Creating Change

By Laura Poulton ’18

From January 21st to January 24th, I and five other Bucknell students attended the National LGBTQ Task Force’s annual Creating Change conference. Creating Change is a five day event full of speakers, workshops, and panels all focused on education, activism, and networking among the queer community. It was a really amazing experience for all of us.

One of the most obvious differences between Bucknell and Creating Change was the sheer amount of diversity present. There’s a real culture of conformity here on campus which makes it easy to forget just how many ways there are to express yourself. At Bucknell, standing out isn’t a good thing. At Creating Change, standing out was part of fitting in. Wherever you went, there seemed to be a hundred different hair and clothing styles. There were almost 4,000 attendees, and a wide variety of ages, races, gender identities, gender expressions, sexual orientations, romantic orientations, ethnicities, cultural backgrounds, socio-economic backgrounds, and geographic origins. I was so grateful to be a part of a community that truly celebrates difference.

I also got to hear some really interesting life stories. I listened to one of the founders of black feminism, an 81-year-old trans woman who came out when she was 60, a house father in the ballroom community, and an immigrant who just recently got her green card. So many people have used their negative experiences to affect positive change. I heard from queer people who have survived multiple suicide attempts and now work to improve mental health services. I spoke with a trans woman of color who has spent over 20 years advocating for the rights of transgender and immigrant people. She was homeless for much of her life, and now runs a homeless shelter. I’m sure the other students who attended have even more inspiring stories to share. Our experiences sparked many thought-provoking conversations about the possibilities for increased activism and allyship in our own communities. We hope we can use what we learned at the conference to create some change here at Bucknell.
Bucknell Brigade

By Maribel Lopez Vilchis ’18

This January, I had the opportunity to attend the Bucknell Brigade in Nicaragua. During this service learning trip, I served as a translator for an English speaking doctor and had the chance to interact with the people of Nueva Vida. The Brigade taught me an invaluable amount about the cultural, social, and political aspects of the Nicaraguan community. It was a total life changing experience, and it has motivated me to declare an International Relations major. Because of my experiences in Nicaragua, I cannot imagine being aware of global issues and not doing anything about them.

Translating for doctors was a very challenging task, not because I had difficulty translating, but because it was surreal to see the needs and the inability of the patients to receive a lot of what we take for granted here in the United States such as insulin, inhalers, and basic over the counter medications. I recall the doctor on multiple occasions asking if the patients had over the counter medications and the answer was always no. Not any one of them had any sort of pain killers or vitamins. The clinic provides medication; however, it does not provide them with complete medical packages such as a full bottle of ibuprofen as we would expect to receive in the US, but only a limited count. A lot of the patients were diagnosed with diabetes, and many of them were unaware of their high levels of sugar that could possibly lead to death. Others suffered from asthma, and were unable to get an inhaler. There are two particular patients whose cases I can vividly remember. The first was a grandmother who feared so much for the life of her granddaughter that when the doctor asked, “Do you have any questions?”, she broke into tears and thanked him for his services and for all the clinic has provided for her and her family. The second was a diabetic man who could barely stand and had been discharged from the hospital because there were other patients who seemed to be more ill than he was. He was neither able to afford transportation to the nearest hospital, nor afford a piece that would adjust his prosthetic leg and help him avoid the spread of a rash he just developed on his leg.

Although it was very overwhelming to see the reality of a third world country, I believe I went with an amazing group of Brigadistas who weren’t fluent in Spanish, but really made an effort to engage in their culture. The memories of our discussions, delicious meals, baseball games, children climbing trees and playing with spiders; those memories bring a smile to my face. The simplicity of the Nicaraguan community’s daily lives is filled with joy and gratitude, something very admirable. It has definitely been an unforgettable experience that I will continue to cherish. After this trip, I can finally say I am so proud to call myself a Bucknellian. It is truly admirable to see what the Bucknell Brigade is doing to help aid the community of Nueva Vida in Nicaragua. I plan to continue to be any source of help that is needed to the Brigade from here on forward, even after my graduation. I cannot wait to see the clinic grow and the many lives that the Bucknell Brigade in Nicaragua can help save.
Together Everyone Achieves More (T.E.A.M.)

By Christian Limawan ’16, T.E.A.M. Mentor

As part of the student community at Bucknell, we all have at least one thing in common – we have been a first year at some point in our life! If you are reading this as a first year, I’m sure the memories of your first day of school are somewhat fresh in your mind. If you are not a first year anymore, I’m also confident you still have some recollections of those mixed feelings when you’re about to embrace a new phase in your life. Close your eyes for a moment and think about the moments prior to starting your life at Bucknell University, or other institutions if you didn’t start your journey at Bucknell as a first year.

Starting our life as a college student could definitely bring a lot of different feelings. We might be anxious about the new friendships and experiences that await us, excited about what’s going to come up in the next four years of our life, and at the same time we could also feel afraid of the uncertainties. These are all normal feelings that we have whenever we are about to start a new chapter in our book of lives! However, have you ever thought how different it could be, had we known somebody who had been “there” before us? Wouldn’t it be easier to get to know the resources that are available for us, tips and tricks to thrive and get the most out of this new experience, or perhaps as simple as having an older “brother” or “sister” – mentor– whom we could always go to for anything?

This short reflection of our first year experience at Bucknell – or first time starting a new chapter really – and having a mentor on our side is what T.E.A.M. Mentor “T.E.A.M. is a close knit community where scholars support my dreams, no matter how big or small. T.E.A.M. = having a mentor who is always there for me when I need help or guidance.”

— Angela Ri ’19, T.E.A.M. Scholar

“TEAM has given me an opportunity to be a resource for my scholars, and grow as a person. It granted me the chance to see circumstances from a very positive perspective. I have learned how I can assist others to achieve their best potential, and make the most out of my Bucknell experience.”

— Lidya Abune ’16 T.E.A.M. Mentor

Prior to starting mentoring the scholars, all the selected mentors get a rigorous training for a semester. This year, we will be having nine weekly sessions and another one before starting Fall 2016. The training covers various learning skills that we can apply to tackle different issues that often come across in a first year’s life. In addition to being equipped with these life-long soft skills, we will get better exposures on the resources on campus and most importantly each of us would form new friendships and support system even amongst the mentors. If you feel that you could be a great role model and want to learn more about the program, we are accepting applications to be a mentor through February 12.

Program is all about. T.E.A.M. engages intellectually talented students by matching first-year and transfer undergraduates –called scholars– from underrepresented backgrounds to an upper-class peer mentor. This program was founded in 2009 and it has grown tremendously since then. Currently we have 18 mentors (two are studying abroad) and 26 scholars with two Co-Directors – Amy Davis and Rosalie Rodriguez – who oversee the program.
Asian Gala

The annual Asian Gala is the signature event of Students for Asian Awareness at Bucknell (SAAB). Numerous Asian clubs on campus come together for the event to showcase Asian heritage, traditions and culture. There are cultural performances, which is supplemented by a range of delicious Asian cuisine.

Event date: Friday, 25th March 2016

Chinese Spring Festival

The CCSA Spring Festival, organized by Chinese Culture and Students Association, is the celebration of lunar New Year. Chinese customs, values and traditions are displayed through performances including dances and music. The dinner also aims to educate people about Chinese culture and break the stereotypes of China.

Event Date: Saturday, 20th February 2016

Burmese Dinner

Every spring semester, the Burmese club hosts the Burmese Dinner, which is the biggest event of the year for the club. During the event, performances of traditional dances, songs and cultures are displayed. Each Burmese Dinner has a theme which is chosen by the members. Past themes have included ‘Burma Meets West’ and ‘Thingyan Festival’.

Event Date: Saturday, 2nd April 2016
The Violence of HATE

By Mona Mohammed ’16

Last year, the Birthday of Martin Luther King, came at a dreary period of my time at Bucknell University. The atmosphere on campus was heavily affected by the continued prosecution and murder of unarmed black men. Like many around the U.S., a group of students, who were outraged by the injustice experienced on daily basis by our black brothers and sisters, organized a number of events to show their support, including die-ins, demonstrations, vigils and others. Through joining many of the events in support of the African American struggle, I began to learn about and visibly see many forms of discrimination on campus that I was not exposed to as an international student. While it was difficult to start many of these conversations outside the group of students who were active in the movement, the Yik Yak threats against the demonstrators and other non-conforming Bucknellians as well as the racist radio incident brought an ugly face of Bucknell to the surface. Everyone saw, heard and knew. After being part of Bucknell for 4 years, I knew Bucknell wasn’t perfect, but I didn’t realize it could be this ugly.

Fast forward to the beginning of Spring semester 2016, I was very happy when I received the flyer advertising all the events sponsored by the President’s Diversity Council. Not only was the sheer number of events, more than anything I have seen at Bucknell, but also the breadth of these events reflects the breadth of MLK’s vision across international, ethnic and gender boundaries. The Violence of Hate was the theme chosen for this week, and the events highlighted internal violence in the USA, against women, children and people of minoritized ethnicities, as well as violence committed by the USA across the border. One of my favorite sessions was the talk by Haider Hamza, the Iraqi photojournalist and activist, where he presented many of his photos and told stories about his experience during the war in Iraq. This was one of the few times, which I felt the Middle East was highlighted instead of the general atmosphere of actively ignoring what is going on at home, which had a very therapeutic effect on me. Another favorite of mine was the unplanned historic conversation between Nyle Fort and Reverend James Lawson. The opportunity to witness such a dialogue between two great activists from different generations, helped me frame many of the conversations about the difference in tactics, the role of human connection in advancing the struggle, and how the social media has reshaped these connections.

Changes such as the recognition of the Africana Studies Department, the fantastic week of speakers and luncheons in remembering Martin Luther King’s Birthday, and finally the $20 Million dollars donation by Malesardi allocated for financial aid are all steps in the right direction. This makes me optimistic about the possibility of change! But to aspire to the Bucknell we all want to see, we have to acknowledge that we still have a long way to go. We still need to reconsider the Social Justice Major which was not accepted last year, if not for the simple reason that students are demanding it. And in light of recent events, it is time for Bucknell to provide educational opportunities that actually teach the student body about the value of diversity outside of the classroom. Our students need to learn how to interact with diverse peoples of all races, genders (and the non-conforming), sexuality, religions and creeds. It is not enough to train the administration, faculty and staff with regards to the importance of need for diversity on campus, we must do better at making campus more welcoming to All students. I look forward to seeing what Bucknell will look like in a few years from now. As an Alumni I will definitely stay in touch, check in with you all and influence the way decisions are made in every possible way I can. I am hopeful that we will continue to strive for greatness.
Upcoming IEA Events

- **Learn about OPT and H1B (employment visas)**
  - Date: Feb 17th
  - Time: 5pm-6:30pm
  - Venue: Center Room ELC

- **Chinese Spring Festival**
  - Date: Saturday, 20th February
  - Venue: Larison Dining Hall

- **Movie Screening**
  - "The Illusionists"
  - Date: Feb 18th
  - Time: 7pm
  - Venue: ELC 045

- **"Empty Bowls"**
  - Fighting World Hunger and focusing on International Women’s Day- $10 for soup and a handmade clay bowl
  - Thursday March 10th,
  - Walls Lounge ELC

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