

## FM REVIEW 2019 5

**COMMENTS TO EDITOR:** This essay includes two examples of a program at the author's medical school, "Diversity Dinners," that allows students to share their stories of how their experiences intersect with issues of racism, xenophobia, homophobia, and other social prejudices. The topic and the program are both important especially in our highly divided country.

However, the essay lacks coherence. The opening sentence is engaging but with no reference point it is also confusing. The introductory paragraph describes problematic deaths of African-Americans, yet the anecdotes are not related to the resultant societal tensions and anger. Finally, the dinners themselves are not well-described, another source of confusion. With some editing and rewriting, this could be a very interesting account of how to disseminate medical students' stories about diversity in a safe supportive environment.

**COMMENTS TO AUTHOR:** We like the idea of this essay very much but think it could benefit from some revision. Please consider the following suggestions:

- 1) The opening sentence is engaging but with no reference point it is also confusing. Perhaps add an explanation that provides a framework for the sentence: "In our interactions with medical students, we frequently hear variations on this statement. Being in a new environment and feeling at the bottom of a hierarchy, students can often feel silenced, especially when it comes to issues of identity and in their encounters with racism, xenophobia, homophobia, and misogyny. "
- 2) The introductory paragraph describes police shooting deaths of African-Americans, yet the student anecdotes are not directly related to the resultant societal tensions and anger. Either provide a broader context for the stories, or show how these events triggered a need for students to come together and speak out.
- 3) The dinners themselves are rather vaguely described. Please provide a little more detail about them - how often they are held, how students are recruited, who attends, what is the location, who provides the food.
- 4) The stories are lovely, but could be edited for brevity. Also, avoid making them into testimonials for the diversity dinners.
- 5) The conclusion needs some work. The shift from "visitor" to "host" does not really seem central to the main theme of your essay. Instead, consider focusing on building community and creating a safe space.

By paying attention to these issues, you will be able to craft an essay that better meets the main criterion of this section, which is to tell moving and relevant stories.

**COMMENTS TO EDITOR II:** I don't believe this has ever happened before, but this revision is much farther off the mark than the original. I regret that apparently unclear feedback to the authors has resulted in this confusion. The original essay contained two narratives, both of which needed

considerable revision and were also not completely tied to the program description, which was lacking in specificity, making it hard to actually understand the context for the narratives. Unfortunately, the authors decided to completely eliminate the student narratives, and instead have submitted to what amounts to a program description. It is DEFINITELY not a narrative essay; and in fact, without any sort of evaluation data, it could not be considered for publication in any section of the journal.

I do not see a simple way forward. My recommendation is to suggest that the authors start over. Below I try to do a better job of explaining that the narrative essay section needs to tell a specific story, and cannot be a program description. I feel badly that they obviously worked hard on this revision, only to produce an article that is inappropriate for the journal.

COMMENTS TO AUTHOR II: Thank you for this revision. We can see you put a lot of effort into this version and made some very substantive changes in the manuscript. I regret that, perhaps as a result of unclear feedback, this revision has gone in the opposite direction of what the narrative essay section of the journal intends.

The purpose of the narrative essay section is to tell a story. By eliminating the student narratives, you have excised the only pieces of the essay that might have made it relevant to this section of the journal. Instead we are left with what is essentially a program description. As a matter of policy, the journal does not publish program descriptions unless they are accompanied by rigorous evaluation data; and in any case, such a submission would be better suited as a brief report.

To be considered as a narrative essay, the piece should tell one (or two) specific stories that illustrate the value to participants of the diversity dinners. The essay can offer a very brief description of the dinners, to provide context. But the heart of the essay must be a focused narration about a specific event and how it affected the narrator. For example, "It was my first time at a diversity dinner. I walked in, not knowing what to expect. Then someone came up and greeted me. Then this happened. Then that happened. This is how I felt. This is what I learned. This is how I changed." Something along these lines is what we are looking for in a narrative essay.

Again, please accept my apologies if our initial letter did not clearly convey these criteria. The diversity dinners sounds valuable and meaningful, and we would love to hear a story that emerged from one of them.