

## SUNY New Paltz community comes together to fight racism

By [Jeremiah Horrigan](#)

Times Herald-Record

Published: 2:00 AM - 12/01/11

NEW PALTZ — The evening's subject was immense, but its aim was modest: to speak about the effects of racism despite knowing that speaking was only the beginning of any possible answer.

More than 400 SUNY New Paltz students, faculty and staff filled various rooms of the Student Union Building Wednesday evening at a gathering that had an ugly genesis nearly three weeks ago, when several racist signs appeared in campus buildings.

College President Donald Christian assured the crowd the school's investigation into the postings had produced a "person of interest." But the question of who was responsible for posting the signs was less important than questions of how those attending the forum felt about the signs and what the answers might mean to people individually and the campus in general.

Christian cautioned that while everyone might wish to see some "grand action" take place that could help heal the wounds resulting from the signs, "change occurs slowly." He also dismissed the idea that this was a "trivial matter of political correctness" or that people should "lighten up" about the postings.

"Words matter," he said, "and we take these incidents seriously." Participants then organized themselves into small groups and discussed how they felt about the postings.

Adjunct professor in electronics Prabjit Singh said afterward that he felt "all people are racist to some extent." The problem, he said, frequently had to do with the way a person was raised.

"Ultimately, it all comes down to the parents," he said.

After the discussion groups, members of each shared the conclusions they had reached, including plans to continue meeting both formally and informally.

[jhorrigan@th-record.com](mailto:jhorrigan@th-record.com)