Students of color need a safe haven

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Due to the dissatisfaction of many minorities at Colby, a proposal for a multi-cultural dorm is being discussed. Although the dorm would primarily exist for students of color, it would not exclude people of any race. The main goal of such a residence hall would be to create an atmosphere where students are committed to multiculturalism and feel respected for being who they are.

The idea of minorities having their own seemingly separate residence hall brings up some interesting issues and debate in the Colby community. It is important for people to understand the importance of this proposed dorm.

Although diversity should exist in all the dorms at Colby, it is very difficult for a school in rural Maine to accomplish this. As it stands now, with Colby attracting less than ten percent minorities to the student body, the option for students of color to live in a multicultural dorm is a way of creating a more comfortable atmosphere. Many students of color are not minorities where they live at home. They live in places where they are not constantly reminded of their skin color, or made to feel unwelcome at times.

The situation here, though, is different. At Colby, many minorities feel as if they are here as educators, continually defending themselves because of assumptions made by majority students. The ignorance displayed by so many white students at Colby is deplorable. Not only do minorities go to classes and other daily activities in this environment, but they have to go home every night to the same thing. For some there are never times to be themselves and not have to worry about the reactions from others.

Rarely can a minority just be a student at Colby, or feel comfortable doing so, which is one of the major reasons Colby has difficulty retaining its minorities for the full four years. Minority students who do not have any aspects from home that would make them feel comfortable and safe as a minority students on campus are not willing to stay at Colby. Majority students do not have this difficulty.

Having a multicultural dorm is one way to build a comfortable community for minorities. This is a place where minorities could feel relaxed and not be stared at. They would not feel forced to be educators, but could feel like students.

By no means would all minorities on campus live in this dorm or feel inclined to do so. For many, the option of living in a multicultural dorm could make their experience at Colby a better one. Non-minorities as well as students of color would benefit greatly from learning to understand one another and appreciate differences.

There is a possible drawback to having such a dorm. With many of Colby's minority students living in one dorm the rest of the dorms on campus would be less diverse. This would cause minority students to feel more comfortable and safe on campus. However, if a multicultural dorm does host parties, dances and other activities, it would hopefully create opportunities for other students to become involved.

Dorms similar to the proposed multicultural dorm do exist successfully at other colleges. When discussing the possibility of a multicultural dorm at Colby, it is important that the number one priority be the concerns and needs of the minorities on campus. Minorities rightfully feel that changes need to be made to make a comfortable learning environment for all students.

Majority students are in no position to accuse the proposal as separatist on a campus with so much ignorance and in a country with so much intolerance. Whether or not a multicultural dorm happens, hopefully minorities will have a strong voice. In all decisions, that Colby is striving for a diverse learning environment.