

Connecting the civil rights era to today

Equality. A grant from the NEH will spark a two-year conversation at Bryn Mawr College.

At Bryn Mawr College, students, faculty and community members will be learning about the civil rights movement — which may sound like a fairly typical academic panel discussion, but it isn't. Created Equal: America's Civil Rights Struggle is a two-year initiative that comes to the Main Line courtesy of a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The program will screen four documentaries dealing with civil rights, from the pre-Civil War era through the 1960s. Each semester for the next two years will be dedicated to one film.

While there are many faculty and community members involved with the project, Olivia Castello, outreach and educational technology librarian at Bryn Mawr, is the woman making it all come to-

gether. "This fall we will be screening 'The Loving Story,'" says Castello. "We're showing a sort of abridged version of it to allow time for the discussion." The documentary, though very influential and critical to the conversation of civil rights, is not the driving force. It's the panel and post-panel discussion that are the meat of the project.

"Discussion is an explicit part of the grant," says Castello. "The idea is to promote a more public discussion [of civil rights], and that's why one of the requirements for the grant is to make it open to the public. We're holding it in Thomas Great Hall, which is very accessible to everyone."

Castello says that when applying for the grant she was thinking about Bryn

Mawr and the surrounding Main Line community. There are several institutions that will partake in the Created Equal project, but as Castello puts it, "We're hoping to add a little Bryn Mawr flavor to it."

Why, though, is it important to be remembering and talking about the civil rights movement in 2013? "People want to know where we are at today," Castello says. "Is the struggle over? That's a complicated question that deserves a more nuanced conversation. We feel that it's important to observe the anniversaries of civil rights events in a way that is inquisitive and connects to today."

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Quoted

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Bryn Mawr College will screen four documentaries to kick off community-wide discussions about civil rights. / HEMERA TECHNOLOGIES

Who's who

On the panel

Each installment will have a diverse mix of academics and local activists on the panel. The first, on Nov. 14, includes Regina Austin, professor

of law at the University of Pennsylvania Law School; Florence Goff, former associate CIO and equal opportunity officer at Bryn Mawr College; Cynthia Chalker, director of diversity at Friends Semi-

nary and former acting director of institutional diversity at Bryn Mawr; and Sharon Ullman, professor of American history and coordinator of gender and sexuality studies, also at Bryn Mawr.



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