Tapas Series and “Cultural APOPriation!”

On Thursday, March 26th, the Lealtad-Suzuki Center’s Tapas series hosted their main event of the semester: “APOPriation,” a conversation about cultural appropriation in pop culture. The event took place in the C-House, and attendees engaged in discussions focusing on the effects that cultural appropriation has on society and structures of power that are inherent within it.

Around 15 people attended the event, which made for a well-focused large group discussion at the end to elaborate on the main ideas and conclusions that were made in previous small group discussions. The program began with a showcase of music videos, interviews, and images that had evidence of cultural appropriation, arguments made for or against certain claims, and facts and statistics that supported the prevalence of appropriation in pop and hip hop culture. The event then shifted its focus to small group discussion in which attendees shared how they felt upon observation and engagement with these sources. Ultimately, the event was successful in creating awareness around the issue, recognizing the possible differences between appropriation and appreciation, as well as initiating further discussions.

Thank you to all who were able to join us for this event.
Consuming Oppression

On March 27th, the Cultural House hosted the final Fresh Friday of the year focusing on the topic of Consuming Oppression. Whether it is intentional or not, everyone consumes oppressive messages everyday. It is in the TV shows we watch, the music we listen to, and the ads we see everywhere. This Fresh Friday focused its attention on music videos and what kind of messages are embedded in this media and how these messages affect our lives and ourselves. The program started out with a journaling activity so that participants could reflect on what conversations and thoughts they have had regarding the role media plays in our lives. Then the fifteen students in attendance broke into three groups and watched two of six music videos - Blurred Lines, Tunnel Vision, Anaconda, Booty, Animals, or Bound 2. Participants discussed the messages conveyed in these videos and what these representations mean in our lives and the lives of other people. Participants grappled with issues of representation as well as the tension between what is empowering and what is degrading and who gets to decide where that line is. The Fresh Friday not only opened up a space to talk about the issue of media representation but also brought up some tactics for broaching these topics with other people.

An(other) Story Circle: Grappling with Heterosexism

On March 10th, students and staff gathered at the Cultural House to attend this semester's An(other) Story Circle: Grappling with Heterosexism. A four person panel comprised of students and staff spoke to how they have reconciled manifestations of heterosexism with their personal identities. In other words, the panelists spoke to how heteronormativity and homophobia has influenced their upbringing and how they have established strategies to maneuver a world that is institutionally oppressive. Although the panel was diverse in sexual orientations, the panelists touched upon a few similar concepts and frustrations. All spoke about how they demonstrate their sexuality and chosen gender with the power of a haircut and a few changes of clothing choice. Perhaps most importantly was the idea that identity can largely be defined externally and then internalized due to perceptions based on what is considered the "norm." Highlighting the stories of the "otherness" is crucial for all in our efforts to intentionally create the inclusive community.
Gender & Sexuality
(By Isabel Ruelas ‘15, Vivian Liu ‘17 and Errol Phalo ‘17)

“Femicide is part of the big increase in violence in general in Brazil,” Nadine Gasman said. As a way to decrease gender killings, President Dilma Rousseff passed a new law imposing stricter punishments. The new law includes longer jail terms of those convicted of crimes against women and girls, including domestic violence. Brazil joins 15 other Latin American countries creating stricter laws against femicide.

**Hen**, a gender neutral pronoun, was added to Sweden’s dictionary. Hen refers to a person who is transgender or whose gender is unknown. Writers or speakers may also choose to see gender as superfluous information. The use of the pronoun first emerged in 2000 and has since resurfaced. “For those who use the pronoun, it’s obviously a strength that it is now in the dictionary,” one of the editors, Sture Berg, told AFP.

North Carolina is following in the footsteps of Tennessee with conservative legislators introducing the “Prenatal Narcotic Drug Use” bill, which would jail pregnant women or mothers of newborns addicted to drugs. The bill takes a criminal rather than public health approach.

Economic Justice
(By elisa lee ‘15, Mitch Paquette ‘16, and Abbey Feola ‘17)

**Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton** is looking to implement a universal, full-day preschool system for all of the state’s four-year-olds. About a fifth of the state’s estimated $1.9 billion surplus, or $348 million, will cover the costs to create preschool programs in every public school. Access to early education has shown individual benefits such as an increase in “cognitive, academic, and emotional educational skills” in children and also a larger economic benefit.

A **law in Florida** combating wage theft has been modified to state that companies that fight a wage theft claim and lose may have their business licenses revoked. It also mandates that companies found guilty of wage theft pay the legal fees spent to bring the case against them.

On, **Last Week Tonight**, political satirist John Oliver **criticized** the way municipal violations, such as speeding, parking tickets, and jaywalking, disproportionately affect the poor. He described how low-income individuals who cannot immediately pay these fines fall into a cycle of indebtedness, paying off the fees of private enforcement companies rather than their actual fine. Oliver highlighted cases where individuals lost their jobs and had been jailed for these minor violations.

The Lealtad-Suzuki Center’s Team
Pope Francis urged members of organized crime to turn away from violence and exploitation and stop the "tears of the mothers of Naples" after visiting one of the city's most violent and drug-infested neighborhoods on Saturday. He urged residents of the area, which has often been the battleground of Camorra clans fighting for control of drug trafficking and extortion rackets, not to let criminals rob them of their hope.

The controversial case of Sweet Cakes by Melissa, the former Gresham bakery that refused to prepare a cake for the wedding of two Portland women, moved to the penalty phase, where an administrative law judge will hear arguments to determine compensatory damages. The owners contended that they were practicing their Constitutional right to religious freedom and providing the cake would have violated their beliefs against same-sex marriage.

Banen Al-Sheemary who is a graduate student at the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, explores and discusses inter-Arab discrimination. She begins by speaking of her own identity as an “Iraqi hijab-wearing women refugee” and the oppressions she faces due to those identities from white racial supremacy. She talks about how there exists a lack of acknowledgement of Arab hierarchies and then begins to explain the existence of privilege in passing for white in the Lebanese community. The focus becomes on the need to distinguish “Lebanese-ness” from “Arab-ness” in the form of changing names and exclusion from housing and resources. The article then speaks to the need to historically contextualize the experiences of Iraqis and the U.S. involvement in the experience of Iraqi refugees in the U.S. Banen Al-Sheemary concludes with a reflection on writing the piece and advice for moving forward.

In February, an Alabama police officer used unreasonable force against Sureshbhai Patel, a 57-year old Indian man who recently moved to the U.S. Patel was walking outside his son’s home in an Alabama suburb and was approached by police responding to a neighbor’s call about a suspicious person. Two police officers detained Patel on the sidewalk before promptly shoving him down on to the ground. Patel suffered significant injuries including partial paralysis, and is currently still recovering in a rehab center. The officer Eric Sloan Parker has been charged with state assault this month and released from his job. Alabama Governor Robert Bentley apologized to the Indian government for the assault.
ESP: We Are Enough!

On Monday, March 30th, the Emerging Scholars Program (ESP) students and the first year Bonner Scholars students came together to learn about the various opportunities available to them while at Macalester. Upperclassmen panelists shared about the various positions they hold such as, for instance, being a research assistant, a Chuck Green Fellow, ACTC Museum Fellow, Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellow as well as applying for the Davis Projects for Peace, and the Live It Fund. Panelists shared how they found the opportunity, their words of wisdom about creating a successful proposal or application, and learning to plan ahead for these future opportunities.

This panel brought me with a lot of insight about the importance of having a strong community where such opportunities are shared and spread, especially if students come from backgrounds (i.e., first in family to go to college; students of color; other marginalized identities) where opportunities like those mentioned above are not always apparent and seem daunting to think about. However, this panel also brought me back to emotions I felt (and still do feel at times, especially as a graduating senior) of anxiety of never quite feeling like I am doing “enough” or being “enough.” It is times like those that I want to remind myself (and others) that we need to embrace ourselves and tell ourselves that what we are doing (or not doing) is enough. We are enough!

SPEAK! Series featured Zerlina Maxwell

On Tuesday, March 10th, the Macalester community members welcomed Zerlina Maxwell, the Keynote Speaker for Women’s History Month in Kagin’s Alexander G. Hill Ballroom. Zerlina is a political analyst, speaker, and contributing writer for ESSENCE Magazine, often engaging with a feminist lens on issues of domestic violence, sexual assault, victim blaming, gender inequality, and rape culture.

Zerlina encouraged the audience to believe and have empathy towards the victim/survivor instead of misplacing that empathy onto the perpetrator. Using pop culture references and incidents that happened in the United States, she described the ways rape culture manifests itself: unhealthy masculinity, cyber bullying, victim blaming, among other manifestations. She played video clips of herself appearing on the shows of conservative political analysts like The Sean Hannity Show to reach other audiences in order to discuss rape culture. Zerlina talked about and modeled how engaging with pop culture critically can be a good way to start the conversation about rape culture with other individuals who may not be as aware.

The Lealtad-Suzuki Center’s SPEAK! Series, Lectures Coordination Board, and Sexual Violence Prevention at Macalester sponsored this event along with the other co-sponsors for Women’s History Month.
What to Look For...

- Tuesdays @ 6:00pm: “In the Kitchen With…” (C-House, 37 Mac St.)
- Saturday, April 4 @ 12:00pm: Xpressions: Gender Xpressions: A Community Mural Project (Kagin Lounge, Kagin Commons)
- Friday, April 17 @ 4:00pm: Xpressions Cultural Fest (Kagin Lawn or A.G.H Ballroom as the rain location, Kagin Commons)
- Tuesday, April 21 @ 7pm: SPEAK! Series featuring Mia Mingus: Embody Transformative Justice (JBD Lecture Hall, Campus Center)
- Friday, April 24 @ 10:00am: The Allies Project Training Workshop for New Allies (Contact Karla Benson Rutten for registration and location)
- Saturday, April 25 @ 1:00pm: C-House Arts Project (C-House, 37 Mac. Street)
- Tuesday, May 5 @ 3:00pm: Harambee! A Celebration of Multicultural Moments (A.G.H Ballroom, Kagin Commons)
- Tuesday, May 15 @ 1:30pm: Rites of Passage (Weyerhaeuser Chapel)

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