

Human race machine alters image

It's impossible to change one's race, but for a short time, students at Mount St. Mary's University, Emmitsburg, were able to view themselves differently. Using the Human Race Machine, which the university hosted for five days, students were able to change their faces into six different races, mapped from their own images. In moments, the machine's morphing program applied the changes.

Designed to challenge the participant's perception of race, age, and physical features, the machine has been used by over 150,000 people throughout the world and was featured on "Oprah."

"Expanding perspective is paramount for a thorough understanding of what people in different races see and face in everyday life," said Johnika Nixon, director of the Mount's intercultural development office. "The Human Race Machine is a unique experience that places people, for a brief moment, in someone else's shoes."

Student Hannah Dell, class of 2011, thought it was an eye-opener to realize how different racial groups are, yet how similar.

"Even though I was seeing myself as a different race, it was still me sitting in front of the machine," she said. "I still thought the same way and acted the same way." Ms. Dell thought the machine caused awareness to users of how much society focuses on external characteristics.

Amanda Althoff, class of 2011, liked being able to see what she would look like as a member of a different ethnic group. "Diversity gives students an opportunity to explore the differences of the world. The machine showed me that everyone was unique."