

JACQUELINE HORTON | guest columnist

JMU is not as welcoming as you think

In the matter of diversity, some students feel out of place as soon as they enter campus



BLAIR ROSEN / THE BREEZE

Being a minority at JMU has been one of the most difficult parts about being away at college. I am not a part of the LGBT community nor am I a religious minority. But I am an ethnic minority. Many of you may know me as Jackie, the girl who went to speak with vice president for access and enrollment management Donna Harper or the blogger who emphasizes the need for more racial diversity on campus as a part of the #MinoritiesAtMadison campaign.

Not only have I been attacked with racial slurs, but I have also had people discriminate against me both intentionally and unintentionally.

Let me begin by telling you a little about myself. I am originally from the Bronx but I have lived in Virginia for well over five years. I graduated from Indian River High School in Chesapeake, Va. It was a very diverse school

and not just in thought. There were students of various backgrounds, ethnicities, religions and ability status.

When I was applying to colleges, JMU was the last school I applied to. One of my closest friends kept telling me what a great place it was and how it was his dream school. My mother's co-worker advocated for JMU so much that I finally agreed to apply. I applied to six schools and was accepted into every single one of them.

On April 15, 2013 I attended CHOICES. Upon arrival the first thing I noticed was that there were not a lot of people who resembled me. Although, many of my friends are white, including my best friend, it was still a culture shock.

After going to the various activities throughout the day I still had my doubts. My mother and I decided to visit the Center for Multicultural Student Services (CMSS); I ended up talking with a staff member and she reassured me that this institution was an excellent choice. She was right.

JMU is an awesome university, however as a racial minority it can be extremely difficult. Not only have I been attacked with racial slurs, but I have also had people discriminate against me both intentionally and unintentionally.

I am so tired of being asked if I am paying for my tuition through the Centennial Scholars

Program or if I am simply a result of affirmative action. What most students probably do not know is that affirmative action applies to categories outside of race and benefits white women more than any other minority group. Also, I would like to believe that I got here by merit, not by skin color. I graduated from high school with a 4.04 GPA. If that is not enough, I was also senior class vice president and an officer in four of the seven other clubs I participated in. I am just as qualified to be here as any other student on this campus.

After speaking with numerous racial minority students here all of them are saying the same thing, "We are tired." Many students have faced so much discrimination here that they do not know if this is the place for them anymore.

As a student body we must come together and work hard to implement change. By taking action and speaking out we can share our frustration with those around us. Again, diversity of thought is great, but unfortunately when I walk into a classroom others do not look at my intelligence. The first thing that they see is the pigmentation of my skin.

Jacqueline Horton is a freshman justice studies major. Contact Jacqueline at horto2ja@dukes.jmu.edu.

COREY TIERNEY | media mogul

GMU is onto something

Gender-neutral housing could be groundbreaking for JMU

Comfort and peace of mind are two things that college-aged students — and honestly people in general — take for granted. Imagine being born a gender you don't identify with. You might feel trapped in the body of someone you don't recognize, and feeling comfortable even in the most relaxed of atmospheres would be a luxury you do not have. The beaches of Cancun (where bathing suits are a given and genders are clearly defined) might feel like a dentist's chair.

Now imagine being a freshman all over again. Things like moving into a dorm with strangers and being subjected to immediate judgment by hundreds of unfamiliar peers could be infinitely worse for someone who is transgender. Being a woman in the body of a man and then being forced to live with a male because of that fact can be emotionally distressing.

According to a Feb. 16 *Washington Post* article, George Mason University is going to make a major step toward progress in the fall by being the first public college in Virginia to have a gender-neutral dorm.

This means that men, women and those who identify as any or no gender will be living in the same housing facility and have the option to share a room. This is revolutionary in terms of the safety and comfort for transgender and other LGBT students living on campus.

Freshman roommate horror stories are all too common for basically anyone, let alone those who feel out of place simply for being homosexual, transgender, genderqueer or whatever makes them unique. While I never had any direct conflicts with my roommate, I can tell you that even after two semesters we never connected or really even talked post-FrOG groups.

My story is a mild one, however. There are "Safe Zones" on campus for students who feel harassed or threatened for being gay, non-heterosexual or otherwise. This program is wonderful, but imagine a place where areas of safety wouldn't even be necessary.

Though GMU may be known as one of the most diverse campuses in Virginia, there is no logical excuse for this type of housing to be at least an option at other schools — JMU being no exception.

Excluding backlash from hate groups, no downside to this proposal comes to mind. The diversity conversation/controversy going on at JMU right now would definitely lighten up after a change that directly supports the somewhat restless LGBT community at this school.

This is not an LGBT-only issue, however. Heterosexual couples or those who wish to live with a friend of a different sex would be allowed this right as well.

Grouping students together just because they have the same genitalia or identify as a woman is a caveman concept at best. Officials also being scared of males and females having sex while living together is condescending, especially seeing as 99 percent of students admitted to JMU are 18 or older.

Whatever decisions made are done so as legal adults. In fact, maybe more students would stay on campus for their second year instead of immediately flocking to Devon Lane.

All in all, safety, options and progress sound like good words to me. While realistically this would involve a lot of red tape and legislation, it's certainly something for the administration to think about in regards to diversity and ultimately the well-being of students.

Corey Tierney is a junior media arts and design and writing, rhetoric and technical communication double major. Contact Corey at breezeopinion@gmail.com.

DARTS & PATS

Darts & Pats are anonymously submitted and printed on a space-available basis. Submissions creatively depict a given situation, person or event and do not necessarily reflect the truth. Submit Darts & Pats at breezejmu.org

An "I'm-a-student-too-and-I-want-a-tank-top" dart to the Convocation Center for not allowing my TeamStore co-worker and me to get tank tops even though we were among the first people there.

From two people who believe it's not their fault they had to work and couldn't enjoy the game for fun.

A "thank-you-so-much" pat to the woman at E-Hall who literally "thanks me so much" when she swipes my card.

From someone who appreciates the cordial response on a Sunday morning.

A "please-don't-remind-me" dart to the Student Government Association for sending out emails with the countdown to graduation.

From an emotional senior who appreciates your optimism, but is in denial that the best four years of her life are almost over.

A "that's-what-Glen-Coco-would-do-too" pat to the Life section for featuring artWorks' student artists and students' fashion in "Life Style."

From someone who thinks more students featured means more people reading.

A "can't-stop-won't-stop" dart to the article in Thursday's *The Breeze* calling Miley a "fool." She knows exactly how to play the crazy Hollywood industry. And her music is pretty dope.

From a woman who hated "Hannah Montana" but loves "Wrecking Ball" and plans to see her in D.C. this April.

An "it's-women-like-you-who-make-me-cringe" dart to the three women grabbing lunch in Festival who were loudly criticizing a friend's Instagram selfies for looking airbrushed. Beauty is only skin deep, but ugly goes clean to the bone.

From a nearby senior who was disgusted by your rude words and suggests you get over yourselves, unfollow or learn to see the beauty in all.

A "Hot-in-Herre" pat to University Recreation for keeping the heat up.

From a junior who doesn't need the water weight.

A "priority-mail" dart to the people who ignore the "Do Not Enter" sign at the post office.

From someone who hopes you find a literacy course that suits your busy schedule.

A "thanks-for-being-a-class-act" dart to the Parking Services attendant who decided to give me a \$25 ticket, instead of taking 10 seconds to put in the 20 cents I had on top of the meter in case my meeting ran too long.

From a senior who won't be donating to the university after graduation.

A "that-was-too-unorganized" dart to E-Hall for not properly organizing the "Clean Your Plate" event when the student organization that was supposed to run it evidently called off sick.

From a student worker who did not appreciate having to stay almost 30 minutes past her shift because E-Hall decided to run the event on its own.

Editorial Policies

The Breeze welcomes and encourages readers to voice their opinions through letters and guest columns. Letters must be no longer than 250 words. Guest columns must be no more than 650 words.

The Breeze reserves the right to edit submissions for length, grammar and if material is libelous, factually inaccurate or unclear. The Breeze assumes the rights to any published work. Opinions expressed in this page, with the exception of editorials, are not necessarily those of The Breeze or its staff.

Letters and guest columns should be submitted in print or via e-mail and must include name, phone number, major/year if author is a current student (or year of graduation), professional title (if applicable) and place of residence if author is not a JMU student.

The Breeze

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"To the press alone, chequered as it is with abuses, the world is indebted for all the triumphs which have been gained by reason and humanity over error and oppression."

— JAMES MADISON, 1800

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