October 27, 1997

To the Colby Community:

Sometime late Saturday or early Sunday, October 25-26, someone entered the office of the Society Organized Against Racism (SOAR) in the Pugh Center and wrote the words "fuck niggers and spics" on a message board and defaced a student-constructed collage of faces of persons of different races and ethnic groups.

This racist act is hurtful and oppressive. It violates our principles of respect and dignity. Racism divides our community, raises hostility and defensiveness, and works against open intellectual dialogue. Moreover, this particular act explicitly works to exclude and marginalize students of color. While this was clearly an act against SOAR and particularly those African-American and Latino members of that organization, all of us suffer from acts that exclude or silence some members of the community.

Since the discovery of this racist graffiti, some students have said that incidents such as these are to be expected. Although these sentiments are understandable, I believe that as a college, we have committed ourselves to fighting racism in any form and to working toward a community where no one will feel that such events are inevitable.

An investigation has begun, led by Colby Security, under the direction of Mr. Peter Chenevert. This investigation can only be successful, however, if individuals who have information act responsibly and come forward. Please call Mr. Chenevert in the Security Department (x3345) or speak with any of the staff in the Dean of Students Office (x3104), if you saw or know of anyone who was near the SOAR office either Saturday evening or Sunday morning.

A discussion of creating heightened penalties for those found guilty of creating hate graffiti was, in fact, already on the agenda for the Campus Community Committee which meets Wednesday, October 29, at 8 a.m. in the Pugh Center and is open to all members of the community. Mr. Steven Wessler of the Hate Crimes Division of the Maine Attorney General's Office will be joining us in that discussion. You are encouraged to attend.

While we all think of how to counter the continuance of such acts, I ask that we listen to the students who have been most recently targeted and who have made it clear that the "answer" is not a rally or a singular opportunity to "teach about racism." Instead, we all must constantly work to prevent such acts.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

William R. Cotter