means taking direct action to change policy, I think we’re struggling because people don’t know how our political systems work. We’re stuck at conscious- ness and while I think this is the first and most important step, I don’t think we’ve gotten to that place of more legislation,” John- son Dias said.

While the average college student may not yet be able to name specific leaders of current social justice movements, clearly people like Johnson Dias are stepping up. GrassROOTS has had success in supporting the election of political candid- oates like Rac Baraka in Newark who have pledged their com- mitment to change the status quo. And although some recent large scale marches have been designed mainly to raise awareness of a particular issues like science and environmen- talism (see photo ____, others have focussed on specific legal actions like striking down the muslim ban. Gibson might see the latter as an example of reac- tionary activism, but other ef- forts involve greater long term vision. For example the group Swing Left is working to replace legislators who do not support social justice with those who do, and New Voices USA is working state by state to get legislation passed to protect student press freedom (a matter of great im- port to The VOICE). Additionally students and young protestors do seem to be getting the idea that lead- ership and sustained organiza- tion are key. Groups like Emily’s List are seeing a surge in young women signing up to learn how to run for office and push for so- cial justice legislation.

Hayley Bransont, a freshman at Monmouth Uni- versity says, “I think that rallies are important, but I think that the most effective form of activ- ism is direct contact with one’s representatives. I believe that it is important for people to write to or call their representatives in Congress because that kind of direct contact is hard for a politician to ignore.”

Beyond the other criteria for success Johnson Dias stresses the need for emo- tion at the core of social justice activism.

She says, “Start with your frustration and your pas- sion, take the thing that frus- trate the hell out of you, find the thing you’re passionate about and try to see if you can stop them.”

On-campus daycare unavailable, students must look elsewhere

Continued from page 3

increase.

In his response wrote on the survey: “If it doesn’t af- fect my tuition then I don’t care.”

The opening of a day- care on campus might affect tuition costs, according to Dean Campbell. She says, “There are so many regulations that go with childcare that makes it very expensive to run. To renovate the toilets that are the little size, for examples. So as we look into it, it takes more and more money to even to begin to set it up.”

What would be the di- rection that Mercer would take if they decided to open a day- care?

According to Profes- sor Theresa Capra, who runs the college’s education pro- gram, “We don’t want to open a babysitting place, like in the supermarket where you can drop off your kids while you shop. If we are going in the di- rection of opening a child care center it must be a high quality facility with trained and quali- fied professionals, and it would be a wonderful opportunity for students in the EDU courses and psychology courses to get hands on learning and observa-

Continued from page 8

Social Services Support for Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NJ Community College</th>
<th>Has a Health Center?</th>
<th>Has a Daycare?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Bartin Valley Community College</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Mercer County Community College</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. County College of Morris</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>Women's Center</td>
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<td>4. Ocean County College</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
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<td>5. Brookdale Community College</td>
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<td>YES</td>
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<td>6. Pascall County Community College</td>
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<td>7. Middlesex County College</td>
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<td>8. Gloucester County, Rowan College</td>
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<td>9. Sussex County Community College</td>
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<td>10. Camden County College</td>
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<td>11. Atlantic Cape County College</td>
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<td>12. Rowan College at Burlington County</td>
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<td>13. Union County College</td>
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<td>14. Salem Community College</td>
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<td>15. Bergen Community College</td>
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<td>16. Cumberland County College</td>
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<td>17. Essex County College</td>
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<tr>
<td>18. Hudson County Community College</td>
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</table>

Support services for students and employees at New Jersey’s community colleges differ from campus to campus. Mercer is one of four community colleges in the state that offers neither a health center nor a daycare on campus.
promoting what it calls “Military Friendly® Schools.” These lead veterans and military members to believe that the colleges promoted by Victory Media are good for service members. Unfortunately the opposite is too often true.”

The report also states, “The only schools that have more than 100 complaints in the GI Bill Feedback System are University of Phoenix, ITT Tech, DeVry, and Colorado Technical Institute. All are designated ‘Military Friendly®’ by Victory Media and promoted by Victory Media’s survey, search engine, and e-mail blasts.”

In fact, Mercer, too, has had three formal complaints lodged against it by student veterans that are currently noted on the VIxS website, vets.gov GI Bill comparison tool, which helps veterans seeking higher education options. Two complaints are regarding financial issues (Tuition/Fee Charges), and an additional complaint related to a change in degree plan/requirements.

Mercer student veteran Chris Mohlar dismisses the complaints saying, “There is a lot of paperwork and back and forth between the VA and the school that has to happen for Veterans to get their benefits for school every semester and it gets really annoying. But Colonel Becker [Mercer’s Veterans Services director] and Tammy [his executive assistant] help a lot with whatever they can, and any time I have come to them pissed off or annoyed because something isn’t working or stuff is taking longer than it should, they help me out right away.”

Nevertheless, many community colleges that have veterans services programs have no formal complaints lodged against them with the VA and offer a broader variety of services on campus, such as health centers and daycare services as four other community colleges in New Jersey do. This raises the question of what Victory Media’s criteria are for determining who goes on their Military Friendly list and in what order.

Victory Media’s website describes their current methodology saying, “We collect vast amounts of public and proprietary information; process this data using our methodology and weightings, which are established with the guidance of our Military Friendly® Advisory Council, and audited by EY (Ernst & Young); and rate institutions and organizations on how Military Friendly® they are.”

It does not specify what public and proprietary information they evaluate, but it seems unlikely that formal complaints with the VA are included.

One central aspect the assessment of military friendliness is a free survey that schools can allow veterans to complete so the data can then be sent to Victory Media.

Mercer’s president, Dr. Jianping Wang, when asked how the college qualified for it’s ranking said: “Well it’s really the hard work of our staff. So there is a survey you need to fill out to do this. We got such a great response and that earned [it]. So it’s not like any secret or anything; it is just by a very simple survey.”

But of Mercer’s roughly 145 student veterans and active duty military personnel it’s not clear what percent actually took the survey. We got such a great response and that earned [it]. So it’s not like any secret or anything; it is just by a very simple survey.”

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Mercer’s President

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Campus vets like services, but questions surround source of military friendly ranking

Marking or Merit?

From Veterans Education Success and Samples of Victory Media Rate Cards

A hard work of our survey you need this. We got such a great response and that earn[ed] us the or anything; it is just by a very simple "Well it's really the hard work of our staff. So there is a survey you need to fill out to do this. We got such a comfortable lounge for the has made a point of creating Adombire says Becker College in New Jersey.

September 11. The college is the cer during a ceremony this past the Purple Heart given to Mer New Jersey Military Order of veterans services, such as the received other accolades for its Mercer has also re.

rector of services, John Becker. Actions were universally posi.

You would have to ask your direction they use on their email.

As a first step in that process The VOICE combed through each month's official Board of Trustees Updates for the past year as these include financial updates and autho.

rized payments to vendors. We also reviewed the school's financial audits, but in both cases we were unable to find any list.

ing of Victory Media under that name or any alternatives, such as "VMI" which is the designation they use on their email. Marvin went on to say, "You would have to ask your school administration if they paid Victory Media/GI Jobs Magazine any money."

To that end, The VOICE did file an Open Public Records (OPRA) request to find out if the college had, in fact, paid Victory Media for the ranking or for any other marketing services, but the request went unanswered. According to the report done by Veterans Success, "Victory Media also makes money a second way: it operates a 'pay-

for-play' scheme that promotes the colleges that pay Victory Media the most."

With this information The VOICE was able to obtain rate cards from Victory Media from 2012 and 2015 that provide a fee structure. These do not indicate any pay-to-play information for how high on any list a school might pay to be ranked.

They do, however provide information entitled "Packages Offer Greatest Reach and Value", which explains a star ranking system going from 1-5, where more stars offer better perks. The 2012 prices ranged from 1 star being offered at $9,900 and a 5 star rating being sold for $49,000. By 2015 the rates had increased to $14,900 for 1 star up to $59,900 for 5 star.

The ratings correspond to the marketing services provided such as "Preferred Search Results on militaryfriendly-schools.com," print ads and "Enhanced Print Listing" in the Military Friendly Schools publication, and "Run of Website Ads" and "Suggested Schools" listing also on the militaryfriendlyschools.com website.

When asked by The VOICE how MCCC reaches out to veterans to let them know about programs offered, President Wang said, "Oh yes, we are trying to publicise as much as we can and we also have our current satisfied veterans marketing for us."

Without the public the records requests information it is impossible to know the extent of Mercer's relationship with Victory Media. Has the paid for marketing and advertising to veterans? If so, has that influenced the college's ranking on the Military Friendly list? Or was the extent of the college's interaction with the company simply the administration a free survey to veterans that showed our college was the best?
Dear Uncle
By Zayvion R. Thompson

My Body is my body and my skin is my skin
Zayvion will win for those that believed in him
And saw past the exterior you thought was superior
I am my own breed of man not your football star
In 6’3 and me and it’s sad you can’t see that
I love you but i’m not falling for your trap
When I make it to the top I’ll still treat you the same
But I’ll only share a true bond with those who saw past my frame

All Ye Faithful
By Casey Genevieve

“You haven’t seen Sal, have you?” Sal’s younger brother Rick was standing dutifully in the cold. Spending his last day of Christmas break looking for his brother. I said I hadn’t. That was half true.

“I haven’t seen Sal since I left for school,” Rick said.

I processed that there had been 4 months of no communication. I hadn’t been in touch with Sal for a few months, but I had an idea.

“I’m pretty sure I know where he is.”

Wanting to be out of the house that was beginning to stifle, I grabbed my coat and walked out into the winter wind.

It was dark out and snowing heavily. The headlights of Rick’s SUV made the snow seem to whip by even faster. Rick fumbled with the radio changing the station constantly. He wasn’t a good driver. He was just unable to get comfortable being in control. We turned onto a back road towards Fishers Landing, and Sal. There were no cars headlights to be seen anywhere.

Extreme weather conditions had always excited me. There was a small hurricane of sorts when I was a kid and I spent the whole day in the backyard playing house with some food and rain gear. I just sat experiencing the storm outside raging. I pictured myself as a lighthouse keeper stationed on the rocky coast of Maine. A pack of cigarettes would be the only change in a present re-experience.

“Dad turned his phone service off because of Valeria’s nagging. My Mom hasn’t heard from him either,” said Rick. It had been two years since his dad re-married and Rick refused to refer to Valeria as anything other than her first name, “I just want to say bye to Sal before I leave. Talk to him about what’s going on.”

I understood, but also couldn’t understand. Sal had dropped off the face of my world this past summer. I would see him working on his car in the driveway when I was coming home from work pretty consistently. I was up everyday before sunrise to unload the supermarket trucks. Sal would just be starting his day as I was getting home to sleep. I was always envious of that.

It was warm then, he seemed happy and excited about the future. But, all us youths were happy. We were young and making money, away from our parents, and not attending school. Nobody addressed the thought of an end at the time. But the end had come.

School started, work ended, new things tried to happen. And Sal was not accepting it. Which was normal, but not to the extreme he had gone to now. I didn’t know all the details, but assumed it was bad if Rick was the only one on both sides of his family making an effort to know where he was. I felt bad for both of them.

As we continued down the abandoned snowy roads in darkness and relative silence, I informed Rick where I was taking him and hoping Sal might be. “I should have guessed Jerry’s house. Who do you think will be there?”

I replied that I had no idea. Again I told half the truth. I knew exactly who was gonna be there. It was one of the few things guaranteed to not change. These kids weren’t gonna be going anywhere unless Jer’s parents started charging rent. Never gonna be going anywhere. I had been a bit jealous of that too.

TO BE CONTINUED IN THE NEXT ISSUE....
Top 10 Transfer Colleges for 2017

Below is a list of the colleges and universities that MCCC graduates transferred to the most this past year. To learn more about the specific requirements for each school, follow this link: www.mccc.edu/student_services_transfer_out.shtml

1. RUTGERS UNIVERSITY
To transfer you need a cumulative GPA of 3.2

2. WILLIAM PATERSON UNIVERSITY
To transfer you need a cumulative GPA of 2.0

3. RIDER UNIVERSITY
To transfer you need a cumulative GPA of 2.5

4. THE COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY
To transfer you need a cumulative GPA of 3.2

5. ROWAN UNIVERSITY
To transfer you need cumulative GPA of 2.0

6. FAIRLEIGH DICKINSON UNIVERSITY

7. NEW JERSEY INSTITUTE OF TECH.
To transfer you need a cumulative GPA of 2.0

8. MONTCLAIR UNIVERSITY
To transfer you need a cumulative GPA of 2.5

9. THOMAS EDISON STATE UNIVERSITY

10. STOCKTON UNIVERSITY

Graduation fashion explained

HOOD TRIM
Hood trim color tells you the wearer’s field of study.
Dr. Campbell’s Ed.D. is in Education (thus light blue)

VELVET TRIM

VELVET ARM BANDS
Velvet bands on the arms mean Ph.D.

1 - VELVET TRIM
Tells the field of study of the wearer’s highest degree. (Of the two professors pictured, the first one has blue trim for study of English, the second has purple trim for study of law)

2 - LINING & CHEVRON
Show school colors of the university attended.
(Both of these professors attended Rutgers, the color of which is scarlet)

3 - SHELL
Shells are black and their length tells if the wearer has a Master’s or Doctoral level degree.

TASSEL
Tassels come in many colors, often reflecting the school’s colors, but pure gold tassels are given only to those with a Ph.D.

HONORS RECEIVED AT MCCC:
Robert Noyce Scholarship which is specifically for people who want to teach in the STEM field in NJ. Covers $10,000 per year of tuition.

BEST EXPERIENCE AT THE VOICE:
Writing Breast Cancer Awareness column on how much money goes towards awareness vs research/support programs for patients.

BEST KNOWN FOR:
Supporting everyone else while excelling individually.

CONGRATULATIONS
Graduating VOICE Staffers!

CAITLIN KEVETT
POSITION AT THE VOICE: Copy Editor
GOING TO: Montclair University
MAJORING IN: Communications
BEST EXPERIENCE AT THE VOICE: Attending the College Media Association conference in New York in March 2017.
BEST KNOWN FOR: Consistency and ability to take feedback and apply it immediately.

SAVANNAH DZIEPAK
POSITION AT THE VOICE: Photo Editor
GOING TO: William Paterson University
DUAL MAJORING IN: Biology with an Ecology Concentration, as well as K-12 education
AWARDS WON AT THE VOICE: Society of Professional Journalists’ Mark of Excellence Finalist for “’Twas the Night Before Christmas” photo.

Top 10 Transfer Colleges for 2017

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To transfer you need a cumulative GPA of 2.0

6. FAIRLEIGH DICKINSON UNIVERSITY

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Supporting everyone else while excelling individually.
TRANSFERRING TO DELVAL WAS THE BEST DECISION OF MY LIFE

- Francis Arnold ’16
Business Administration

TRANSFER TUESDAY
April 18 & May 23
delval.edu/transfer
to apply, plan a visit or request information

You Taste, We Pay!
Firmenich, a leading flavoring supplier to food and beverage companies, is looking for kids, teens and adults to taste test at our Flavor Headquarters in Plainsboro, NJ.

Fast  Usually 20 minutes during workdays & lunch hours
Flexible  Attend panels that fit your interests and schedule
Fun  Your opinions count!

No experience necessary!

To register and for further information
www.flavorsensory.com
The Value of Family

Community Bridge

With an Associate's Degree, the path to your career just got faster.

More transfer friendly than ever. Once you’ve earned your associate’s degree (A.A. or A.S.) from Mercer County Community College, you are now simply required to take courses that are related to your major to complete your bachelor’s degree. That’s Community Bridge. And that means you can start your career even sooner.

Generous scholarship opportunities are available, with on-the-spot credit evaluations being offered to transfer students every day.

At Holy Family University, 40% of new full-time students began their college experience at another institution. Like them, you’ll find more than 40 programs to choose from, one of the lowest net cost options among private universities in the region, and a truly supportive learning environment. Plus, Holy Family University was ranked by NPR as a top 50 school in the nation for emphasizing upward mobility.*

Join our Family. Learn more at HolyFamily.edu/MercerSession

The Value of Family

Info Session
May 11, 3:30 - 5pm

Holy Family University

**National Public Radio, September 2015**
ATTEND A DREW TRANSFER EXPLORATION DAY.

Monday–Friday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Drew University, Madison, NJ

Take a tour, start a preliminary application, get a credit evaluation and find out which scholarship could be yours.

Register Now:
drew.edu/mcctransfer
A clean campus is a two way street

If the college prioritizes maintenance and cleanliness students should follow suit

The Mercer quad is a beautiful place to eat lunch by with friends. However, going to the bathrooms and reading ‘Big Dick Bandits’ or ‘Jesus Loves You’ in size 136 font on the stall doors is offensive and show some people on this campus do not respect it. That’s got to change.

In an interview with Natalia Lobo, a sophomore studying to be a Physical Ther-apy Assistant, she said that, “They treat the [place] like they don’t live there...it’s a joke for everyone.”

Natalia Lobo went on to explain how often times she comes into bathrooms to find towels and even hair on the floors of our bathrooms. Natalia said, “Students don’t coop-erate that much...I guess some (students) have more concern about trying to keep everything clean.”

However, a dirty bath-room is surprisingly just the be-ginning of the problem. Some bathrooms themselves seem to call for a higher degree of re-spect. Some Mercer bathrooms are very rundown whereas the ones in MS and AD buildings are newly renovated and in bet-ter shape.

For example, if one goes into the men’s bathroom on the third floor of the BS building, you’ll find that one of the stalls does not have a lock. At the same time, one of the bathrooms in the Administra-tion building, by contrast, are pristine.

This is where I go back to my story about Princeton. It is possible that because the campus is so maintained, stu-dents and pedestrians are more willing to throw away their gar-bage in a proper garbage can and not on the ground.

Joel Cartagena is a Sophomore studying Liberal Arts at Mercer. He said, “It’s kind of immature. It kind of sends a message as if...it makes the campus not seem as profes-sional. Makes it seem like play-house or a club.”

Just imagine a group of potential students coming to Mercer for a college tour. They are taken to the ES Building entrance and they look to their side and see a billion cigarette butts sitting on the ground. That sends two messages: stu-dents here have no regard for the no smoking policy on cam-pus and are also tossing their cigarette butts on the ground when there’s a trash can right by the entrance. Maybe some of those potential future students will decide they do not want to come to this campus because of that.

Bryon Marshall who is the head of Security and Main-tenance at Mercer stated, “I think people have a general low sell esteem or disrespect for themselves or property of oth-ers.”

When it comes to how students and faculty can help keep the campus better main-tained he said, “To maintain a better campus work through peer association...if you see something, let us know right away...”

Maintaining a bet-ter campus can be as simple as speaking up and reporting something like a broken lock on a stall or when you see some-thing inappropriate written on the stalls. I know for myself I will certainly be reporting these kind of things to maintenance (whose employees, I’m sure, could stand a pay raise).

Another thing that can go a long way is not allowing people to just destroy our cam-pus. Bryon Marshall went on to say “if you see somebody lit-ter...just say ‘come on, man. You know, this is our campus’.”

For the sake of seeing an improvement on our cam-pus we should be maintaining it more. Seeing graffiti on bath-room doors each day should no longer be an issue. Water foun-tains that have dirt and rust on them should be cleaned up. There shouldn’t be buckets in the hallways gathering water whenever it rains.

When the effort is made by the college to look af-ter these things better, students will likely follow in the example. Both employees and students will take campus maintenance seriously and by working to-gether we may be able to see a campus as well maintained as Princeton.
The human cost of nationalization and fear
Mexican in the age of Trump

Maria Ramos
My home town is Chihuahua, Mexico. Just four hours away from the border between Juarez and El Paso, Texas. I will never forget walking over the bridge under the Rio Bravo. I was crossing legally with my visa and all my paperwork in order. It had taken months to fill out the forms, gather the necessary documents, secure the visas and permits I needed to enter legally, but looking over the border, seeing all the border patrol officers with their dogs staring at me and the others who were crossing I felt as if I was a guilty criminal. I was coming to the United States through an agency to take care of a family’s young children, but by the time I had to show my visa to the border officer I was sweating and scared. Why so scared if everything was in order? Maybe it was because of the message I had heard for so long, that I was Mexican and we are coming to steal your country. Once the officer let me into the country, I felt relieved, calm and relaxed. I had made it to el otro lado del charco, the other side of the river. Now everything was going to be great, I thought. I was here to accomplish the American dream, my American-Mexican dream.

The feeling of being legal in a place but not able to travel to your country is indescribable. At night I would pray that nothing would happen to my family because I couldn’t travel home if something happened. After two years I was homesick that I started to look for plane tickets to get back home. Things were changing, the US presidential elections were coming up, and things didn’t look good for Mexicans if Trump was to win. So I took the risk and went home and re-applied for a student visa. I told myself if they denied my visa it would be destiny, as sign that America wasn’t for me.

But I got approved for my visa, for four more years, came back and restarted my education. By then, however, I had to watch the daily political campaign of Donald Trump spewing hate towards Mexicans and saying over and over: “we are going to build a wall, and you can imagine. There were well over 30 children per room. I remember having notebooks with about 10 pages in them to learn how to write. There were three ladies that watched my age group, but only one really cared about us.

In the orphanage some children were male, others were quiet, some were drowsy, some tried to make the best of it. I had one good friend; her name was also live; I thought about the $600 dollars that I had to pay between fees, forms and permissions, I am talking about not being able to see my family for two years. It was the toughest time of my life. At only 19 years old I now felt trapped in this country.

Svetlana Craft
One night in Nizhny Novgorod, Russia, when I was 5, the police came. I don’t think I was even considering my mom was always belligerent, drunk and in trouble. I thought they were there for her, but they were there for me. I never saw my mother or sister again after that night. I was put in one orphanage and several months later moved to another, even farther away from home. I stayed there for two years.

Mostly I was in one big room with the smallest bed anyone could imagine. There were well over 30 children per room. I remember having notebooks with about 10 pages in them to learn how to write. There were American came to visit me and later I was told by one of the last orphanages that I was being adopted. I was eight, and I was more than okay with it because who knew any place was better than there. It was a long flight to the US on an open arm from my father America crying. ‘I’m assuming tears of joy.” When I finally walked into my new room, I didn’t even know people lived in that kind of luxury to have their own room. I was full of excitement. The next morning, opened my cur and I was raining outside. I started to cry. I had imagined America would always be a sunny paradise. I thought: Oh no! This family has brought me to this place worse than where I was before!

My adoptive family knew basically no English. Between us we had a few simple words like: “hi, hungry, and sleep.” They would try to get me to understand them. I would just point at things. There would be no conversation, yet a lot of laughs and fun.

The adopted was so foreign that I had no idea what was going on. When my first father took me to Grace N. Rogers elementary school, after about 3 months of being adopted I was eight, and it was being brought back into an orphanage. Once again I started to cry. “Casita” who knew any place was better than there.

It was a cold flight to the US on an open arm, I was full of excitement. But I was wearing a long coat. American was finally. I was so excited to stop feeling guilty, guilty for being Mexican. I choose to be an immigrant in the US and I will never regret my decision. I am a proud and thankful for being Mexican.

Maria Ramos was literally arrested and carried away during the protests. Russians are being thrown in jail for the slightest offenses or for simply trying to speak up. How is it, I wonder, that Americans, many of whom speak Spanish, are coming to destroy the country, despite the circumstances that caused me to leave, but now everyday I encounter endless negativity about Russians. The Russians rigged the election, the Russians are bad, they are coming to destroy America, and etc. It’s so frightening. Or maybe he’ll cancel all my visas gets canceled, even if things get harder in this country, this country has become me nuestra casa, my new home, I will keep doing my best.

One evening in 1975 I was walking with my mother, my dad and my twin, considering my mom was always belligerent, drunk and in trouble. I thought they were there for her, but they were there for me. I never saw my mother or sister again after that night. I was put in one orphanage and several months later moved to another, even farther away from home. I stayed there for two years.

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The First Amendment is under attack at Mercer

Editorial Board

Staff of The College VOICE

Mercer's Human Resources department has emailed all college faculty and staff a link to a mandatory online compliance training and requires them to complete it by May 14. The training includes information on Title IX and other important and relevant policies, but one point in the first module, on slide 22 of 84 states that “employees should not talk to the press without explicit consent from the college.”

The slide does not say “employees should not speak on behalf of the college to the press without consent from the college,” it simply states they should not speak to the press, period. The policy requires employees to surrender their First Amendment rights, it chills free speech and is a threat to The VOICE and to the college’s journalism and New Media programs.

We shared a picture of the slide with Frank Lomonte, an experienced First Amendment lawyer and the Executive Director of the Student Press Law Center, and asked for his reaction. He said: “I think the answer is yes it’s pretty illegal...that raises very serious First Amendment issues.”

The VOICE then reached out to Human Resources at Mercer, the department that had supplied the training materials. Thankfully, either the manager or the executive director agreed to be interviewed and instead referred The VOICE to Jim Gardner, the college’s director Public Relations.

Gardner defended the policy saying, “It’s standard operating procedure for any large organization, whether it’s for a Fortune 500 company, a community college or a school district.”

Obviously private companies and public institutions are not the same. Private companies do not have responsibilities like providing transparency through open public records laws or filing annual crime reports like we do. As Mr. Lomonte pointed out, a complete blanket policy against speaking to the press would “also be illegal at Fortune 500 companies.” Private companies can ask employees to sign contracts that preclude them from providing proprietary data to outside entities and so on, and colleges can require that only Public Relations representatives speak to the press on behalf of the college, but that’s not what the material in Mercer’s training says.

Because Mercer’s policy is so broad-reaching, with zero clarification or exceptions given, and all employees of the college are required to read it and demonstrate their commitment to it by completing the online training, it amounts to censorship where The VOICE is concerned. We will end up writing articles that are filed with “no comments” and anonymous sources. It has the potential to turn The VOICE into a shoddy publication like TMZ. We already have an article in this issue where we had to use an anonymous quote from a faculty member about the contract negotiations because the person was scared to go on the record. It’s a troubling experience for us as students interviewing someone who is supposed to educate us and realizing they are too scared to open their mouths. The college’s efforts to intimidate employees are already working.

The one administrator we found at Mercer who did seem to see the First Amendment right concerns was Edward Carmien, the department head of journalism and New Media programs.

As Mr. Lomonte pointed out, this slide does not say that the faculty training materials before sending them back out to be completed. Meantime The VOICE will carry on trying to keep people informed, we will continue encouraging students to be engaged in the life of our college, and we hope that faculty and staff will acknowledge they can always speak to us, not on behalf of the college, but on behalf of themselves as employees and individuals.

If you are an employee and would like to show your support for the First Amendment and the press, please feel free to trim out the image below and tape it to your office door.

I stand with the free press

Write to The College VOICE!

Do you have something to say? The College VOICE accepts letters to the editor. Submissions should be no more than 300 words; longer submissions may be shortinded. Submit materials in electronic format, and include your name and status at Mercer (major and year, faculty or staff position or alumnus). All materials submitted become the property of The College VOICE, which reserves the right to reject or edit material based on length, taste or clarity.

The College VOICE is written and edited by students of Mercer County Community College and published every 3-4 weeks under the guidance of faculty advisers. The material printed in The College VOICE, be it articles, advertisements or opinion pieces, does not necessarily represent the views of the editors, the faculty, staff, administration or the board of trustees of Mercer County Community College.