

**Ferris State University  
Faculty and Staff Diversity Mini-Grant Application**

**I. Identification**

Name of Primary Applicant **Barry Mehler**

Members of Team: **Christine Baily and Richard Griffin**

Department or Unit: **Humanities Department/ Political Engagement Project**

Campus Address: **Barry Mehler, ASC 2064**

Telephone: **X 3612**

E-mail address: **mehlerb@ferris.edu**

**II Event Title (25 words or less)**

**Blood and Politics: White Nationalism and the Politics of Hate**

**III. Specific core value, strategic initiative, or goal related to diversity that the event will address. (See the University Strategic Plan and the Diversity Plan)**

**This program will:**

- a) bring a leading scholar-activist to campus**
- b) engage students and faculty in the debate over the meaning of tolerance**
- c) encourage discussion among students, faculty and community**
- d) draw local television and radio news to Ferris**
- e) draw together diverse elements of the community together**

**IV Abstract (150-200 word, use additional paper if necessary). If the application is approved the abstract will be posted on the Diversity and Inclusion Office website.**

**Leonard Zeskind, winner of the MacArthur Genius Award and author of *Blood and Politics: The History of the White Nationalist Movement – From the Margins to the Mainstream* (Ferrar Straus Giroux, 2009) is currently touring the nation speaking out on the politics of hate. The single most important issue that has brought white nationalist from the margins into the mainstream, according to Leonard Zeskind, has been the debate over immigration and “illegal aliens.”**

**President Eisler, in his “*Vision for Ferris and Its Future*” said that we “must help foster understanding, tolerance, and acceptance of differences in ethnicity, culture, religion, preference, and abilities. We must look within and honestly assess how we are fulfilling our role as an academy that both values and embraces diversity.” America is the midst of a transition to a multiethnic society in which whites are a minority. For those committed to making that changeover a successful one, it will be necessary to anticipate and understand the forces that will be arrayed against us. I believe, Zeskind’s new book, *Blood and Politics* will be indispensable in our efforts. Having him**

here to interact with our students will, I believe, move us another step towards our shared vision for future for Ferris.

**V. Event Narrative (up to 4 pages single-spaced)**

**The conceptual framework**

Our goal at Ferris State University is to foster diversity. It is obvious that we are in the midst of an often violent transition in which groups threatened by the changes that we are undergoing are organizing a powerful and often threatening coalition to oppose change. Mr. Zeskind has been a scholar-activist who has successfully worked with labor and business, ethnic minorities, religious groups as well as a broad spectrum of political opinions to form coalitions focused on overcoming the obstacles to change. He will give a major talk in Williams Auditorium and be available to meet in smaller groups with students and faculty.

Mr. Zeskind's presentations will be augment a number of our programs including, History, Political Science, Social Work and Sociology.

**Timeline.**

I would like to have Mr. Zeskind here either shortly before our Spring Break or immediately after the Spring break.

**Expected Impact:**

Having worked with Mr. Zeskind for over thirty years, I can attest to his ability to energize students and engage academics. His appearance on our campus will have a lasting impact. His various presentations will be taped and archived for future use both as a classroom tool and as a resource for scholarly research.

**Assessment Plan:**

An assessment plan will be developed that will measure attendance and include an attitudinal study. We will develop a survey instrument to be used at all events sponsored by this mini-grant.

**VI. Budget**

Honorarium:	\$3,000
Air fare from Kansas City to Grand Rapids	\$250.00
Two nights Hotel:	\$300.00
Meals:	\$300.00
Total Estimated Expenses:	\$3,850.00

Funds anticipated from other sources: N/A

I will solicit funds to support this program

From the Dean of Arts and Sciences, the Department of Humanities

And other co-sponsoring entities, but I cannot estimate how successful those solicitations will be.

**Total amount requested from Diversity Mini-Grant: \$3,500.00**

**VII. Final Report – will be submitted containing:**

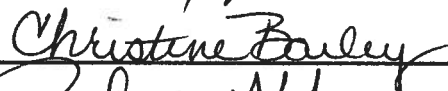
- a: A self-evaluation**
- b: Results of the event assessment**
- c: Attendance figures**
- d: Final budget**

**Applicants' Signatures:**

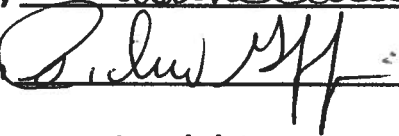
**Barry Mehler**



**Christine Bailey**



**Richard Griffen**



**Submission Date: Tuesday 9/8/09**

Submit applications to Patty Terry, Diversity and Inclusion Office, CSS 312. Review of applications will begin upon receipt and continue contingent on available funds.

BAM Diversity Mini-Grant 9Sep09

Addendum to the Mini-Grant Application:

Attached to this grant proposal is my original PEP proposal for the Fall-Spring 2009-2010 Semesters.

I met yesterday with David Pilgrim and he agreed to support and fund a debate which will also take place in the Spring between Richard Kessler, Grant Rapids attorney and civil rights leader and Wayne Lutton, the editor of Social Contract Press. The debate will be in the Dome Room and David was hoping we could arrange for "break out" discussions after the debate for students who wished to continue the conversation.

I have been assured the support of the Hispanic Students Association, the Political Engagement Project, the American Democracy Project and the Department of Humanities. I'm hoping that the Spring semester will be as focused on the immigration debate as the campus was focused on 1984 when a coordinated campus wide program was organized around the Williams Auditorium presentation.

Barry Mehler  
September 9, 2009

## PEP Immigration Project 2009

Barry Mehler

Fall 2009

As my PEP project for the Fall and Spring of 2009-2010, I will be working on the Immigration reform issue. Immigration reform is third down from the top on the Presidents agenda. As everyone is aware, the President is currently pushing forward on his health care agenda. His Cap and Trade energy bill is being currently put together by Congressman Henry Waxman. The Presidents immigration bill is in the hands of Senator Charles Schumer of New York.

The main state organization in Michigan is right here in Grand Rapids and is led by Richard Kessler, a Grand Rapids attorney who single handedly handles more than 75 percent of the the immigration cases in this area. He has organized the West Michigan Immigration Reform Group which is meeting regularly at the Catholic Information Center - a fabulous new building constructed by the Catholic Diocese of Grand Rapids. I am a member of this group primarily doing educational work on the nature of the anti-immigration movement, which I characterize as "white nationalists." The group is composed of twenty to thirty individuals. I haven't gotten to know them all yet, but there is a Bosnian Muslim woman, representatives of several liberal protestant organizations, a variety of Hispanic representatives from various Latin American countries; several leftist organizations, including the Grand Rapids Institute for Information Democracy. GRIID (<http://griid.org/>) is currently editing an interview I did with them on the immigration issue. Needless to say this is what we really mean by diversity. This is a group representing Jews and Muslims and Protestants and Catholics and athiests and leftists and liberals and lawyers and professors and community organizers. Of course, this group is ideologically unified behind a committment to liberal immigration reform.

The opposition to immigration in this state is centered in the Petosky based, Social Contract Press (<http://www.thesocialcontract.com/>). The Social Contract Press was founded by John Tanton, who also founded three major organizations fighting for greater restriction of immigration, both legal and illegal. These three organizations, all located in Washington, D.C. are among the most influential and well funded in the United States. They are, Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), NumbersUSA and the Center for Immigration Studies (CIS). The Southern Poverty Law Center's Intelligence Report recently released a study of these three organizations titled, "The Nativist Lobby: Three Faces of Intolerance" ([http://www.splcenter.org/intel/nativist\\_lobby.jsp](http://www.splcenter.org/intel/nativist_lobby.jsp)). The editor of the *Social Contract*, the quarterly journal of the Social Contract Press is Wayne Lutton. I would like to bring Dr. Lutton to campus as well.

Lutton is an important figure in the immigration restriction movement and he exemplifies the white nationalist origins of the movement. From the mid 1980s to the mid 90s, Lutton wrote for the *Journal of Historical Review* which is devoted to Holocaust denial. Lutton never challenged the facts about the Holocaust, but he wrote a series of reviews in which he compared the Nazi soldiers behavior in Paris with the Russian soldiers in Berlin. He noted that the Nazis were always correct and the women of Paris had nothing to fear from the Nazis. The Russians, on the other hand were barbarians. His general observation was that he found the German's likable, "warts and all." But more importantly, Lutton feels the Nazi were defending civilization, the

Allies were not. In 1986 he co-authored *AIDS: Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome* with David A. Noebel and Paul Cameron, which claimed that AIDS could be contracted by casual contact. While C. Everett Koop, Reagan's Surgeon General was trying to calm the hysteria over AIDS by reassuring the nation that AIDS could not be contracted by casual social contact, Lutton was fanning the flames claiming that AIDS could render "the human race extinct within 50 years." Lutton recommended a crackdown on gay bars and other gay community organizations. He felt that the general population needed to be protected from homosexuals who were spreading a dangerous disease.

I would like to organize a debate for mid-March 2010. I am also interested in inviting Dr. Stephen Steinlight, senior fellow of the Center for Immigration Restriction. I spoke with Dr. Steinlight the other day and he would be delighted to come here. Steinlight represents the liberal wing of the anti-immigration movement. He came to the CIS from the American Jewish Committee, which is currently spearheading the drive for immigration liberalization. Lastly, I would like to bring Leonard Zeskind to campus as a featured speaker in Williams Auditorium, perhaps sponsored by the Arts and Lectures Committee. Mr. Zeskind has just published a history of the white nationalist movement in the United States from the 1960s to the present. His book, *Blood and Politics: The History of the White Nationalist Movement from the Margins to the Mainstream* (Ferrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009 - 672 pages). ISAR has a feature on Mr. Zeskind including a review of his new book and a link to his one hour television interview on *Democracy Now* (June 11, 2009). I would like to arrange a speaking tour for Mr. Zeskind that would begin here at Ferris and carry him as far across the state as possible. In my view, there are few more knowledgeable or worth listening to than Mr. Zeskind.

I have also spoken with Rabbi David Krishef who is interested in having a debate in the Synagogue on a Sunday evening, either on the 14th or 21st of March. On the other side of this issue, I would like to bring Richard Kessler. There could be other participants as well. My plans are still preliminary. Richard lives in Grand Rapids and is a fellow member of Congregation Ahavas Israel. He has indicated that coming up to Ferris in the Fall would not be a problem. He could then return for the Spring Debate. Richard will also be organizing a special Passover service later in March that will bring together immigrants - with or without documents to prove their humanity - and the Jews of Grand Rapids Congregation Ahavas Israel to meet, so that the people about whom we are debating, have a chance to express themselves. We don't want the debate to be "about them." While they are not citizens of this nation, they certainly have a right to speak on this issue which will determine their lives. I would like to do something similar here at Ferris - to give those most interested in the outcome of this debate a chance to be heard.

It is a cliché that the United States is a land of immigrants. This debate gets to the core of what it means to be a citizen and what it means to be an American. It is a compelling debate and one that I hope will engage our students. It goes without saying that I cannot do this alone. I need help, lots of it. So, if any of you are interested please let me know. I would like to form a group to work on this project as soon as possible. Caryn and I are leaving this Tuesday for New York where we will be meeting with Ken Stern, Senior Fellow at the American Jewish Committee. The AJC just received a half-million dollar grant from the Ford Foundation to do a study of the political landscape regarding immigration reform in order to lay out a map of what is realistically possible given the political realities of the present. I will report on my New York trip upon my

return at the end of August.

I'm very much looking forward to working on this project and I hope others will be anxious to join me.

Barry Mehler