



Across Cultures

NOTES FROM WESTMONT'S DIVERSITY COMMITTEE

ISSUE 19

SPRING 2009

UPDATE ON INTERCULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS

by *Intercultural Programs Director Elena Yee*



The newly formed Intercultural Organizations (ICOs) are now in their second semester of planning events and activities that highlight their cultural or ethnic heritage, and are open to all students.

These organizations are under the umbrella of the Intercultural Programs Office (ICP), have two student co-directors, and receive one percent of student fees to help fund their programs with ICP matching the student fee funding. The WCSA multicultural representative also works with the ICOs so they may have sufficient support from student government.

In addition to our long-standing organizations, i.e. Asian Student Association (ASA), Black Student Union (BSU), Hawaii No Ka 'Oi, Latino Cultural Organization (LCO) and Nomads, we have the Filipino American Student Association (on hiatus this spring) and Americana. We are excited that nearly a third of the student body has expressed interest in the ICOs. So far the ICOs have

organized twenty-five activities and events for the campus community.

A valuable addition to the ICOs is Americana. The leaders of Americana, Arianna Barels and Joshua Wellman, wanted to start an organization that would encourage more majority White students to engage in Intercultural Programs, to learn and appreciate our common culture as U.S. Americans and for White students to learn that they have a culture as well. So far they have had a Lazer tag night and educated students about the development of laser technology in the U.S. Later this semester they plan to have a re-enactment of the first battle in Lexington during the revolutionary war. They have consulted with faculty in the History department as well as researched a plethora of web sites for their upcoming event.

Last month, BSU partnered with Armington residence life staff to listen to the sermons of Reverend and Dr. Martin Luther King so they may learn more about Dr. King as pastor as much as he was a

Westmont strives to be a community informed and enriched by thoughtful and intentional study of and interaction with multiple cultures.

As a liberal arts college rooted in Christ,

- we celebrate diversity as an aspect of God's creation;
- we strive to create community out of rich diversity as an aspect of building God's Kingdom in the world;
- we value the range of perspectives on the world that stimulates intellectual and personal growth; and
- we seek for faculty and staff to apprentice students in the art of dealing with diversity in constructive ways.

It is an aim of Westmont to prepare graduates who will function intelligently, effectively and for the good of our increasingly intercultural world.

From Long Range Plan Excerpts

Civil Rights leader. They also attended a performance of the Alvin Ailey Dance Theatre group at the Arlington.

Later this semester, ASA will be partnering with ICP to bring speaker Sandy Schupp to share about her life choices as an Asian American woman who went into full-time ministry and is in a biracial marriage.

Of course food is an important part of any culture and so LCO and Hawaii No Ka 'Oi have had events centered on good food and thus created space for relationships to be developed across ethnic and racial lines.

WORLD PREMIERE OF WESTMONT THEATRE'S FIRST BILINGUAL PRODUCTION

by Theatre Arts Professor Mitchell Thomas



Continuing the 2008-2009 season of “Think Globally, Act Locally”, the theatre department achieved two important milestones during February: the presentation of the first-ever student written mainstage production, as well as the first bilingual production in Westmont theatre history.

Directed and commissioned by department chair and professor Mitchell Thomas and written by senior Diana Small, *Muéveme. Muévete.* broke down barriers of language and culture in fascinating, funny, and moving ways. Set in the Chicano cannery world of mid-century California, the play followed a young woman, Aideth, who carries her family history with her in the form of an ancient peach tree, and listens to the chattering ghosts of her relatives while trying to navigate her contemporary struggles with work, relationships and culture clashes.

The production had a week of performances at Westmont’s Porter Theatre, and then moved down to La Casa De La Raza, a community center on the lower East side of Santa Barbara dedicated to the preservation and empowerment of the Chicano culture,

where it played for another week. Thanks to a grant from Montecito Bank and Trust as well as support from Elena Yee and the Intercultural Programs at Westmont, performances at La Casa were offered free of charge to the community, preceded by live musical performances of Mexican and Mexican-American music from the period of the play as well as fresh churros hot out of the oven!

The project was conceived as both a gift and celebration of the stories and heritage of the Latino people of California, and so the diverse backgrounds and truly bilingual nature of the audiences at La Casa were especially exciting to the cast and crew.

Playwright Diana Small '09 reflected on the project:

Art is necessary for a culture and state to flourish. Casa De La Raza had not had theatre in its walls since the 1970s. It was a wonderful image to see children and mothers and fathers see live theatre in their native language, maybe for the first time. My hope is that it revitalized, empowered, and of course entertained them during a time in California that is economically and culturally fragile.

One of the challenging aspects of the project was for cast members to be performing in two languages. Though the play was bilingual, sections of the text were memorized in both English and Spanish so the play could be performed reflecting the language background and abilities of the audiences in the two locations.

Cast member Manuel “Chach” Hernandez wrote:

This project allowed me to share my culture and heritage with the rest of the student body and with the community as well. We were able to break any stereotypes that our school has by putting up a production in a poor neighborhood that many times is forgotten by the community of Santa Barbara. This play contributed to both the Christian and Global components of Westmont’s Philosophy of Education.

Ultimately, *Muéveme. Muévete.* took cast, crew, and audiences on two important journeys: into the fantastic world of the play, and into a deeper sense of shared community and story that interconnects all of Creation.

East African Hymn

used at seed consecration services

Seed we bring

Lord, to you, please bless them, O Lord!

Gardens we bring

Lord, to you, please bless them, O Lord!

Hoes we bring

Lord, to you, please bless them, O Lord!

Knives we bring

Lord, to you, please bless them, O Lord!

Hands we bring

Lord, to you, please bless them, O Lord!

Ourselves we bring

Lord, to you, please bless us, O Lord!

2000 Years of Prayer, compiled by Michael Counsell.
Prayers by Indigenous Peoples, page 526.

**A SUMMARY OF
RETENTION / GRADUATION RATES OF FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS CLASS COHORTS**

Four-Year Average Rates²

	Four Cohort Years Represented		Entire First-Year Class	Men Only	Women Only	White/ Non-Hispanic	Students of Color ³
After 1st Year	2004-07	Retention	88.2%	88.2%	88.3%	89.9%	84.3%
After 2nd Year	2003-06	Retention	82.4%	84.2%	81.4%	83.6%	77.3%
After 3rd Year	2002-05	Graduated	4.4%	2.5%	5.3%	4.9%	2.4%
		Continuing	76.2%	79.4%	74.6%	76.5%	74.8%
		Persistence ¹	80.6%	81.9%	79.9%	81.4%	77.3%
After 4th Year	2001-04	Graduated	71.2%	73.5%	70.0%	73.1%	66.0%
		Continuing	1.8%	3.3%	0.6%	0.9%	1.8%
		Persistence	73.0%	76.8%	70.6%	74.0%	67.8%
After 5th Year	2000-03	Graduated	74.6%	78.1%	72.9%	75.8%	68.8%
		Continuing	0.5%	0.7%	0.4%	0.4%	0.5%
		Persistence	75.1%	78.8%	73.3%	76.2%	69.2%
After 6th Year	1999-2002	Graduated	74.7%	78.1%	73.1%	76.0%	69.1%

- Note:
1. Persistence is the % of students that graduated + the % of students continuing enrollment.
 2. The four-year average was selected since this is the federal standard established by the I.P.E.D.S. Graduation Rate Survey
 3. American Indian/Alaska Native; Asian/Pacific Islander; Black; Hispanic.

SCORR CONFERENCE, 2009

by Director of Campus Life, Angela D'Amour

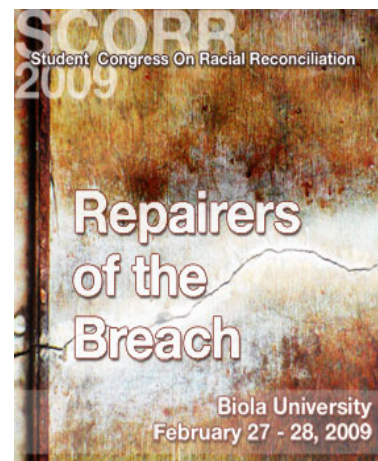
I had the privilege of accompanying the Student Body President, Vice President and about 40 Westmont students, faculty and staff to the Student Conference on Racial Reconciliation (SCORR) at Biola University February 27th-28th.

I was pleasantly surprised to hear about a Christian student conference devoted entirely to discussing and exploring racial reconciliation. To be honest, however, my expectations were quite low.

I spent five years at secular institutions prior to returning to Westmont in the summer of 2007, pursuing graduate studies at the University of Vermont and then work at Dartmouth College. At these

institutions, plenty of people were passionate about racial reconciliation; in fact, it was at these institutions that I came to understand the very disturbing facts of privilege and oppression and the subtle, yet ugly face of institutionalized racism. Unfortunately, what I found in the midst of the struggle is that Christians seemed to melt into the shadows of their safe, predominately white communities when these issues arose, indicating to me that they believed they had more important issues to consider.

As I became entrenched in the struggles of marginalized communities, I became convinced that social justice is not just a liberal issue, it is a faith issue. I dug



Continued under CONFERENCE page 4

The Easter Exultet

Seventh century



2000 Years of Prayer, compiled by Michael Counsell.
©1999, Morehouse Publishing. Monastic Spirituality,
page 127.

On this night we sing to Jesus, the true Lamb of God,
who makes death to pass over all
who are marked with his blood.
Alleluia, Christ is risen, let the heavens make it known!
Alleluia, all creation rejoice round God's throne,
God's throne, God's throne,
alleluia, let the trumpet of peace now be blown!

On this night God leads us over by the power of his hand
out of slavery into freedom in his long-promised land.
Alleluia, Christ is risen, let the earth now be bright!
Alleluia, sin is powerless, and God brings us his light,
his light, his light,
alleluia, sing to Jesus, who conquers death's night!

On this night the earth and heaven are wedded again –
may our candle shine for Jesus till he comes here to reign.
Alleluia, Christ is risen, Mother Church, sing his praise!
Alleluia, may he shine on our lives with his rays,
his rays, his rays,
alleluia, serving Christ for the rest of our days.

SCORR CONFERENCE

Conference, *cont.* from page 3

into the Scriptures and read of God's heart for justice and reconciliation and for the marginalized. I understood that my responsibility as a Christian included pursuing justice for all people and more importantly, reconciliation between people, beginning with me and my assumptions about people who were different than me. And that was painful. It still is painful to realize the way negative stereotypes have crept into my mind and heart and covertly built walls between myself and people with different backgrounds, skin colors and values.

So I traveled to Biola resigned to the fact that I'd hear a softball message about the Christian imperative to love others well, and to try extra hard to be kind to those who don't look like you. To my great surprise and delight, I heard instead for perhaps the first time in my life devout Christians share intelligently and wholeheartedly about the Biblical basis for racial reconciliation.

The keynote speaker Soong-Chan Rah explained the modernist/fundamentalist split between Christians today who primarily pursue either the social gospel (serving the poor; eradicating injustice) or the defense of the history of the faith (Bible is the Word of God). He advocated for an adoption of the transforming power of the Gospel based on the truth and power of Christ as modeled in Ephesians 2:14, "For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility."

But for most of us, myself included, the work toward racial reconciliation goes against almost every desire for comfort and peace within us. The work of racial reconciliation is painful and hard and has a high cost emotionally and physically.

I learned that the Biblical word for peace – Shalom – is not the absence of war, but the presence of God's goodness and fullness. And Christ teaches us that the power of his fullness and goodness is not evidenced by making himself great, but

rather through giving up his own power and privilege, fighting for the marginalized and in essence, being the servant of all.

I'm honored to part of a Christian college community that is offering students the opportunity to explore the heart of God for social justice.

DIVERSITY COMMITTEE SPRING 2009

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http://www.westmont.edu/_offices/diversity