Introducing Tamara Austin & The Return of Women and Gender Initiatives

The Cross-Cultural Center is honored to welcome Tamara Austin, previous director of the LGBQT Resource Center. The main goals of the Women and Gender Initiative Series is to inform students about gender portrayals, and to show that regardless of gender roles we all still face similar issues. The goal is not to enforce any beliefs on anyone, but for people to take what resonates with them—to educate students about themselves and to help them realize their exceptional worth.
As part of the Cultural Wellness and Personal Development Program at the Cross-Cultural Center, the REAL Talk program aims to help voices be heard. The first meeting of the year was held during week 4 in the board room of the Cross-Cultural Center and was open to everyone. Natividad Rico, one of the main organizers of the event, expressed that REAL Talk is meant to be a safe place for both students and staff to be empowered through voicing concerns and opinions about campus climate and issues with microaggressions. It is a space where people can feel comfortable to share their stories. REAL Talk exemplifies the philosophy that everyone has a story, and every story has a message.

The topic of the first meeting delved into identity and intersectionality. Intersectionality refers to the way our various identities intersect with one another and shape our experiences. However, the conversations in REAL Talk are not just limited to these topics—the conversation may branch out into other topics and issues. The discussion can be whatever people want to talk about, what they feel passionate about, and how they view the world. Although the group at this first meeting was fairly small, people were engaged. Future programs may change to a later time to accommodate for those who couldn’t make it but express interest. Nonetheless, the conversations from the first group were good and overall the meeting went well.

As the year goes on, hopefully students will feel more comfortable speaking out, because understandably it is a hard thing to do. As of now, the foundation of the program is being set and gradually being built upon. In the future, the organizers plan to hold a much larger event similar to an art exhibit where individuals are surrounded by artifacts that represent who they are and they tell their story. Hopefully more people will learn about REAL Talk so this event can become a reality.
The workshop “Know Your Rights,” was organized by Cross-Cultural Center Interns Jennifer Lima and Saul Avelleira and hosted in the Dr. White Room on October 21st. Lima and Avelleira hoped to emphasize the absolute importance of knowing your rights when coming across police activity to prevent any kind of injustice toward oneself or others. Guest speakers from a copwatch organization in Santa Ana joined us and shared their experiences and knowledge about police abuse and the systematic forms of oppression. They discussed the ever growing issue of members in the police force abusing their power, specifically when encountered with people of color. Above all, they focused on the value of autonomy within unjust and just societies.

Autonomy is freely acting, independent of outside forces (in this case the status quo), making decisions, and forming one’s own beliefs. Unfortunately, not possessing this ability is one of the main reasons for social struggles because in our society, there are people who want to strip us of our autonomy because they feel threatened by it. “White supremacists” are quite content with their position in society where people of color are beneath them. However, when those “beneath” them realize their true value, and the fact that they deserve far better, they begin to break “rules”--rules that those in power have upheld to protect their status and their incredibly flawed ideals. It is these people who feel threatened by rebellion and questioning, and who use the police or even are the police to put down the rise of autonomy. If we examine the social structures created within institutions, we can see who they truly benefit and this is at the cost of others.

With this rooted into the workings of society, people must do all they can to draw attention to wrongdoings by being educated on what is and is not police abuse. Representatives from Copwatch of Santa Ana were able to reveal that in this interactive workshop and provided a handout with suggestions to protect themselves. The audience in the room was extremely passionate about this issue. There were constant nods of agreement. One member of the audience was very aware of current bills being discussed relating to issues of police brutality and people of color, and shared that, as well as information about the organization she is a part of that combats similar issues.
The Community Roots Festival was a spirited event held by the Cross-Cultural Center Interns Saul Avelleira and Jennifer Lima, on November 4th outside in the space in between the CCC and the Career Center. I attended for a couple hours and had a great time. I spent majority of the time helping Cambodian Awareness Organization, an organization that I am a member in, but was also able to interact with the other cultural clubs that were present. Everything was in close proximity and the organizations sold food and beverages at their booths where they also displayed their mural. The murals were a representation of the different organizations and in my opinion were all very beautiful. Overall I enjoyed the experience and am happy to have been a part of it.
The first workshop from the Social Justice in Action Series: The Intersection of Our Struggles was held in the Dr. White Room on November 4th, 2015, and was organized by Umbrella Organizations Liaison, Caroline Truong. They hoped to provide a space where students can hear from speakers who have struggled with intersecting identities, and about their experiences in overcoming them.

All of the speakers shared their unique intersecting identities. There was this sense of harmony that presented itself when this diverse group of people came together and connected with their struggles. “Teaching is a form of activism because it is helping students understand and give context of their lives,” said Malone. This quote resonates what I believe is the mission of the series, and more specifically this workshop. Activism is not only about organizing strikes with signs and chants, but it is also about educating oneself on their lives and of those around them. It is about becoming aware of the way life works, and how one has gotten to where it is. Activating others to see their life is one of the greatest forms of activism. During the discussion, Higgins mentioned his story and observation about how from a young age, people of color are told that they do not matter. This is seen in the way that young people of color are scared of police. Similarly, many students in Malone’s elementary class shared with her that they all know someone in prison. This greatly impacts their life growing up and what they think of themselves and their future. The importance of being politically educated is that “politics is about an access to power, a method to understanding,” said Cervantes.
“Dimensions of Wellness: A Holistic Approach to Healthy Living”

“Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation and that is an act of political warfare”

-Audre Lorde

**Held** during week seven, the first part of their Cultural Wellness Series for Advocates and Allies recognized the importance of self-care. Planning throughout the quarter, Jade and Cheryl, our Student Development Coordinator and our Cultural Wellness Intern respectively, strived to bring not only awareness but also resources to students in finding ways of healthy living.

As students who carry multiple roles and responsibilities, we often forget to take care of ourselves. In this workshop, Jade and Cheryl emphasized the importance of finding the balance between managing stress and maintaining an overall well-being. Although stress exists in all of us, it is crucial to adopt coping skills for a better, healthier life—a good tool.

In case you missed the workshop, do not stress out! There are plenty of ways for you to practice self-care! To recognize the areas you are most stressed in, a helpful tool would be to do a burnout self-test. Another great way is to visit the UCI Student Wellness and Health Promotion Center, located in SLL. They provide practical ways to eat better, exercise more, and de-stress! And of course, stay tuned in attending the rest of the Cultural Wellness Series hosted in each quarter.
Let’s do a throwback to week eight and focus particularly on November 20th, 2015, in a collaboration with the Study Abroad Center, International Center, and Cross Cultural Center, the quarterly Across The Bridge: Diversity Dialogue Series was held in the CCC Dr. White Room. Over 70 students attended, making for lots of conversations in store! For those who are not aware of what Across The Bridge is, it’s actually an event that serves to connect international and domestic UCI students through discussions of a variety of topics over a warm meal. This tradition has been ongoing for four years now, and it is a great way to view all the different perspectives, opinions, and stories from people of diverse cultural backgrounds. Trained student facilitators all lead small group discussions based on the questions that the coordinators created with the help of the faculty staff.

For this quarter’s theme, the questions centered around cultural holidays and celebrations. For instance, Halloween is a huge U.S holiday where individuals of all ages delight in dressing up in costumes and going trick-or-treating for candy, but this holiday does not exist in India. Instead, Diwali, the Hindu festival of light, is one of their biggest national holidays that involves fireworks and decorating homes with iridescent lamps. Look at that! You did not have to hop on a plane to India itself to learn about it! Not only is our goal to help stimulate and enlighten young minds, but we also aim to create a safe space for everyone to come together and share their experiences. We hope that everyone who came were able to make new friendships and picked up something that they could take away from the event. Like Shanelle Garcia, one of the student coordinators, said, “Let’s continue building bridges!”.

ACROSS THE BRIDGE
DIVERSITY DIALOGUE SERIES

INTERESTED IN LEARNING ABOUT CULTURAL HOLIDAYS & CELEBRATIONS?

Across the Bridge: Diversity Dialogue Series is a collaboration with the Cross-Cultural Center, International Center, and Study Abroad Center. It is a time for international and domestic students to eat a meal together and share stories on holiday celebrations and traditions. Lunch will be provided!

SIGN UP: www.tinyurl.com/ATBFall2015
12:00 PM – 1:30 PM NOVEMBER 20, 2015
CROSS-CULTURAL CENTER, DR. WHITE ROOM
It’s that time of year again when everything is decorated head to toe in Christmas lights and giant creepy Santas because Halloween is over and the air is full of Christmas joy. But is it really only Christmas you can feel in the air? Christmas is a grand holiday celebrated by many religions and families, but we must remember that there is more to winter than Christmas. Winter Solstice is an event meant to identify and explore the various holidays that occur during the winter time, especially since UCI and America in general is full of great cultures and traditions. It is impossible to coordinate an event that can incorporate every possible holiday in the world, so we were able to narrow it down to ten holidays from the corners of the world: Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Lunar New Year, Diwali, Yalda, Dia De Los Reyes, Buddha Day, Eid Milad un Nabi, and Boxing Day.

The event consisted of amazing food, holiday music from all around, an identity game, and a presentation. Within the two hours of the event, student participants were able to interact with one another and the two organizations that were able to attend. Hillel, the Jewish Student Association, and BAI, Buddhist Association of Irvine, were able to come and present about the holidays they celebrate respectively, given the attendees a better insight to the holidays. Attentive and collective, the response was astounding and it ended on a sweet note. We hope those who came, even for a second, were able to get a better feel of the holiday season. Also, that those who came were able to see that the media and the world decorates everything from head to toe in Christmas lights, but there is more to this time than Santa and presents. Christmas brings joy, but so do many holidays to those who do not celebrate it. The event was meant to bring joy from all areas of the world and to unite many through their own cultures.
Women of Color in the Digital Age: Racism, Sexism, and the Media

Fall quarter the committee of Women and Gender Initiatives began the first workshop of a three part series about representations of women of color in the mainstream media. This first workshop, held during Week 8 of the quarter, covered how Latina women are represented and the problems and tensions in these representations. The first half of the workshop was education based and focused on defining representation, the media, and the stereotype. The facilitator, Priscilla Perez, covered how often the representations that women of color get of themselves in the mainstream media are stereotypical and rely on racist and sexist tropes. She covered stereotypes that have been seen in film and movies of the “angry latina” or the “maid” which reduce the experiences of Latina women to these images. Next, the conversation moved to representations of the Latina women from the Latino community. She discussed shows such as Sabado Gigante which objectified women and treated them as sexual objects. After that, the conversation moved to how colorism is deeply implicated in Latina representation and the main roles for Latinos are given to light-skin actors. Once the workshop was finished the dialogue began and those in the workshop began to discuss why these stereotypes continue to be replicated and what representations are currently in the media which disrupt this problematic pattern. Come join Women and Gender Initiatives this winter quarter where the dialogue will focus on media representations of Black women!
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.

**Interns:**
Saul Avelleira
Leticia Cruz
Melanie Fernandez
Cheryl Flores
Jennifer Lima
Patsy Morales
Susan Phommasak
Naty Rosales
Kara Rivera
Monica Salazar
Michelle Yang
Janani Venkat
Jenny Tseng
Caroline Truong

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

**Volunteers:**
Alicia Aguayo
Roxy Ayala
Joanna Bradshaw
Tejas Dethe
Irene Ear
Zenith Farin
Sandy Lee
Priscilla Perez
Valerie Sanchez
Sama Tamer
MEET JADE AGUA, OUR NEW DIRECTOR!

Originally from East Side San Jose, Jade is a 4th generation Filipino Chinese American who’s family immigrated to the United States through Hawai’i. Jade joined the CCC staff as Director in December 2015. In this role, she is responsible for the overall management, direction, and long-term development of the Cross. She will be working on developing departmental goals and objectives, strategic planning, and assessment. Jade earned her B.A. in Sociology and Master’s in Public Administration at USC. She is committed to empowerment through education, holistic human development, and social justice. She lives in Long Beach with her husband and daughter, Sierra.

Fridays: 1/15, 1/29, 2/12, 2/26
10 – 11 AM IN THE CCC LOBBY