



New Trier has made many efforts to initiate conversations addressing the racial narrative within the school community over the years. The first article below was originally published Jan. 15, 1970, discussing the black seminar day which was held for the purpose of allowing black students to voice their complaints regarding the prejudice they faced at New Trier East. The second article was originally published Feb. 10, 2017 regarding a seminar that addressed topics of race.

From the archives: Originally published Jan. 15, 1970

Blacks' statements provide insight to NT-E race relations

"My parents believe that the white man will do you right if you work for him. I don't dig that. You've got a new breed this year so don't mess with us or we'll cut your throats! We don't love you and we don't want your love."

Last month the New Trier News sponsored a seminar in which Black students had an opportunity to voice complaints and comments on New Trier East. Some frightening attitudes were revealed in this seminar.

"Parents have a great influence on us here because we're inexperienced," one student said.

"We'd rather be at Evanston high school because there are more militant Blacks there who are ready to tear the school apart."

"I have been many different people," said a Black student. "One person with white kids, and another with Black. But this year I know who I am, I am myself."

"Prejudice against the Black student in this school can be felt. It can be felt in the classroom, it can be felt in the lunch hall, it can be felt from some teachers; it can generally be felt all over."

"Black teachers should teach African studies. Also, there should be an Afro-American studies program, dealing with Black life in this society."

"The only reason I participate in any outside activities is because it looks good on my college record."

There are only 35 Black students in a student body of slight-

ly less than 4,000 white students. Black students have been attending classes at NT-E for as long as people can remember. When the first Black student came to NT-E is not exactly known, but there were Black students during the 1920's.

Why then does it seem the Black students are just now beginning to say, "This is what I feel," and "This is what I want"? It is not an isolated attempt at Black Equality, but a very real attempt to obtain and establish an identity which has long been denied them.

Incidents of prejudice always seem to arise for one reason or another at student dances and sock-hops, and a more recent example occurred in the lunch hall in December. A few of the Black students started to dance to the music being played in the lunch hall, and though white students were also dancing, the Black students were the ones who were told to sit down, and threatened with green cards. Furthermore, they were accused of inciting a Black riot.

Though the teachers and the administration seem to pride themselves on the open-mindedness and relative equality of the school, to the Black student it is a far cry from what it could be.

Black students feel that some of the teachers are prejudiced against them for one reason or another, but they were fair in stating that some are not and leave them alone. The general complaint against the teachers is that at times they make generalizations about the Black people, which are usually based upon



Three students, (l. to r.) Denise Bey, Rita Johnson, and Wendy Harston are representative of New Trier East Black society. (photo by Baker)

the teachers' own feelings and a general lack of knowledge about the Black people and their background.

These generalizations have run the full gamut, and the Black students feel it is not only annoying to themselves, but should be to the white students as well, for the teachers teach these as truths, and expect the white students to accept them, as facts.

These and many similar incidents have alienated Black students from whites in general and from NT-E, specifically. Most Blacks attend NT-E for the single purpose of attaining a good education, not for the purpose of social involvement.

Some Black students enter NT-E expecting their four years here to be a beneficial experience both academically and cul-

turally. Their attitude now is that things have been made so difficult that they just want to get through and go on to college, where they perhaps will excel in fields that are most interesting to them. Black students feel that they have tried to become a homogeneous part of the school community. In their own words, they have tried "turning themselves white," they have renounced the friendship of "Black brothers" to gain acceptance in a white society. They have, they say, tried to think white, and act white, but they have reached the conclusion that they have only been fooling themselves.

In searching for ways to improve relationships with the Black students who are attending school with whites, the Black students have brought up some

interesting ideas. The establishment of a Black cultural center within the school, where students can learn about the culture and ideas of the Black man was suggested. Also, the establishment of Black performing arts within the theatrical department would bring to the stage the feelings and emotions of the Blacks. These are just two of many cultural exchanges which could be formulated within NT-E.

The establishment of the Black students here in NT-E is not as great as it is in Evanston. nor are the tensions and explosive atmosphere as great. However, there is still much that can be done to ease the situation, and increased steps should be taken to enable a greater understanding between Black and white than now exists

From the archives: Originally published Jan. 15, 1970

Parents challenge "agenda" of All School Seminar

Parents take to social media and news sources to debate Seminar Day

by Maggie Curry

New Trier's all-school seminar day coming up on Feb. 28th, about civil rights, has gotten the attention of Breitbart, Illinois Family Institute, and even the Chicago Tribune as controversy over the content of the day raises concerns for some parents.

A parent Facebook group was created called "New Trier Parents Seminar Day Review" and changed to "Seminar Day Discussion."

The group was public but is now a closed group with 159 members. According to the Facebook page, the group caters to "people who care about the Seminar Day Program at New Trier."

The Illinois Family Institute published an article written by Laurie Higgins on Jan 10, headlined, "New Trier High School Avoids Diversity Like the Plague."

In this article, Higgins provided summaries of the seminars, along with a section she called, "What Can Parents Do?" In that section, Higgins advised parents to file a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request for the names of teachers leading seminars.

Higgins said this would help disrupt the day because "leftist teachers depend on their

anonymity, autonomy, and absence of accountability to exploit their positions."

Ten FOIA requests were made to the school from seven individuals. Each request had several individual requests within them, totaling over 50 requests, according to Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations at Northfield Campus, Christopher Johnson.

On Feb. 3, the Chicago Tribune also published an article about the seminar day, headlined, "New Trier High School parents debate planned civil rights seminar."

Members of the Facebook group expressed concerns about students being manipulated and having one-sided viewpoints forced onto them, but many members wanted change made to the day rather than getting rid of the day altogether.

Marianne Holzhall, a member of the group, said, "The goal should be to have the students walk out thinking, 'What skills can I use to solve this problem?' And not 'I am a bad person because of my racial and socioeconomic classification.'"

Other parents felt the day was a good opportunity. Member Heather Pigott said, "You are not giving our students enough credit. Those of you who feel this seminar is too one-sided have surely shared your feelings/positions with your children-- send your kid to seminar day and let them bring that perspective into the discussion. The whole point of the day is to get students thinking and talking about race."

Senior Jimmy Lipsey expressed



Novelist Colson Whitehead will be a keynote speaker at the Winnetka Campus at this year's All School Seminar Day on Feb. 28

similar opinions to Pigott when he signed up for the Microaggressions seminar because he didn't agree with it.

Lipsey said, "I'm interested to hear what they have to say and I think I'm gonna bring an opposing perspective to that, which might not be exactly what the day is for. But if they're making me come to school, I'll do with it what I please."

Assistant Superintendent Tim Hayes said that he has heard more positive feedback about the day from parents than negative. He also

said that teachers and staff had heard from students that "this is a topic that they're interested in, but it's very difficult to talk about it because what you see in the media and online is when adults start to talk about it. They generally just start arguing with one another and there's not a lot of discussion actually happening."

Junior Liam Murphy attended half the day last year, but left early. He said the day was "beneficial in some aspects, but to have an entire day dedicated to it seemed a little extreme to me."

He said it would have been better to have a variety of opinions and to have these topics integrated into regular school days.

Senior Callie Fauntleroy said she was one of the first girls in her advisory to register, but she also sent an email to the parentsofnewtrier.org in response to posts on the Facebook page. She has yet to hear back yet.

She said, "I was very shocked and pretty disgusted and altogether ashamed that people would protest the seminar day."

The website, Parents of New Trier, that Fauntleroy emailed was established this year. The subtitle of the website is "Because New Trier's All School Seminar Day is Biased, Unbalanced, Divisive, and Costly."

The website advises people to write to the board, attend board meetings, and suggest alternative presenters. There's a page dedicated to panelists suggested to create a more balanced point of view for the day. There's also a link to a petition to "Balance - or else suspend - New Trier's Seminar Day on race." The number of signatures and names of signers is not open for the public to view.

Another petition to show support for the seminar day was also made. This petition has accumulated 2,306 signatures.

Fauntleroy stated, "By wanting to get rid of this day, you might as well have said 'let's make a petition to rid the school of the civil rights movement.'"