

Order of The Golden Bear

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ESTABLISHED 1900

Temporary Meeting Location September 17, 2019

The meeting was convened at 6:00pm.

Items for the Good of the Order:

The Warden reviews some useful protocols for participating in Order discussion.

A fellow emphasizes our three charges, and the importance of heeding to them during discussion.

The Warden encourages the Fellowship to come forward with nominations for the Arleigh Williams forum, and reminds the Fellowship about the continuing Warden's Challenge. Anyone who feels led to contribute to the cause can donate to the Order of the Golden Bear or the Senior Hall Restoration Program, by going to give.berkeley.edu.

A fellow brings light information about the Celebration of Life for late Fellow Dan Cheatham.

A fellow asks the Fellowship to consider volunteering to fill to vacant positions on the Order Council. These currently include the roles of Steward and Scribe.

Items for the Good of the University: Othering and Belonging

The topic of discussion for this evening is "othering and belonging" on the Berkeley campus. This conversation can encompass ways to create an environment where everyone feels welcome.

The concept of "othering and belonging" was created by Professor John A. Powell, a member of the Berkeley faculty.

The aim of this discussion is to expand the circle of human concern; on the Berkeley campus, where change occurs rapidly, newcomers may be frightened of personal differences, causing them to latch onto those most like themselves, "othering" others in the process.

The Warden introduces us to two terms, useful in the context of othering and belonging:

- **Breaking-** seeing others only through differences and deciding that makes them lesser or more undesirable, resulting in dissociation.
- **Bridging-** finding concern for others and taking steps to forge relationships with people who are unlike oneself.

Here, we will attempt to think about ways to correct “breaking,” while imagining how we can use our differences to “bridge” different communities and individuals.

The Warden notes that some may find it ironic that we are having a conversation about “othering” in a semi-exclusive space, where some crucial opinions and vantage points may be missed during the discussion.

A fellow who self-identifies as African American and lived through the Civil Rights era has a unique perspective on being labeled as an “other.” This fellow decided to live at International House (I-House) when they attended school at Cal. I-House may be thought of as a focal point for belonging and inclusion, because of its unique culture of bridging gaps between people.

A fellow thinks that the idea of the “other,” has a lot to do with problematic implicit biases. This fellow encourages others not to “fit in,” but to use their differences to better our society and recognize their implicit biases so that we as individuals can work toward repairing them.

A fellow brings up three critical points:

1. We should identify that there is always going to be a fear of the unknown; we confront the unknown with many questions that we are not immediately answerable. The unknown creates a sense of danger.
2. The issue of “othering” can also be addressed by understanding our many commonalities, and what holds us together. We are all a part of this great University, for example. And we all experience the educational privileges that come with that. This gives us a foothold to treat others with respect, and we should always remember that we are more alike than different (depending on the context with which we frame this term). Ultimately we are all human beings.
3. Belonging requires active building- it is not just the absence of exclusion. It’s the sense that we are building something together, and celebrating that we more than the sum of our individual parts. Together we can go farther and achieve more. If some of us need extra assistance (like additional time to take an exam,

perhaps) to be able to succeed, we should all remember that we have a long road to walk together. This builds a sense of belonging and trust.

A fellow who has oftentimes been an “other” elaborates on their experience. This fellow, who has a disability, was the first person to go to school in an antiquated building without an elevator. But this fellow persevered. This fellow also lived in I-House, and agrees with a previous fellow’s proposal to examine I-House as a model for belonging. Maybe the “international experience” is one of the ultimate othering or belonging stories. In fact, during the Gulf War, students living in I-House who came from countries on opposite sides of the conflict were able to do the seemingly-impossible- talk to each other peacefully, as human beings.

A fellow talks about their “othering” experience at Cal as an African American student. People feel “othered” even more intensely when there are less than 3% of their demographic present on campus. Co-ops are a good model of community, especially for these students. The homeless community is also an excellent example of “othering.” There are many homeless Cal students, and bringing them in and making them feel like they belong is a great way to destigmatize them. Dr. Martin Luther King dreamt of a “beloved community” based on justice, equal opportunity, and love for one’s fellow human beings.

From one fellow’s understanding, “othering” is often a result of implicit biases. This fellow raises a question for students: what tools do we have to help us understand our own implicit biases?

One fellow thinks it is pretty safe to say that we can collectively frown upon actively “othering,” but we do hold implicit biases and even sometimes hang onto ones that are somewhat known. For example, we sometimes look down upon people from opposing ASUC parties. There are lines actively drawn in the sand all the time. Sometimes these biases come to a head when we feel like an issue is particularly important, and this can increase “othering.” However, if we look at political climate, for example, there are too many lines that are too easily drawn. We don’t put in enough effort to push back against this “othering,” in which we are sometimes active members.

One fellow echoes the previous fellow, about drawing “too many lines.” Sometimes, when somebody thinks differently than you and they do not accept your model, they don’t want to converse with you. Oftentimes on the Berkeley campus, a scarcity of resources can force our hand when it comes to drawing lines. Nuance often goes away when there is a competition for resources- somebody who is a little different than you becomes essentially completely different in the blink of an eye.

A fellow harkens back to a previous speaker who spoke of implicit biases. We should emphasize holistic listening instead of conversational listening- that is, listening to what someone says without already formulating a response in your head. While we all have our own lived experiences, we should stray away from gratuitous storytelling in lieu of productive conversations. “Belonging” does not mean homogeneity. “Everyone should be treated the same” is a dangerous notion that we should be critical of, because it assumes that people start out on equal footing. People should be treated based on their needs, and not the exact same way as everyone else. Treating everyone else the same means leaving people behind. This fellow ponders the frequently-asked question, “what advice would you give a new Cal student?” To that end, the institution creates a culture of “othering,” and you really have to fight for your own community. Going out into the greater Cal community (when you have the capacity) to bring other folks into your own space will do wonders for the campus.

One fellow thinks about culture. What is the culture at Cal really like? What about the world? The implications of what we do here also affect the world at large. While we do not have control over the conceptions brought in by new students, we definitely have an influence on how the culture looks when students get here. The greatest sense of belonging this fellow felt when they were at Cal was in the Cal Band. Why is this? The group numbers close to 200 members. But there is a sense of belonging to something that has predated the members and is largely about service. This fellow wonders how many students have experienced something like this, rather than just focusing on getting a good job and earning a good salary? Is that mindset detrimental to the greater campus culture? To this fellow, the University experience is about evolution- not just preparing for the job market, but preparing for life. This fellow notices talk about inclusion and exclusion. What would it look like if we were radically inclusive? Going above and beyond, just for one day, even, to be inclusive. What kind of impact would that have on this campus?

A fellow makes the distinction between othering and uniqueness. We do not want to give up our uniqueness to feel like we belong. This fellow does not think we can properly internalize the importance of diversity if one does not first experience the benefits for one’s self. This fellow encourages students to get together in small groups to interact one-on-one with others. The fellow then shared an experience that they had at the Multicultural Center, involving the use of proper pronouns like “they” and “them.” Even though this fellow made a mistake by using improper pronouns, the person interacting with this fellow made them feel like they belonged even though they were embarrassed. This fellow also invites the fellowship to check out this [Mi Migración piece](#) called “The Butterfly,” a story about someone entering a community as the “other” and becoming part of the community.

A fellow ponders what advice they had received and given when it comes to finding one’s place in the Cal community, in response to a previous fellow’s inquiry. A lot of groups have broader influence on campus, whether it is clubs or off-campus housing or other perks. But there are challenges: How can groups make the club experience

unobtrusive? How can groups make the experience accessible for people who are different than the current makeup?

A fellow encourages others to avoid focusing on differences when discussing “othering.” We should focus on the similarities instead. We are all human beings, at a great school, here to learn and change the world together. As a transfer student, this fellow was very nervous about the riots and political climate when first coming to Cal. Cal (the institution) itself makes for a hostile environment, which permeates into the national environment. This fellow doesn’t have a solution for this, per se, but we should consider truly listening and comprehend where others are coming from, and their point of view. As a final point, this fellow thinks that clubs are a great sense of community. But what this fellow has noticed is that the small community that clubs foster tend to become exclusive. Sometimes club leaders and officers are unwilling to make personal connections that make new folks feel like they belong. Although we are in small communities, we should foster intercommunal connections. These are among the most impactful.

A fellow emphasizes how important it is to join communities. But this also comes with a layer of privilege. As an example, people who have to work and people who live off campus don’t have the same opportunities to join groups. Clubs must not be the only way to find community, because of these restrictions.

A fellow frames their comments in a systematic way, focusing on how resources are allocated and how that limits spaces for community to form. Maybe pronouns and phonetic spellings should be included on class rosters, so we can properly get to know our classmates. The fellow is critical about how we honor people on campus, bringing up Barrows Hall as an example. The fellow proposes that naming a building after President Barrows is counter to the values we seem to promote on campus.

A fellow comments about clubs and organizations, and how they can foster exclusivity instead of inclusivity, especially with regards to the selection/recruitment/interview process. Clubs here on campus are really exclusive, and this issue needs to be addressed throughout the campus. Many groups have rigorous application processes that limit the types of people who can become a part of that community. We should really look more closely at the application processes for different clubs and organizations.

A fellow draws our attention to unintended consequences of campus development. Back when university athletes used to live throughout the on-campus housing system, a larger sense of community was fostered between athletics and the rest of the student body because of close living proximity and familiarity. Nowadays, the athletes are sequestered together. This is just one example of how the University has implemented real systems which promote othering. Also, we all take part in othering across the board: a popular class at Yale about happiness called “The Science of Well-Being” emphasizes talking to people when you find them (in lines, happenstance meetings). It

has been found that talking to others in public spaces is a small way of fostering community.

A fellow claims that building community starts with oneself. Random acts of kindness can make a huge difference in the lives of others. People are going to have biases no matter what. But when disagreeing, people should not point a finger and say “you are wrong,” but should instead try to see other points of view. On top of that, coming to a University is often the first time where students are on their own. Maybe orientation should have some sort of tolerance training to help students interact with unfamiliar ideas, cultures, and ways of life.

A fellow points out that back when they came to Cal in the 60s, there were very few Latinos on the Berkeley campus. This fellow felt like an outsider most of the time, but there were some groups where they felt like they belonged. If you are in the minority, it is sometimes up to you to break down the barriers. If there are walls, sometimes you have to break them down yourself. Words have a lot of meaning- many times, outsiders criticize Berkeley students for getting hung up on words. Berkeley students sometimes make people “others” because of the verbiage they use and promote. When people use the wrong words, it does not mean that they hate you! We cannot get offended. You should not try to find offense in people who mean well. Instead of becoming offended, you can educate them. Try to work with others, even when you might be displeased with them.

A fellow acknowledges that othering can take two forms: marginalization, and the decisiveness of knowledge. These are two different veins when it comes to othering. Navigating both requires empathy.

One fellow follows up on the previous speaker, and emphasizes the Order’s pillar of tolerance. We do not address any other person- this should be taking place in classrooms as well. Members of the faculty do not always take this charge seriously, or maybe do not know enough about its importance to really take it to heart. We should be trained to address comments to issues, not people. However, it is the responsibility of the leader of the classroom to make this a reality. Both the campus administration and faculty members do not take that responsibility upon themselves. The fellow then transitioned to address a previous fellow’s comments about President David Prescott Barrows. We can acknowledge that he did things that we do not accept today. But we can also acknowledge that history is located in time and space, and that it should not stop us from realizing positive contributions made by Barrows (or anyone else). This particular fellow came to campus at a time where there were not many people who looked like them on campus, but there are still many people on this campus who want to speak to you. Campus really segments itself, in ways where it claims to be open. But we as individuals have the option to really make it an open, welcoming place.

A fellow wants to express their opinion on “exclusivity” when it comes to the Order’s space. But this fellow paints a different picture within the purview of this model. There

are a lot of groups like the Order on this campus, but the Order is the only space with the purpose of discussing things, taking what we talk about, and going out with newfound information. Our design is to listen, share, learn, and go out. Unlike other spaces (which are super exclusive), we have the opportunity (possibly a responsibility) to go out and have many different conversations on this campus with the information that we learn, but not as in an echo chamber, but making sure to include opposing viewpoints and what we still have yet to understand. We broaden the conversation this way. "Exclusive" may have a little too much edge when applied to this space. But, when we neglect to go out, we "other" ourselves. Generally speaking, we also other ourselves because of survival on this campus. Do not just go to the place that is comfortable and stay there. Continue to challenge yourself. Do not "self-other." This gets in the way of the end goal: making this place less cold and more of a community. A previous speaker mentioned reaction to "wrong words." Focusing on these is another form self-othering.

The Warden here encourages the fellowship to think about moving the discussion focus from othering to belonging. How do we create a sense of belonging on this campus?

A fellow comments on focusing on holistic listening. We should also be using as many examples as we can to explain our concepts. How do we go from taking people seen as others to help them belong? When is it appropriate to ask questions to help them belong? How do we assess whether or not to ask tough questions? When is it too early? The fellow gives a personal example about a wheelchair-using student they met through the sorority rush process. It was not until very late in the recruitment process that somebody asked this student about how her house preferences were affected by her disability. If this student's needs were addressed earlier, the sorority system could have done a better job of creating a culture of belonging. However, jumping to ask these questions may not always be the best of ideas. The fellow struggles to determine when and how to make these inquiries; they have previously been made uncomfortable about their sexual orientation in group settings by incessant questioning, making them feel like an other.

A fellow who generally has different political views than the campus as the whole address explosive language in the classroom. Making broad statements which are assumed to be unanimously agreed upon shuts down productive conversation in the classroom. Even when professors are welcoming to opposing viewpoints in one-on-one situations, using assuming language instead of open-ended language implicitly puts down differing views.

A fellow comments on a previous speaker, and asserts that acknowledging how people could be "othered" depends less on timing and more on one's relation to them. Leaders, or "superiors" have a responsibility to ask the tough questions (in an appropriate way) to make people feel like they belong. Speaking on the issue of finding community, this fellow observes that it is often done through shared skillsets or interests. This can be made very difficult, with auditions and interviews and recruitment processes, and it is really easy to feel like you are an "other" at Cal. But, there are LEAD center programs to

help with dealing with these feelings. People want to be with people who seem like them, but organizations should make an effort to make “others” feel like they belong, and that the organization is not just looking for people who look and sound like them.

A fellow is thinking about action and solution. The Order doesn't vote on actions; each member takes out individual meaning. What's missing is compassion, understanding, and sensitivity. How can we incorporate these things? Are there conversations like the Order's that are open to the campus community, other than the annual Arleigh Williams Forum? Athletic events seem to work, in that they bring thousands of people together. What other times do we have these numbers coming together? Commencement, convocation, GBO? Can we increase the frequency and types of these events? Often, during finals time, the Chancellor will bring cookies and coffee to students in the library. This is a great opportunity to meet others and foster small communities. What if there were folks out on Sproul Plaza who just listened to student concerns? What if we have this content shared anonymously? This fellow imagines an art installation, such as a chalkboard in a public place on campus, asking uncomfortable questions and made available for student answers.

A fellow mentions an activity they start a few times a semester that can be seen as an effort to foster belonging. They post on one of our Facebook groups about free treats in the library (and someone to talk to). This fellow does this because it is a lot of fun, and their favorite thing about baking is feeding other people. This activity does something nice for them. This fellow challenges others to find something they like to do that also serves others. This is how we sustain building community.

The meeting closed with song, and was adjourned promptly at 7:32pm.

Meeting minutes taken and compiled by the Chronicler for the Order.

