

Roots

Volume I: Issue 3
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Coming Events

Tuesday, January 15th M.L.K. Birthday.
Lecture: M. K. Asante Jr. - "I Am Because We Are: Dr. King, Our Generation and the Next Movement."
PAC Pavilion 7:00-9:00 p.m.

Tuesday, February 5th African-American Jeopardy
UU 221 7:00-8:30 p.m.

Wednesday, February 6th Another Type of Groove: featuring Talaam Acey
Pac Pavilion 7:00-9:30 p.m.

Tuesday, February 12th Step presentations - Cal Poly Style
Spanos Breezeway 11:15 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Tuesday, February 12th Film: "Stomp the Yard"
UU 221 7:00-9:00 p.m.

Thursday, February 14th Performance: Crown City Rockers
UU Plaza 11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Thursday, February 21st Screening: CNN Special: "The Noose - An American Nightmare" & discussion
UU 220 4:00-6:00 p.m.

Saturday, February 23rd Cross Cultural Retreat: Social Advocacy
UU 208 11:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

Thursday, February 28th Film: "Little Rock Central: 50 Years Later"
UU 208 7:00-9:00 p.m.

NAHM packs the house

Students crowd venues to take part in great events.

Native American Heritage Month went off smoothly as students crowded various on-campus venues during the month of November to experience great events.

The first event was the Chumash Presentation: The Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians on November 6. Members of the Chumash Nation Joe Talogon, Margie Talogon, and Pete Zavala (Crowheart) presented the history of the Chumash and spoke about the importance of the land in the Central Coast. Event Chair Joey Sanchez said, "The presentation was awesome. It was about an hour long and there was a lot of information about the native people of this area that basically everyone didn't know." Sanchez also said that more people than expected showed up, causing the event to be moved to accommodate the nearly 150 attendees.

On November 8, Soldier Creek Drum presented a drum circle in UU 220 which drew a crowd that spanned wall-to-wall. The audience stood while the

performers drummed honor songs including the American Indian Movement song, and then the dancing began. Sanchez said, "There was a two step dance. It's basically a dance, where the woman asks the man to dance, and it's a friendship dance kind of thing." He added that on a funny note, if the man rejects the woman that asks him, he usually owes the drummers \$10 or \$20 dollars. "It's like a joke, slash rule of thumb."

On November 14 seed bead key chains and boxes were made during a craft workshop in the UU. *Full story on next page.* The last event of Native American Heritage Month was a film showing. "Skins," a film exploring the unemployment, domestic violence and drug and alcohol abuse of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation through the eyes of Rudy, a private investigator, was shown to a crowd of about 60 people. Following the film, a discussion was held which focused mainly on the conditions in reservations.



Soldier Creek Drum providing a beat for a packed UU 220

CAL POLY



MCC
MULTICULTURAL CENTER

Stories and layout by Brian McMullen (b.man.beats@gmail.com). Special thanks to Joey Sanchez for additional information crucial to this newsletter

Cross Cultural Retreat discusses white privilege

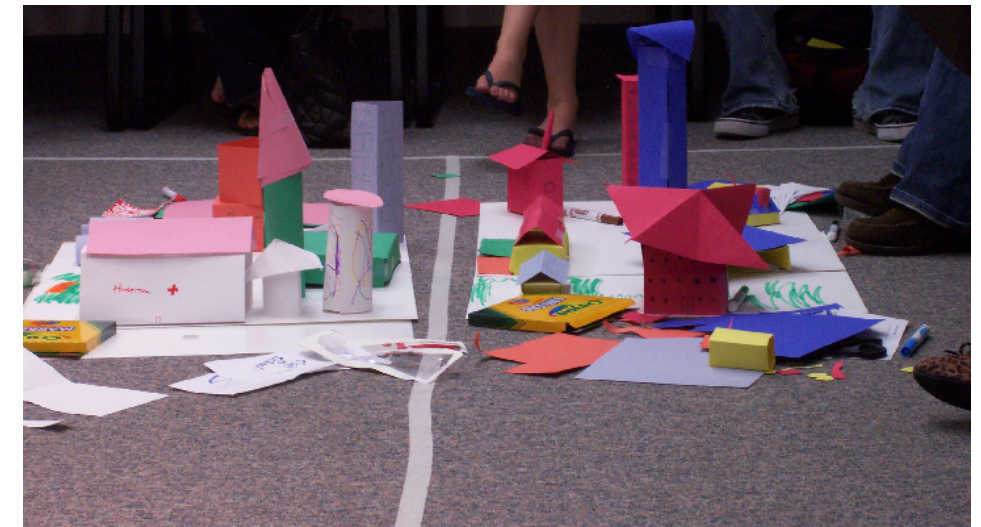
On Saturday, November 3, the MCC presented a Cross Cultural Retreat titled White Privilege: A Discussion. Participants in this activity were lead through two excercises with accompanying discussions to help present to them a relevant model of white privilege and its effect on people of color.

The first exercise was called "Archie's bunker." The participants were split into four groups and given office supplies with which to build the necessities of a community. Two groups were given tape, colorful paper to build with, markers to color with, and more space to build on. The other two groups were given black and brown paper and one of the two was given tape and a pencil, the other just paper. Dealing with two uncooperative cops and a less-than inviting mayor, these two underprivileged communities struggled to build things such as low-cost apartments and the privileged community flourished with hospitals, parks, and dance clubs. Following this activity was a discussion in which members of the privileged communities said that they didn't think to give

supplies to the other communities.

The second exercise showed participants the inequality caused by white privilege. Those in attendance stood shoulder-to-shoulder in straight line in the UU Plaza. Business senior Shariq Hashmi, the event's coordinator, called out scenarios and asked students to take a step forward

or backward depending on the scenario. Obstacles to one's getting a job, an education, or likewise, resulted in participants stepping backward. Following the exercise a discussion was held which stretched from issues of race to the socio-political atmosphere of America and how it can be changed to deconstruct privilege.



The privileged communities built by participants in the "Archie's Bunker" exercise were tall and colorful and had many buildings.

Mixed successes, but all smiles at N.A.H.M craft workshop

On Wednesday, November 14, people crammed into UU 216 and used all available table and floor space to get small seed-bead key chains or boxes started. After a quick instruction on how to bead, the participants started their creations.

Asked how his beading was go-

ing, Recreation junior Andy Bowlin said, "It's actually quite fun, it's really hard though."

It was Kinesiology Sophomore Meghan Lord's first time beading, she said, "I think it's really interesting, I'm actually going to ask about where they get the beads so I can do it on my own."

Asked what project she would like to pursue on her own, Lord said that she liked the idea of making a beaded purse or bracelet. She also said that she would recommend the activity to others, "but it takes patience." She then added, "It's really calming when you get into it."

Brent Anderson, Aerospace Engineering freshman was having difficulties beading. He said that the activity was difficult because of, "the dexterity with your hands, and how intricate it is and how one mistake can set you back." Asked if he enjoyed the activity, he responded with a smile, "it is stimulating if you will, but it is hard."

Journalism Freshman Elaine Denham looked forward to and enjoyed taking part in this cultural activity. "It was the one I was most excited about out of all the choices," she said.

Though they did not have enough time to finish their key chains or boxes, the participants left with a piece of Native American culture in their possession and a fun experience under their belt.



Biology senior Jacob Valenzuela (top) and Kinesiology sophomore Meghan Lord (bottom), show off their bead key chains

The Futuristic Stylings Of Poet Ben-Alex Dupris

He calls himself a kid from the “Rez” and describes himself as the “remix of old-fashioned ghosts.” Both are accurate. Ben-Alex Dupris is a Native American poet whose spirit travels freely between the past and the future.

Coming from the Colville Indian Reservation nearby Spokane, Washington to Cal Poly, Dupris performed his brand of poetry which explores contemporary Native issues with an often humorous approach as well as fuses traditional Native American and high-tech imagery. It was the first Wednesday of November, the Business Silo was crowded, and Dupris kept the audience entertained with his humor and thoughtful with his social commentary. “It’s the first time that I’ve performed in front of a poetry group of people who weren’t all exclusively Indian,” Dupris said outside the Silo after putting down the mic, shaking hands with students and grooving with the night’s musical provider DJ Snax. During his performance he made the same comment and was greeted by a sassy “helloooo” to which he responded, “Oh, three of you, now I feel like I’m back in College.”

Speaking on his first impression of ATOG following his performance, he said, “I thought that the host was really funny and sharp and everybody seemed like they had a really open mind and they were totally respectful of everything even if they didn’t understand it.” Alex was also impressed with Another Type of Groove’s open mic. “There’s so much creativity within another type of groove you almost don’t need fea-



Dupris performs at the Business Silo



tured poets because people are, you know, really on fire.” Speaking about the differences between a mostly Native American audience and ATOG’s audience, Dupris said, “Some jokes that I would say I think, you know, with Indian audiences they’ll laugh, because it’s just, culturally they understand it. And I noticed that somethings I would say, I would get this kinda like ‘Oooooooh’ and I was like ‘oh yeah, they’re not used to hearing people talk so candidly about Native American culture’ and I thought, ‘oh this is cool, this’ll be fun.’ And so, as we got into it I believe that they started to understand what a real contemporary Indian person’s personality and energy was about.” Dupris went on to say that the audience was really on board for the second half of his performance and that they began to understand the cultural nuances. “It’s really cool when you can do a performance and people understand it and soak it up. You feel like you actually did a good job. People might actually go out and say, OK, all of these things about Indians aren’t true.”

One of the aspects of Dupris’ life that is of particular interest is his futurist perspective. “I always believed that native people needed to be more futuristic in order to survive. I look at the example of Japanese culture and I’ve always been really marveled at how they were able to fuse traditionalism with this future-forward thought process. So that, you know, they’re watching sumo-wrestling matches in high definition.” He then went on to explain that “in all the old Hopi prophecies; and Mayans, you talk about entering the fifth world. And they say that this generation is the generation who will be born with an amazing amount of understanding of technology and that’s going to be their biggest asset and it could also be something that harms them, because with all this great technology comes responsibility. So I feel like one of the foundations of my work is to continue to rebuild the native traditions and rebuild the ideas of what’s most valuable to our people to survive. And those concepts can be applied to anyone’s culture, any denomination, any race. Having humility, love and respect for

your family, knowing that there’s consequences for every action. And then adding that to nanotechnology and biophysics and all that cool s*** that, that’s just cool.”

When asked what he thinks the future holds, Dupris said, “The future is all about technology becoming smaller ... and humans and electronics are going to start to become interfused. They’re just now, with the nanotechnology, taking bits of like, computer s*** and fusing it to human biological systems. And you’re talking about smart thinking robots and computers. Well, as a futurist you get excited about that. As an Indian person, you get excited about the possibility of curing cancer and curing AIDS and it’s really optimistic, everything is about optimism.”

On that night Dupris performed a poem called “Aye, Christopher Columbus” for which he said he received hate mail from fellow Native Americans. When asked to explain further the negative responses to his poetry, he defended his work by saying, “The negative responses to my work come from Native people who feel like they’re defending a particular position of our culture. And they’re reacting and they’re trying to insulate and save Indians from themselves, but the problem with that is that, you know, I’m the most traditional cat I know, next to some of my friends who are very heavy into Native spirituality. And my concepts are just universal concepts that everybody should apply to their own cultures for survival. Again it goes back to that. So the Indians that hate my work are the kind of Indians who don’t really understand what it is to be Indian in the first place, they’re just making assumptions. And the kind of Indian people that understand what I’m saying are probably just like me. They’re 15-35 and they understand technology and they understand the traditionalisms, they just haven’t expressed that yet.”

Asked to explain what it means to be Indian, he said, “being Indian to me is having my family, spending time with the people I grew up with, participating in the ceremonies and the songs, and being caretakers of what we’ve been given both spiritually and physically. And just having

the company of people who are like yourself. For instance, a white person can walk around and go around the world and still find a white person that they could talk to. If an Indian goes to Los Angeles he’s not gonna see another Indian for, could be a year, or never ever see another Indian. So you’re talking about less than one percent of the world population and as kids start to marry into different races we’re becoming less and less of a race and more of just a philosophy which is fine with me, but I don’t want my philosophy of life to die. I don’t care about the color of my skin, if my kids become Asian or White or Black when I have one, I don’t care. I don’t want them to go through life not knowing the traditional philosophies which are universal.”

Dupris also said that he does not stoop to using shock value for the sake of shocking people. “I do shock value when it applies to my theories and if it doesn’t, then I exclude it. I don’t wanna do work that just makes people angry for no reason and I don’t wanna be disrespectful because of some prejudice. I just wanna create work that simply lays it out as it is. And people can take from it what they want. And as long as I know in my heart that I’m saying something that I believe, then I don’t believe that it’s truly an offensive thing to do.”

When asked whether the words or the meanings come first when he’s writing, Dupris’ answer came without hesitation, “Meanings, the meanings are first. You know, the meanings are feelings, they’re emotions, and the words are just the vessel for which we deliver our spirit, you know. When you give in a circle like that and you share your spirit and your share your fears and all your hate and anger at the world, it’s like what Maya Angelou said you know, people will never remember what you wrote or what you said or how you said it, but they remember how you

made them feel. And I totally ripped that quote apart, but if you look it up you’ll see what it says. And giving people a feeling they just learned something new about the world, for me, that’s the best experience I can have. I love like, going into a science book or magazines, Popular Science, and just reading something that blows my mind. I’m like ‘I’ve never thought of that before.’ And so, with the Indian thing, maybe when I do these performances, people will walk away going, ‘man I never really thought Indian people were like that.’”

Dupris’ futurist perspective is not restricted to technology or culture; he even ponders his own legacy. “Me and my friends who are on the Native arts scene are on the cusp, the cutting edge of this new idea and I won’t be the last and I won’t necessarily be the best, because I’m just giving an example for all of these young kids to say ‘yeah OK I can do that too.’ I’m giving them the template for them to come and surpass me and I hope that happens.”

Visit Ben-Alex Dupris’ Myspace for more information: www.myspace.com/benalex

