“CIIS is committed to self transformation that leads to global transformation; therefore, the CIIS community is enriched by the inclusion of all people, especially those who have been historically marginalized and have suffered discrimination. LGBTQ issues should involve all of us—members of the LGBTQ community and allies—in study, reflection, and action. The CIIS curriculum should enable our community to engage these issues in order to be personally enhanced and professionally prepared to advance social justice.”

JOSEPH L. SUBBIONDO, PRESIDENT OF CIIS

“As we educate people for this century it is essential that we include queer issues and content as a regular part of our academic programs. This is especially important at CIIS given our mission to serve individuals, communities, and the Earth. In support of this work we infuse LGBTQIQ content and issues throughout the curriculum and offer courses with more focused attention. Infusion is essential to ensure that all students study in this area and that the material not be perceived as being at the margins. In addition, queer-focused courses and programming are needed as a way to provide depth and a home base. Working with faculty I am seeking to strengthen our efforts, and build a variety of ways to achieve these goals.”

JUDIE WEXLER, ACADEMIC VICE PRESIDENT OF CIIS

“What does it mean to queer the Academy? What critical inquiry enables CIIS to strengthen alliances with movements for social justice, cultural difference, and ecological sustainability? What lives, histories, struggles, and scholarship demand inclusion attuned to the events of our times, to difference in resistance to pathologization, to stigmatized others whose presence operates to disrupt established regimes of knowledge? ‘Queer’ signifies a contested space, challenging dominant practices and discourses around gender, sexuality, bodies, pleasures, community, family, spirituality, identity, truth, and morality. ‘Queer’ is also a dynamic space, disturbing the complacency of knowledge, destabilizing fixed categories, and opening thought and being to new questions and heretofore unimagined experiments in freedom.”

PROFESSOR RICHARD SHAPIRO, CHAIR, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY DEPARTMENT

“It’s important to start by thinking what we mean by queer issues. For me, queer issues do not just affect queer communities. Queer issues are issues that enable all of us to rethink our identity and the presentation of gender, sexuality and desire. Queer disrupts normalization and the rights and privileges assumed to be inherent when presenting...”

CONTINUED ON page 7
ENGENDERING “QUEER” AT CIIS: An Interview with Angana Chatterji

ERIN MCELOY: What are your thoughts on initiating a Queer Studies Department at CIIS?

ANGANA CHATTERJI: Ghettoization, as with Ethnic Studies, Race Studies, Women’s Studies, has been a way of allocating disciplinary space to difference to marginalize it. At CIIS, existing institutional and departmental structures require “queering,” a radical embrace of “queer” concerns beyond staff hires and supplemental curricular inclusions.

If a Queer Studies Department were instituted, how would CIIS respond to demands for a Race Studies Department? Or, Ethnic Studies, Gender Studies, Disability Studies, Religious Studies, Postcolonial Studies, Indigenous Studies, Black Studies, Whiteness Studies, Social Justice Studies? What would merit a prioritization of one over another?

A graduate institution should not initiate a Queer Studies Department because, for example, it may be a fiscally viable proposition, but because the institution finds attentiveness to queer issues imperative to becoming more relevant in the present. Such shifts require difficult negotiations with difference. CIIS should institute research centers for queer and race issues. As well, “queer” the curriculum across departments, and engender curricular intersections with race, gender, class, ability, national (here, U.S.) privilege, creating an emphasis on social justice, consonant with the Institute’s ideals. There should be a serious academic audit of such curricular integration across departments.

Following which, the instatement of a Queer Studies Department will be substantially different, informed by discussion and debate, real groundwork, facilitative of new thought and alliance.

EM: Your classes are attentive to LGBTQIQ issues, particularly as they intersect with differences across nation, race, class, caste. Students from different departments have voiced a need to Queer@CIIS that such attentiveness be developed in their departments. What kind of work do you see CIIS needing to do in the future?

AC: To rethink issues of gender and sexuality requires we rethink liberal white political culture in North America. Curricular and advocacy attentiveness to unjust social conditions must enable ethical confrontations of oppression as systemically structured and held in place. Our study of the conditions of oppression must assist in enabling our entitlement to rethink them and capacities to intervene. An institution of higher education must be acutely aware of this. Institutional commitments to issues of diversity must empower student participation in academic and administrative decision-making, not seek to privatize students, by saying: “Now you see yourself in the curricula, now be quiet.”

To engage queer concerns at CIIS is much, much more than the support of GLBTIQ marriage or multi-gender bathrooms. Intellectually, for example, we must engage why we support GLBTIQ rights to marriage—because we wish to rethink the institution of marriage itself, not because queer peoples must be domesticated into dominant norms. At CIIS, student politicization needs to be further encouraged and supported institutionally. “Civility” must not beckon integration into “whiteness.” Can we affirm that as educators and administrators? It is not easy! It defies the sensibilities of liberal white culture. Are we committed to rethinking whiteness in rethinking heteronormativity? Are we committed to the discomfort it brings, to excavating our own complicity so we might rethink self, community, world? Are we committed to the spiritual practice of becoming undone? Can this be another commitment to “integral” education?

EM: What about your own history influences you?

AC: In my work with tribal/indigenous peoples, former “untouchable” peoples, with disenfranchised Muslims and Christians in India, in cofounding a people’s tribunal in Indian-administered Kashmir, the “most dangerous place on earth,” I learned that being subaltern means forfeiting the right to forget. Not forgetting means the collectivization of struggles and de-privatizing dreams. This is a challenge in the United States, where success is contingent on forgetting and privatization.

In life, in relationships non-heterosexual and other, I have struggled against the confines of heteronormativity. I learned, growing up in riot-torn Calcutta of the 1970s, that addressing the injustices of history requires attentiveness to the ways in which issues of gender, class, race, colonialism, caste, sexuality, nation intersect, are connected and configured, to maintain oppression. I am privileged—my father, a socialist freedom fighter, asked I read James Baldwin at age eight. My mother, who lives in a working/lower-middle class neighborhood in Calcutta, has supported transgender rights. Life, for me, has been experimentation against the confines of gender and racialized convention, in defining what I must resist. Such refusal always risks reprisal.
CHALLENGING WHITE SUPREMACY:
At CIIS, within Queer Communities, and in the World

White people of all backgrounds and experiences attend CIIS, but rarely is white privilege or white supremacy mentioned in curriculum. The purpose of AWARE (Awakening to Whiteness and Racism Everywhere) is to provide a constructive place for white students to address intersections of privilege and oppression. People come to AWARE for many different reasons: some want to share events and strategies around policies at CIIS; some need a place to speak honestly about the racism they carry in order to move beyond the shame and guilt that are seemingly the only feelings available to white people; some need support in advancing changes in the curriculum of their departments; some come with skepticism that they need to unlearn anything, having wrestled with oppressions around queerness, class, trauma, language, sexism, or transphobia. The process of recognizing racism can rarely be done alone. We need people to support us, to challenge us, to question us, and to encourage us to continue.

It is essential that anti-racist critique be interwoven into all aspects of graduate level study. For me, it is not enough to be a fat-positive, working class, pro-queer, cisgender femme who is knowledgeable about and advocates for only queer issues in my psychology classes and in my therapy practice. I must challenge myself to look at the intersections of my white identity and my queer identity. There isn’t supposed to be any racism in the queer community, but there is. If we do not name racism in our queer communities, we run the deadly risk of perpetuating hurtful, racist practices in our personal and professional lives. AWARE has helped me to engage my anti-racist critical thinking in the experiences of all queer people.

AWARE sponsors events that directly address how racism permeates every aspect of our lives. The Learning by Example panel had seven white teachers speak to how they name whiteness, racism, privilege, and oppression in their classroom content and instruction. Guest facilitators gave a workshop on the history of racism in mental health, providing a timeline of the progression of mental health juxtaposed with the timeline of civil rights, and shattering the belief that psychology is neutral territory navigated by everyone equally. These events help to give some structure for conversations across difference.

AWARE is open to students, faculty, and staff who want to participate in a process towards unlearning racism, examining their experience of white social privilege, confronting histories of silence, shame, and complicity, and moving towards alliance-building with people of color for racial justice at CIIS and beyond. Out of respect for people of color, we are meeting as a caucus group of white people. We consider it very important that we don’t impose on people of color the role of “teaching us how we are racist” or the need to care-take people who might be at various stages of their own consciousness around racism or oppression.

Any questions concerning AWARE can be addressed to MAGGIE BURKLE at SWEETIEBURKLE@YAHOO.COM.

STUDENT ALLIANCE AND SELECTED CAMPUS GROUPS

Student Alliance
A student-run organization that facilitates communication, sponsors events, and allocates funding to help students and student groups (including the POC, Queer@CIIS, and AWARE) actualize the Institute’s Seven Ideals. Through listening to student voices, we build alliances, cultivate student leadership, and advocate for social change and transformation of existing power structures.
http://www.saciis.org

Awakening to Whiteness and Racism Everywhere (AWARE)
Maggie Burkle
sweetieburkle@yahoo.com

International Students and Friends
Jody O’Connor
joconnor@ciis.edu

People of Color (POC)
Atiba Rougier
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Queer@CIIS
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Please refer to the Student Alliance website at saciis.org for a complete list of campus groups.
QUEER@CIIS:
An Update from Your Queer Campus Group

Last year was a productive one for Queer@CIIS, as it fully launched the mixed-gender bathroom campaign, and continued to hold and support events such as the Queer Film Festival, weekly and biweekly meetings, the “Expanding the Circle” conference, the Diagnosing Difference screening, as well as artist talks and conversations. It was possibly the most politicized year that Queer@CIIS has ever seen, largely because of the labor involved in the mixed-gender bathroom campaign. This year promises to see continued organizing and education around the implementation of at least two mixed-gender restrooms on campus, but it also promises to foreground other queer-related concerns, issues, events, and celebrations. We are hoping to dedicate time and energy to thinking with various constituencies at CIIS about queering the curriculum, while thinking about different intersections of gender, race, sexuality, class, nation, ability, age, ethnicity, and religion. We are hoping to allow ample space for discussions at Queer@CIIS meetings that complexify such intersections, engendering hospitality towards the myriad ways that queerness does or does not show up at CIIS.

an open letter
TO CIIS ADMINISTRATION AND STUDENTS

I have been following the movement to create a bathroom situation that is queer-friendly as well as being comfortably accessible to those with disabilities. The access to changing tables for young parents is additionally requested. I fully support this movement. It’s time.

Before teaching at CIIS, I had worked on another university campus. I left it vowing to never step foot onto another discriminatory, bureaucratic institution again. When I accepted a teaching position at CIIS it was for two specific reasons. One was that it presented itself as supportive of diversity, having a multicultural draw. The second was its willingness to acknowledge spirituality as valuable in the counseling setting. This was forward-thinking indeed. I have been touched by the cross-cultural and diverse presence of the students.

“As an academic institution we must be willing to listen to our students. In our current era, any learning in academia must be circular.”

As an academic institution we must be willing to listen to our students. In our current era, any learning in academia must be circular. We all learn from each other. It is to the credit of CIIS that students feel courageous enough (though I’m sure it is not with the greatest ease) to speak out, to ask for their rights at the most basic level. What could be more basic, the comfortable use of a bathroom, the freedom to fully be oneself, the freedom to pursue education even amidst personal and life obstacles. Queer individuals expressing themselves fully, students with disabilities and single parents seeking education, all are an expression of the power of the human spirit. We have moved beyond the stricture of outdated conventions and must evolve.

CIIS, we are in a position to make good our mission, to truly embrace diversity. I support this proposal. What can grow from it will be important in a practical and symbolic sense. I know CIIS has moved beyond mere tolerance to true acceptance; we all win here.

sincerely,
MARIA GONZALEZ-BLUE MA; MARCH 1, 2010
REAT; REACE; INSTRUCTOR, PERSON-CENTERED EXPRESSIVE ARTS THERAPY; AND BOARD MEMBER, INTERNATIONAL EXPRESSIVE ARTS THERAPY ASSOCIATION

4 CAMBIO Fall 2010
Mixed-Gender Bathroom Timeline

**March 1st – Potty Re-Training.** An evening of music, film, and discussion around the proposal for mixed gender restrooms on campus.

**April 8th – Campus Master Plan Meeting.** Plans for future renovation of CIIS announced and discussed. Mixed-gender single-stall bathrooms are in the plans, but implementation may take up to ten years.

**March 27th- April 29th – Online Survey.** Should there be a pilot where one female and one male bathroom will be converted to mixed-gender? Approximately 70% of students are in favor.

**May 4th - May 14th – Mixed-gender Bathroom Pilot.** Because of decisions by the Dean of Students, the Director of Human Resources, and the Director of Facilities and Operations, the pilot was conducted by converting the 3rd floor women’s restroom and the 2nd floor men’s restroom to mixed-gender restrooms.

**May 4th- May 14th – Survey feedback regarding the pilot.** Overwhelmingly, there was support from the student body, faculty, and staff to have two mixed-gender bathrooms on campus. Approximately 75% of the school supports the change. There were also comment boxes placed in the bathrooms for feedback. About 65% of feedback received was in favor. Major concerns included whether or not to keep the urinals on the 2nd floor men’s restroom, and the need for locks on the stalls in the 3rd floor women’s restroom. There was also interest in the installation of changing tables for children, and more accessible sinks for people with disabilities.

Anonymous Quotes from the Mixed-Gender Bathroom Trial

1. **This has been a fantastic experiment in changing with our six own personal comfort as a (woman). I don’t feel it has made me feel less safe, and it has opened up for this institution to care for others.**

2. **As an institute that claims to be inclusive, this is an important change. Thanks!**

3. **I think it’s important to consider people’s safety and comfort, and the specific situation could change over time.**

4. **As a middle-aged, white heterosexual male, I am probably in the group that should be least affected by, and least pleased with, this trial run. Quite the contrary, I am delighted that CIIS is proactively addressing this need to establish equality and comfort for marginalized members of our community. I’ve been using the mixed-gender bathrooms throughout the trial period, have not experienced any difficulties or discomfort, and recommend that they be made permanent.”**
This is a body, not a blueprint
and life sometimes strays from the manuscript
even privilege comes equipped with
twists and turns and traps
maps have their mysteries too
Secluded stories struggle to speak,
“how does one seek safety?”
I wonder
flustered yearnings flutter
wander the labyrinth of language caught
contained in a cage
whose boundaries have yet to be defined
confined in fear and “freedom”
“freedom” and fear

And I hear the hesitation
These are familiar concerns:
violence, voyeurism, male domination
I understand the feeling of “what happens if...?”
“what happens when...?”
I understand the desire for a “safe space”
but “a room of one’s own” offers
only precarious protection
And yes, Walls, Privacy, and Privatization
might sometimes suggest sanctuary
but sometimes they stand
so tall
solid and sealed, so starved
by the strain of their own alienation
they swallow our stories
chew them to pieces
and spit them out as secrets;
bodies are not blueprints
but the architect forgets and builds walls so tall
they confine us in our silence

I think of my own experience with violence
behind walls
my calls for alliance stifled by secrecy and shame
A room of one’s own can be far more dangerous
than a world shared
Ensnailed in memories we wish we could forget,
there are times when solidarity is all we have left

“safe” does not mean “solitary”
and “separate” does not mean “secure”

what does this desperation
for stable definitions obscure?

as “woman”
I’ve been afraid to walk alone on certain roads
told I don’t know how to properly “nurture”
and when I claim that I do nurture: movements
which I profoundly prefer to children
I am asked to be more meek,
more malleable, more manageable
I respond that I don’t understand these
customs and codes, I don’t understand these roles
and I refuse to be compliant beneath the weight
of heavy hands;
These curves will only bend when they want to.

Silence can be broken
and stories can be shared.

But what is healing without defiance?
What is community without alliance?
And who are our “safe spaces” safe for?

It’s like the way we’re told that we’re at war
that there’s an enemy outside and that “we” need
an army to keep “us” “secure”
Saturated in suspicion,
scare tactics persuade us to police each other
and free up the nation from this obligation
so it moves on to build bombs and prisons
promote corporate agendas
They call this “defense”
they confine us in fear and “freedom”
“freedom” and fear

Fictions of solidity tear us apart.
We break. And bloom
in the hollow and vibrant reverberating breath
of beyond and in between, we
are fragments with clenched fists
and our desperate fingers cling
to the disparate withered wings
of these things we thought we knew:
“spaces”
“safety”

They say caged birds still sing
but imprisoned in normativity
how do we free them?
And what will emerge when we do?
REFLECTIONS ON SPIRIT, COMPASSION, 
AND COMMUNITY ACTIVISM:
A Course Taught by Professor Susan G. Carter

The course Spirit, Compassion, and Community Activism, designed, developed, and taught by Adjunct Professor Susan G. Carter for ten years at CIIS provides students the opportunity to put their studies into action toward positive social change. Local students from the San Francisco bay area, and online students from around the country (and around the world) have undertaken a wide variety of important community work through this course. Over the years, the class has supported a number of students who have worked with LGBT+ communities, including:

- A Bachelor of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies student organized and led a women’s support circle at CIIS to create a comfortable environment for lesbians in the coming out process.
- One Transformative Studies student initiated, organized, set up, and managed four AIDs orphan feeding stations in Zimbabwe, Africa.
- Another Transformative Studies student volunteered as a regular visitor to provide companionship to HIV/AIDS patients through the “Buddies Program” in Singapore hospital wards.
- A third Transformative Studies student created the infrastructure for a local campus/community group for sexual literacy. The resulting research project is exploring collaborative organizing in the LGBT movement and ways it can improve.
- A Women’s Spirituality student recently wrote, “I have always considered myself activist minded, but never actually found a method through which to put this into practice. This course can serve as a catalyst. As part of my participation with this course I volunteered with Gender (Free) For All, an organization devoted to education, outreach and advocacy for all transgender, genderqueer, intersex and gender nonconforming people. My role moved from that of volunteer to ultimately codirector of a growing and thriving organization. As a result of the discussions, course work, and volunteer hours I realized how important it was for me to be a part of something greater than myself. I realized that personal commitment to action is a vital ingredient to creating community, developing compassion and feeding the spirit.”

Professor Carter shares: “I consider my teaching a form of activism. Supporting students as they draw upon their belief systems and academic studies to help catalyze positive social change is extremely rewarding. I am proud of the work they do and it is an honor to facilitate that work.”
“To me, it all starts with curiosity, curiosity and appreciation, with the understanding that ‘queer’ is certainly not a noun, and is not just an adjective.”

SPEAKING UP, STANDING OUT: THEATRE FOR CHANGE
by jAms Clabecq

Last April, during over four months of group sessions and rehearsals, I participated in the Drama Therapy Theatre For Change project in a production called Speaking Up, Standing OUT: Tales from the Queerlands. It was led by Renée Emunah, Drama Therapy program chair; and Alexis Lezin, an alum of the Drama Therapy program. After five years of issues of diversity being brought up in the Drama Therapy program, it was the first project that focused on queer experiences.

It was such a challenge for our group to try to hold this identity that is so, so vast. What does it mean to be queer? How can we, seven people, encompass so many different experiences? Queer people can be Black, Asian or Latin, bi or questioning, cisgender women or men, or transgender, from a working-class family or from a wealthier family, from the Midwest or from San Francisco, with radical or liberal or even conservative politics. All of these identities and legacies transform what queer means and will mean for each of us.

And then…the power dynamics in our communities: What is queerer? What does it mean that “we” create another scale? To what extent does the heteronormative society affect our people, having to gather between four walls? Shame, alcoholism, oppression, liberation, transformation, activism... This drama therapy process became a process of empowerment and solidarity.

And then...what do we want to say? What do we want people to know? What do we want therapists to know so that they can help an infinitely diverse population of “queer” individuals? What does it mean to be an ally to queer folks? How does it play differently with folks of color? To me, it all starts with curiosity, curiosity and appreciation, with the understanding that “queer” is certainly not a noun, and is not just an adjective.

It was rather impossible to find common ground for what queer is—we all had to listen, and look at our own personal perspective, and at others’, respecting others’ identifications, opinions, and different queer experiences.

I can speak only for my own experiences, and I choose to be open to others. One of the shared experiences that I found possible to rally a large number of queer people together is problematic relationships with families. Interestingly, such relationships make the need for community amongst queers vital. Since I was taking my Human Development class at the same time, it struck me how theories rarely point to these issues. What does it mean that I am the only one to speak up in class? Isolation—looking for a place where I belong, looking for acceptance or simple understanding, even in San Francisco, even at CIIS—is a permanent stress factor for me.

The pathologizations of the queer pervade all parts of our society. Exposing them, changing them, will free us all from conformist and alienating social codes. What do we want to say? That we are human beings—in search of others.

RECOMMENDED QUEER READINGS

- Making Face, Making Soul/Haciendo Caras: Creative and Critical Perspectives by Feminists of Color
  EDITED BY GLORIA ANZALDÚA

- Undoing Gender
  BY JUDITH BUTLER

- The Other Side of Paradise
  BY STACEYANN CHIN

- Exile & Pride: Disability, Queerness, and Liberation
  BY ELI CLARE

- History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction
  BY MICHEL FOUCAULT

- Queer Family Values: Rethinking the Myth of the Nuclear Family
  BY VALERIE LEHR

- Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches
  BY AUDRE LORDE

- Nobody Passes: Rejecting the Rules of Gender and Conformity
  EDITED BY MATTILDA BERNSTEIN SYCAMORE

- Queer Theory, Gender Theory
  BY RIKI WILCHINS
Cross-gender identification is as old as humanity itself—it has been expressed in a variety of ways across cultures and throughout history. Gender variant individuals have been challenging stigmatization, oppression, and invisibility for decades. A larger international transgender rights movement emerged in the late 20th century. Transgender people and their allies continue to challenge DSM systems of classification as pathologizing, dehumanizing, and non-responsive to the needs of transgender communities. We are building our own cultures of education, resilience, and health care services.

In April of 2009, a transgender educational panel for psychotherapists and mental health practitioners created a rare opportunity for transgender and genderqueer people to speak about their helpful, insulting, uplifting, pathologizing, plaguing, empowering, and healing experiences with therapists. Over 110 therapists, mental health practitioners, and therapists-in-training from across the Bay Area filled Namaste Hall at the California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS) to hear directly from transgender and genderqueer clients as consumers of therapy and mental health services.

Unfortunately, transgender and genderqueer people often experience insurmountable barriers to accessing successful therapy and medical care. Either because of harmful direct experience or through the plentiful negative stories of disrespect and betrayal by medical and psychological service providers that circulate within our community, many trans-identified people are unwilling to seek care. Due to a lack of information and experience, doctors, therapists and counseling center staff often show a lack of basic respect and empathy toward gender-variant people.

Among a multiplicity of important stories and statements, the four panelists addressed: why they have accessed mental health services, what has been supportive, what was harmful, and their ideal vision of therapy services for trans folks to come.

Inspired by the event, several audience members shared with event organizers ways they are now in the process of creating new programs and respectful practices in their organizations.

Two CIIS counseling psychology graduate students, Philipe Lonestar, a genderqueer-identified student of Expressive Arts Therapy and social justice organizer; and Elijah Nella, a transgender Integral Counseling Student and HIV test counselor, worked with panelists to organize the event. The panel was sponsored by CIIS Student Alliance, UNITE!, and the CIIS Diversity Program. The event was filmed and an educational DVD was released in February, 2010, entitled Trans Clients Speak: A Transgender Educational Panel for Psychotherapists and Mental Health Practitioners.

For more information, visit http://transclientsspeak.blogspot.com/
It is difficult to speak frankly about issues of diversity in liberal, multicultural environments. Today’s socio-political climate dictates that upon successful completion of the integration of people of color into spaces of higher education, the next step is to welcome queer student populations. Similar to the monolithic and exotic representations of people of color that exist in largely white academic institutions, queer populations are often identified, managed and isolated, as heterosexism and binary gender oppression proliferate in quiet corners; we must struggle against all forms of marginalization as they persist under the guise of a multiculturalism that seeks assimilation, rather than respectful confrontation. Avoidance is a favorite tool of oppression; privilege breeds complaisance and an unwillingness to see. As a graduate student, I have insisted that my education help me to confront these harsh realities so that I can work with others to advocate for change. My doctoral studies in the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology have empowered me to reach out to other students, staff, faculty, and administrators so that this important work may happen. Please consider this as an invitation to participate in an ongoing community conversation.

As a diverse queer student population, what do we require to sustain our ability to learn and grow as community members? The responses to this question must also address students’ needs as they intersect with dynamics of race, class, gender, nationality, ability, and other factors. Students, at a very basic level, require curricular diversity, in addition to access to facilities and resources, such as bathrooms and scholarships. We also need networks of support that may include social events, spiritual guidance, community organizing efforts, mental health resources, and discussion groups.
working to make progress on LGBTQ issues on college campuses.

Another major theme of the conference was transgender and gender issues. Pauline Park, chair of the New York Association for Gender Rights Advocacy (NYAGRA), led a plenary session focusing on possible ways of transgendering higher education through the establishment of infrastructure and through a queering of curricula and faculty.

Other renowned figures who presented at the conference included Lee Knefelkamp and Sharon Marcus of Columbia University, Susan Stryker of Indiana University, Steven Tierney of CIIS, John Hawley of Santa Clara University, Kavita Ramdas of the Global Fund for Women, and poets Judy Grahn and Jewelle Gomez.

According to Karim Baer, director of CIIS Public Programs, which organized the conference, one critical outcome was the creation of an “intentional community” spanning different generations. “The inter-generational component of this conference is crucial. As educators and administrators who have been pushing from within the academy retire, we’ll need to keep the momentum.”

To that end, “Expanding the Circle” will be held again in March 2011. “There is a national mandate to do it now,” Dustin Smith says. “The response has been overwhelming.”

All too often, queer student populations become tokens of cultural capital. In this process, marginal voices are silenced, needs are left unfulfilled, and promises of social justice become distant whispers. It is our hope that our difference need not look the same, even amongst ourselves. The practice of welcoming diverse student populations into a university setting needs to be ongoing; accountability, alliance, negotiation, compassion, and a willingness to take risks need to accompany matriculates as they navigate new spaces of learning. As queer students attend and challenge institutions, policies and practices must shift. If diverse student populations show up, and no shifts occur, what can we make of this? Welcoming queer student populations must not be in the interest of the institution, but rather, it must be so that queer student lives can be supported in an environment that is willing to shift and bend with their unique needs. What must happen when the difference you invite shows up and demands more?
There is biblical quotation that was often cited during the civil rights era: “Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.” It’s from the Hebrew Bible, Amos 5:24.

It seems to be that you can’t exhort justice to flow and then try and divert the flow if it’s not flowing in the direction you think it should go. We don’t get to redirect the path of justice any more than we can stop water or molten lava or any other force of nature from flowing to where it needs to go, which is always downhill to the lowest place.

The civil rights movement is not finished because justice has not been achieved by everyone denied it. For one, economic justice has not been achieved by people of color, and civil rights have not been achieved by the LGBTQQI community or the undocumented worker community. When I think of those of us who have privilege of any kind—economic, social, U.S. citizenship, religious, sexual orientation, race, gender—I think of the words of “Ella’s Song” by Bernice Johnson Reagon: “We who believe in freedom cannot rest until it comes.” I love this song from Sweet Honey in the Rock because music and art have a way of cutting through our intellectual defenses and speaking to our hearts. Whenever that happens, I am reminded that there is still work to be done and I must be engaged in doing it.

What does the work look like at CIIS for me as dean of students and director of diversity? On an individual level it means trying to be a voice for social justice. And on a group and institutional level it means learning how to be a better ally by stretching my boundaries to places where I am not always comfortable going, like mixed gender restrooms. My compass is the notion and ideal of building Beloved Community that I came across again seven years ago when I was ready to wholeheartedly embrace it. I rediscovered it when I read an article by Grace Lee Boggs, one of my heroes who asked the question: “I wonder how things would be different if we had been able to combine Malcolm’s (X) militancy with King’s (Martin Luther King Jr.) vision of Beloved Community? Is it possible that our relationships today, not just inter-racially but intra-racially could be more harmonious? It’s become increasingly clear that King’s prophetic vision is now the indispensible starting point for 21st century revolutionaries.”

Her questions have haunted me ever since I first read them and I have decided to spend the rest of my life in service to the ideal of building Beloved Community here at CIIS and wherever I find myself. My working definition of Beloved Community is as follows: an inclusive interrelated place based on love, justice, compassion, responsibility, shared power and a deep and abiding respect for all people, places and things that radically transforms individuals and restructures institutions.

PLEASE JOIN ME IN MAKING THIS IDEAL A REALITY AT CIIS!

SHIRLEY STRONG DEAN OF STUDENTS and DIRECTOR OF DIVERSITY