

# the NEW TRIER NEWS



Page 2

Young

## Students divided on impact of Seminar Day

Students leave long-awaited Seminar Day with mixed feelings

by Husnain Raza

On Feb. 28 of this year, instead of attending normal classes, New Trier students attended the school's Seminar Day, which incited much controversy among parents, students, and media outlets.

This is the second year in which New Trier has allotted a school day to talk about racial issues. Last year, New Trier held seminars on Martin Luther King Day, a day normally observed as a school holiday. This decision sparked coverage from conservative news outlet, Breitbart.

This year, 77 percent of all students attended the day, which is an 18 percent decrease from the average daily attendance of 95 percent, according to the administration. This is a 10 percent increase from last year's seminar day. In 2017, 67 percent of students attended school on the day, according to the school.

The New Trier student body had a range of reactions to the Seminar Day, from strongly supporting it to strongly disagreeing with what

the day promoted. Senior Hannah Peterson supported the day.

"I like what we did last year. I learned a lot about diversity and race. It's always nice not to have class, but I think the seminars that we have are very informative," she said.

Some students have said that the Seminar Day was one-sided and did not provide enough perspectives from various sides of the political spectrum.

"The whole day was liberal and left leaning opinions. I feel like we should have had more seminars that were right leaning. I care more about intellectual diversity rather than racial diversity," Junior Michael Hudson said.

On the other hand, some students expressed their support for the day. Junior Peter Murray said that "A lot of people think that they are forcing an agenda, but I think it's a good idea to just have a conversation about it and to hear opinions from both sides. I liked how there was a lot of choices for the sessions. That way you could choose what you wanted."

This year, students chose two sessions from over one hundred offerings that were held covering a variety of topics including race and housing, cultural appropriation, implicit biases, racism in the media, and the role of race in the 2016 election cycle.



Colson Whitehead, the keynote speaker and author, at Winnetka campus. Jung

Two National Book Award winners were invited to be keynote speakers at the day — Colson Whitehead, author of books including "The Intuitionist" and "Underground Railroad," who spoke at the Winnetka campus— and Andrew Aydin, author of the book "MARCH," who spoke at the Northfield campus.

In contrast to last year, the 2017 Seminar Day received more backlash from various media sources. Peter Berkowitz, who contributed an opinion to the Wall Street Journal said, "Instead of teaching, the school's aim seems to be hammering home to students that racism plagues America and will persist until white

people admit their unjust privilege."

Warner Todd Huston, who writes for Breitbart News said, "[New Trier] is taking the Obama education agenda all the way with new classes and seminars that teach a long list of other far-left activist ideas."

There were also complaints from within the New Trier community.

Criticism from parents caused the formation of an organization called "Parents of New Trier." They launched a website explaining why having Seminar Day was harmful. In their words, the Seminar Day contained "biased content and misinformation" and that "parents were excluded from input into the

Seminar Day despite attempts by many parents to be constructively included."

Many students elaborated their concerns about the day.

Sophomore Emmett Hulseman stated that the day could have had a more contemporary focus, "a lot of it was past day problems, there wasn't as many in the current day as there should be."

Junior Alex Harris also stated that he felt the day was not needed, "people [at New Trier] are educated enough about what is happening in the world."

However, New Trier remained adamant in their decision to hold Seminar Day.

"Race is one of the most difficult things to talk about. Ultimately, our belief is that our students should be thinking and talking about race," Assistant Superintendent Tim Hayes said.

In an official statement by the New Trier Board of Education regarding the day, the school rejected the claim that Seminar Day had any "political or social agenda being promoted; this is not about taking sides or right vs. wrong opinions. There is only an educational mission, just as there is during the other 182 days of the school year."

## Community packs Cornog to voice views on Seminar Day

On Feb. 20, hundreds gathered for a board meeting about Seminar Day

by Hannah Young

After months of debate over the contentious Seminar Day, hundreds of students, faculty, and community members convened at a board meeting on Feb. 20, some to voice their perspectives on the day itself and others on how the issue of race is addressed.

Around 700 people packed into the Cornog Auditorium that Monday night and many more were turned away at the door.

"I was thrilled, absolutely thrilled by the turn out. I mean, the majority of the people were backing Seminar Day as is, but that's great. We're having a debate. That's the kind of thing that we were hoping to inject into Seminar Day itself," Parent Betsy Hart said.

As the board opened the meeting to "Citizen's Comments," many sides of the debate were addressed by the speakers, according to Hart.

However, limited to approximately an hour for this section, many were unable to speak. In the end, 19 of the estimated 100 people who requested to speak did.

"Half of the people who wanted to speak were refused the right to

speak, arbitrarily," Resident Robert Leonard said.

In respect to her own speech, junior Isabelle Hauser, who believed the day was unbalanced, said, "I was very nervous, coming from a very progressive school. I felt a little scared because I have been silenced before for what my views are, especially on social media. At the same time, I feel better about myself for speaking for those kids who I know have a different point of view."

The overall opposing view was that New Trier day did not include a balanced set of seminars. The concern was that many were too liberal and there were no seminars or speakers to present the conservative point of view.

However, junior Arielle Imber, who led her own seminar last year and who was involved in the planning of this year's event, saw otherwise.

"It's interesting. I emailed 'parentsofnewtrier.org' a few weeks ago, and they sent me a response that included some authors whose views they feel weren't included in Seminar Day. One of the authors is John McWhorter, whose work I had already used to inform one of my seminars," Imber said.

"It's concerning to me that the most outspoken of those who have opposed Seminar Day don't actually know what's going into these seminars. They're just alarmed by a handful of speakers and seminar titles."

Also addressing the opposition, senior Brett Zaslavsky said, "There

are those who say the Seminar Day is biased, or one-sided. But to think that we, New Trier students, are susceptible to brainwashing, and incapable of forming our own thoughts after hearing other opinions, is demeaning."

When asked what they believe the school should do to make the day more balanced, those against the day proposed multiple solutions.

"I was hoping for the board to add more speakers. I believe there's room somewhere for Corey Brooks to talk to a few kids," Hart said. "I believe there's something that could be done."

Hauser agreed with Hart, believing the day was unbalanced. "I personally wanted to be engaged in the Seminar Day and I approached my teacher about it a month or two in advance, and he said 'it's too late now,' and I was kind of rejected."

Resident Robert Leonard suggested including more seminars about the underrepresentation of black people in science courses. "People want to think that besides race, we're all the same. All races are entitled to equal rights, but just lack skill set for certain things, that you can't deny. Last year, California Schools came out with a quota—a knowledge scale. On average, you can't deny, that Asians are the smartest, then Whites, then Hispanics, then Blacks, and then Native Americans. We need to accept these racial differences to solve the problem because we all want to be

... Continued on page 2

## Activities assistant arrested for fraud

Jeanine Brooks, a new employee, was arrested and charged on multiple counts

by Rebecca Lee

On Feb. 17, Winnetka Police Department arrested and charged Jeanine Brooks, New Trier Activities Assistant, for fraudulent activity.

Brooks began working at New Trier at the beginning of the current school year. Prior to her employment here, she worked in other school and office settings as well as in public relations, according to the Student Activities Office.

According to New Trier Director of Communications, Nicole Dizon, as an Activities Assistant, Brooks most likely worked with more than 150 extracurricular clubs at both campuses. Dizon could not make additional comments on the ongoing police matter beyond the information provided in the Winnetka Police Department press release.

According to the press release, school officials discovered the "potential fraudulent activity" by Brooks, and reported her to the police. Brooks allegedly committed these crimes during the current school year.

Winnetka police conducted an investigation and executed a search warrant at Brooks' residence. Following the investigation, Brooks



Jeanine Brooks staff photo | New Trier

was charged with theft of over \$10,000, official misconduct, and unlawful use of account numbers. She was booked at the Cook County Department of Corrections on Feb. 18.

**Brooks was charged with theft of over \$10,000, official misconduct, and unlawful use of account number.**

Also on Feb. 18, Brooks was taken to a bond hearing, where bond was set for \$25,000. She was scheduled to appear in court for a reading of charges on Feb. 23 at the 2nd District Courthouse in Skokie. She is next scheduled to appear in court on Mar. 17.