Identity Exploration Series

Identity Exploration Series consisted of workshops that focused on different identities, leadership development, and gaining an understanding of oneself and being empowered. There were three workshops: Asian American Leadership, African American Leadership, and Chican@ Latino@ Leadership. Topics such as colorism, stereotypes, the 1968 Chicano student movement in East Los Angeles, and immigration were discussed. Students were able to engage in learning and conversations about the aforementioned topics, and share about their experiences around identities.

Announcements

There will be two new staff members, an Associate Director and an Assistant Director that will join the Cross-Cultural Center staff by the end of this Academic Year. Student Internship and Volunteer Applications will be out March 28, 2016. Deadline to apply will be April 15, 2016.

On behalf of the Cross-Cultural Center, thank you all of the facilitators, speakers, students, staff and faculty who took part in Cross-Cultural Center programs, classes, committees, and student events. We appreciate all of you!
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Symposium

THE UC IRVINE CROSS-CULTURAL CENTER PRESENTS
THE 33RD ANNUAL DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. SYMPOSIUM

BLACK RESISTANCE: UNDERSTANDING BLACK POSITIONALITY & THE IMPORTANCE OF RESISTANCE

WEEK 4: TUESDAY, JANUARY 26TH | 6-8PM
CRYSTAL COVE AUDITORIUM

As part of our Critical Consciousness Speaker Series and Dr. Joseph L. White Lecture, we will address this very critical time in higher education with regard to campus climate and racial justice across the nation. We will feature analysis and discussion through the lens of: Afro-Pessimism, Black Queer Resistance, Black Women’s Resistance, and Resistance through Political and Community Organizing.

FEATUREING:

DR. FRANK B. WILDERSON III
Professor
African American Studies and Drama
UC Irvine

DR. JAYE AUSTIN WILLIAMS
Assistant Professor
Theater Arts
CSU Long Beach

DR. TIFFANY WILLOUGHBY-HERARD
Associate Professor
African American Studies
UC Irvine

DR. MEILNA ABDULLAH
Professor and Chair
Pan-African Studies
CSU Los Angeles

PLEASE RSVP AT: TINYURL.COM/UCMLK2016

The 33rd Annual Dr. Martin Luther King Junior Symposium and Dr. White Lecture was centered on Black Resistance: Understanding Black Positionally and The Importance of Resistance. Cross-Cultural Center’s Student Development Specialist, Jade Turner and the Godfather of Black Psychology, Dr. Joseph White gave opening remarks about Dr. Martin Luther King. “Reclaim MLK” was the essence of Jade Turner’s powerful speech and how Dr. Martin Luther King was more than a dreamer, was not immune to his environment and had radical ideologies. The featured panelists: Dr. Frank B. Wilderson III, Dr. Jaye Austin Williams, Dr. Tiffany Willoughby-Herard and Dr. Meilna Abdullah went on to talk about Black Resistance from the following perspectives: Afro-Pessimism, Black Queer Resistance, Black Women’s Resistance and Community Organizing. Congratulations to Cross-Cultural Center’s Cultural Wellness Intern, Cheryl Flores and Jade Turner for planning the program, and a big thanks to the panelists and all who attended.
On Thursday evening from 5pm to 7:30pm in the Dr. White Room, Community Outreach and Programming Interns Jennifer Lima and Saul Avelleira collaborated with the SOAR Food Pantry to host a “Food Security Conversation and Community Dinner” in order to introduce the topic of food insecurity and share personal stories or experiences of food injustices within the Cross-Cultural Center folks and organizations.

The event began with brief introductions of Jennifer Lima (CCC intern), Andrea Gutierrez (UCI Food Access and Security Coordinator), Huda Herwees (MSU member), Selma Hassane (MSU member) and Karina Lopez (ASUCI Food Security Commissioner). Following that, Gutierrez gave a short presentation about food security and the different efforts that are being made on our campus to eradicate student food insecurity. This presentation allowed the audience to reflect on their own experiences and learn about why food insecurity is important. Food Insecurity is not having access to nutritious and affordable food. The focus was to have these conversations as students of color because sometimes the food justice movement is forgotten as part of social justice. Community agreements were made by having the audience’s suggestions abided by because food insecurity can be a very sensitive subject for many and we wanted to create a safe, comfortable, and brave space for all to share and learn from one another. Besides from creating awareness about the different factors of food insecurity and creating a safe space, a warm meal was provided in hopes of bringing our UCI community together by having dinner together while conversing with the members at their table. At each table, an activity known as “fishbowl” was facilitated, where glass bowls were centered with different questions folded inside as conversation starters. One of the questions in the bowl was “Have you experienced food insecurity personally? If so, how has food insecurity impacted you? Or do you know anyone who has?” Anyone at the table had the opportunity to share their answers to these and similar questions. Many great conversations were happening in the room at each table but towards the end of the event, Lima asked all participants to move towards the back of the room to debrief about everyone’s thoughts, feelings and learning of the event. This allowed for more sharing, possible solutions and closing remarks.

This event was another step to inform our UCI community about the different issues that are very close to us. I felt honored to be able to host this event and allow more growing to take place. I encourage others to share their stories and experiences because we can all learn something new from our fellow peers.
Women who were interested in going to graduate or professional schools listened to UCI professional women and women attending graduate school talk about their experiences and share advice. Insecurities and concerns of applying and attending graduate, or professional schools were also addressed by the panelists. Running your own race, research and experience firsthand programs and careers you are interested in, and to pay attention to what your interests are so you can position yourself to be able to what you like were the main takeaways from the women panelists of this program.

Tammy directs the women and gender initiatives at the Cross Cultural center. Our campus offers various organizations to help protect students. The CARE office provides aid for students that have been victims to of assault. They provide different programs to support groups of different genders and violence prevention, for example, Green Dot. Direct, Distract, and delegate are the three Ds in Green Dot to protect oneself against a potentially violent situation. The Office of Student Conduct’s job, located in the student life and leadership office, is to make sure students are ensuring university integrity. They create standards for students to uphold. They also have a Peer advisor program. The UCI PD work closely with the care department to inform women and empower them. The focus on preventative actions such as lock doors, close windows, and make a plan.

I personally really enjoyed this workshop. I got an opportunity to learn about the different organizations on campus that provide a safe environment for different situations. Whether the case is minor or extreme, UCI provides offices that can help people through their situations to try and ensure that the student’s education is not interrupted.
The Queer And Race Series was held thrice on January 21st and on February 2nd and 18th in the CCC Board Room from 12 PM to 1 PM by the UCI LGBT Center and our very own Cross Cultural Center. There was no set format for how the conversations were to be conducted, but this allowed for various topics about the intersection of racial identity, gender identity, and sexual orientation to easily flow between all attendees.

I had the opportunity to attend the first and last event, and I sure did learn a lot from our discussions. At the first event, “The Slut Walk Movement” made the most impression upon me since it was my first time hearing it. Originated in Toronto, Canada, the worldwide SlutWalk Movement fights against blaming victims and shaming survivors as well as stereotypes of the rape culture; it was created in response to a police officer’s comment about how women should dress appropriately so as to avoid unwanted behavior. I strongly disagreed with this statement, and I am completely supportive of the movement because it focuses on changing this perspective of condemning victims to holding the perpetrator responsible.

In contrast, the last event centered on creating inclusivity for queer and trans people of color. I was aware that the UCI campus had implemented gender neutral bathrooms and workshops are held to inform students about LGBT issues, but so much more can be done. For instance, incorporating an inclusive vocabulary into everyone’s language is a small step that has a huge impact on the queer and trans community. I noticed that I constantly addressed groups of people with “Hey, guys!”, and I didn’t know that I was alienating an entire group who didn’t identify with that label. Now, I am learning to be more conscious of the words I use, such as “folks”, “y’all”, and “everyone”. Although this is a difficult process, it is definitely not impossible to make changes! Upon further research, I found out that schools can encourage more queer and trans people from minorities to pursue majors in the STEM field. In addition, prejudice towards gay people of color can be reduced by changing the views of white privilege that some gay individuals use by developing LGBT campaigns that also address racial issues, which is why the Queer and Race Series exist!

So, I highly encourage you to attend the next this series comes around in order to enlighten yourself about these issues!
During week 5, Dr. Tiffany Willoughby-Herard, Associate Professor of African American Studies, had a book talk and signing on her book Waste of a White Skin, published in 2015. Dr. Frank Widerson, Professor in African American Studies and Drama, introduced Dr. Willoughby-Herard. Her research looks at the dimensions of racialization, racial identities, and racial poverty. The book describes the development of scientific racism, white nationalism, and Segregationist philanthropy in the United States and South Africa in the early twentieth century and the effects of the Carnegie Commission Study of Poor Whites. The words I found the most interesting in Willoughby-Herard’s book talk was that poor whites were seen as parallel with black people when in reality notions of poor whites anti-black attitudes.

Dr. Tiffany Willoughby-Herard
The event, “Creating Social Change: Weapons of Choice”, focused on different forms of social action such as education, self-help, and advocacy. This event brought in community organizers to share about how they have used their current positions, available tools, and their passion in addressing social issues. Featured community organizations were Orange County Immigrant Youth United (OCIYU), Viet Rainbow of OC, Student California Teachers Association, CopWatch, and ACLU Youth Activists for Change. By introducing different forms of organizing around issues, students got to hear from community organizers methods of challenging power structures. This provided students with examples and resources that gave them knowledge and support needed to carry out social action in college and after college. This exposure to different methods of social action helps students determine what methods fits with who they are.
Across the Bridge returned for its second quarterly installment on January 29th in the Dr. White Room from 12 PM to 1:30 PM. In a collaboration with the Cross Cultural Center, International Center, and Study Abroad Center, the staff has brought together international and domestic UCI students over a warm meal of Hawaiian Express and a discussion of cultural and social superstitions and myths!

A bonus that the event featured was a trivia game set in the format of a group competition. Each table raced against each other as they battled it out to see who can answered the most superstition questions the fastest, and the winning group received prizes!

After gearing everyone up on the event’s theme, the hosts transitioned to group discussions by turning the mics to the facilitators. Although it is encouraged to share the various superstitions and myths that each student had to offer, we wanted our guests to focus more on how this particular theme affected their identities. For instance, one question was geared towards how superstitions impacted education and one’s identity as a student. Facilitators would then ask how superstitions and/or myths influenced one’s beliefs and guided their groups to making connections to their family backgrounds, values, traditions, and its ongoing perpetuation.

Superstitions and myths are rooted beyond the occasional circumstance of bad luck or good luck, and we hoped that everyone who attended received the opportunity to explore its depths!
The Environmental Racism event was held on February 17th at the Dr. White Room as part of our Contemporary Social Issues Series. It was an event where we discussed how racism and other forms of structural violence contribute to health disparities in the past and present for communities of color, those who are undocumented, the poor, underserved neighborhoods and others. We had Professor Highsmith and Dr. Sami as our featured panelists where they gave their perspectives and insight over the situation happening in Flint and the broader institutions of oppression. We engaged in a conversation over the various intersections that relate to the Flint incident and the audience asked questions and had comments that facilitated the dialogue. A major takeaway from the event is the fact that we need to address and tackle the roots of the systems that produce such tragedies rather than implementing superficial and quick “fixes”.

Environmental Racism

By Saul Avelleira

The event, Women of Color in the Digital Age: Racism, Sexism, and the Media Part II: Representations of African-American Women focused on the various representations of African-American women in the mainstream media and had a discussion about the implications of these problematic representations. The event was facilitated by Tamara Austin and brought together research and audience participation about the way African-American women are portrayed on television, in movies, and through news outlets. The discussion covered topics such as the stereotypes that actors of colors are often forced to play and the way we have seen African-American women go beyond these stereotypes and navigate the racism of Hollywood. The conversation went from actresses such as Viola Davis and the way she is breaking these stereotypical roles in film and television to having a discussion about African-American women in the mainstream news and the #BlackLivesMatter and #SayHerName movements. This exposure to the representation of African-American women helps students in identifying the problems in these representations and seeing the racism of the mainstream media.
The CCC hosted our annual Game Night, this year’s theme being Crossing Paths on 2/25/16! We wanted to bring together the various organizations under our wing and hoped they would come to mingle with other organizations on campus. After setting up chairs in a makeshift circle to play musical body parts, each club brought forth participants that stood around the ring hesitantly waiting for the music to stop but also pacing themselves quickly so they could find a spot on the chair. As the music is about to stop, the host yells, “NOSE!” Every participant plops their nose onto the chair with quick concern hoping they made it the final cut. The winners were Crescent OC and Mecha de UCI in the end after two rounds of musical body parts.

After the scandalous game of musical body parts, the clubs were put to the test about general knowledge of the CCC as well as random tidbit facts of the campus and the rapper Drake. Using their phones, they were timed on the website Kahoot to see who got the most correct within the 20 second time limit. After a close call, the winner ended up being LSPA, Latino/a Student Psychological Association.

The event ended with the coming together of every organization present as they drew images that represented their clubs, the Cross, and campus in general. After consideration, they put together a unifying collage of their images to call to an end to the event. Trivia Night was meant to bring together the organizations for some fun times, mingling, food, and earn cash prizes. We were able to see orgs having fun together and with each other. Even if they were trying to win money, they were still courtesy to each other and learned together.

REAL Talk

This quarter, REAL Talk has mainly focused on issues of mental health for people of color at UCI. We invited Dr. Jessica Ortega from the Counseling Center to join us in conversation about the various ways mental health affects faculty, staff, and students, specifically for those who work around social justice issues. We spoke about social justice burnout and how it can deter us from carrying out the valuable work that needs to be carried through. We also discussed about stigmas associated with mental health and how that prevents us from seeking for help. We ended our meeting by discussing ways for us to practice self care to prevent things like social justice burnout. In having these discussions, it was prevalent that self care and self love are political and our bodies should be taken care of in order for our work to be carried out.

By Natividad Rico
MISSION

The Cross-Cultural Center at UCI is dedicated to creating and maintaining a socially just campus, fostering the cultural identities within our community, and providing opportunities for intellectual exchange, leadership development, and community engagement.

Staff:
Jade Agua
Jade Turner
Anna Capinpin
Kathy Dong
Tamara Austin

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Leticia Cruz
Melanie Fernandez
Cheryl Flores
Jennifer Lima
Patsy Morales
Susan Phommasak
Naty Rosales
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Monica Salazar
Michelle Yang
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Jenny Tseng
Caroline Truong
Priscilla Perez

Volunteers:
Alicia Aguayo
Roxy Ayala
Joanna Bradshaw
Tejas Dethe
Irene Ear
Zenith Farin
Sandy Lee
Valerie Sanchez
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