

MULTICULTURAL CENTER

VOLUME 1 ISSUE 1

DIRECTOR'S COLUMN

CRISIS AND CIVILITY

Many see a "crisis situation" as hopeless conflict, or as yet another example of unrelenting suffering. It seems we have become numb, either overwhelmed by our grief or, at times, unable to feel any grief at all. One outlet for this crushing condition of crisis is simply to scream. To literally yell at any target we see as an oppressor, to rail loudly against policies and practices that only seem to ratify the world's wrongs, and not its rights. The word "crisis" has, for many, become a placeholder for "injustice."

But, perhaps there remains a positive possibility hidden in a crisis; a doorway *out* of suffering, rather than the building of a suffocating cage. From this new vantage point, "conflict" and "crisis" provide the *transformative* engine and power to ignite change. Only here the change is *mutually nourishing*, and here the change is forged with deep respect (even reverence) for the complexities and the pain. To invite such a "constructive crisis" requires both contemplation and strategy. I submit that the compass we need to help direct us is *Civility*.

Yet, I readily admit that the term "civility" is, itself, due for

some renovation. For example, if a person or a group shows up at a speaking event specifically to "protest" it, then "civility" for them merely masks institutional "control." Indeed, so-called civility in this case would probably be perceived as a pernicious code of "censorship" i.e. *mandating* that one stay silent or muzzled, and where one is summarily *banned* from exercising their rights to redress grievances. Moreover, if protesters dare to declare their righteous anger by displaying startling signs and shouting caustic comments, then it is likely to be misperceived as "violence" or even "hate speech."

The *reformed* form of civility which I am proposing is decidedly not one of status quo control, nor one even hinting at censorship. Instead, it submits a radical proposition; a *promise* to regard "protesters" with respect. Now, this is not some ploy of politeness or a tricky maneuver to quell anger. Civility, from my perspective, publicly acknowledges that a crowd's anger is honest and that their pain is real. Therefore, it is not the growing presence of controversy on campus that should concern us, rather it is the *absence* of a truly constructive commitment to civility that is of greater concern.

Allow me now to offer just two supportive strategies which I hope will illustrate a refreshed covenant of civility. The first I call "Shared Suffering." One of the most conspicuous absences from most public forums dedicated to discussing "serious and controversial issues" is the absence of discussing *suffering*. The first step towards respecting protesters is to admit that real suffering is at the source of their anger. But this admission is not a partisan one, it must be *mutual*, i.e. all parties to the controversy share in the suffering.

This deep and profound grief is seldom spoken of, much less honored, in public. But imagine if your "opponent" cared enough to authentically lament the losses of family that you have experienced (or acknowledged your values by quoting from your own culture's "heroes"). Moreover, imagine if you *reciprocated*. The door may be partially opened. Then again it may not, but at least the *possibility* now exists.

Another respectful demonstration of civility would be to grant to the "protesters" that *their* questions will be addressed. Imagine, again, that your "opponent" says something like, "It is clear that we have a group

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Special Points of Interest

- Director's Column
- Book & Video Reviews-
• *Paradise Now* and *The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada*
- International Education Week **Nov. 13-17th**
- S.T.A.R. Project
- CSULB Demographics
- Staff & Hours at MCC

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION WEEK NOV 13-17

Ongoing Throughout the week:

Right to Education Photography Project - Students at Birzeit Univ. (Ramallah) and Al-Naja University (Nablus) documented Palestinian student life under occupation through their own ideas and experiences— Design Gallery, Room 100.

Monday 11-13

10-11:30~ **World Hunger and Food Availability** - Faculty Center for Professional Development -Lib. 5th Floor

12:30-2:00~ **American Muslims: Many Voices**—Dr. Muzammil Siddiqui—The Pointe in the Pyramid

2:30-3:30~ **Men & Masculinities in Gender and Development Programs** -Dr. Paul Perret —The Pointe in the Pyramid

Tuesday 11-14

11:00-12:30~ **The Sun and More of Spain**—Multicultural Center (F03-02)

11:00-1:30~ **International Related Orgs. Representatives:**— Speaker's Platform in front of Bookstore

2:00-4:00~ **Consuls of Japan, Korea, and Asian China**—Dr. Tim Xie—The Pointe in the Pyramid

3:00-4:30~ **Worthy of Faith: Authors and**

Readers in the Long Renaissance— Faculty Center for Professional Development Center, Library- 5th Floor

3:30-4:45~ **The Face of Africa: Looking Beyond the Shadows**— Stan Chu Ilo—Huntington Room, USU-224

5:30-7:30~ **Invisible Children documentary**—Huntington Room, USU-224

Wednesday 11-15

9:30-11:00~ **Nalini by Day, Nancy by Night**—Anatol Center, East. Lib. AS-110

12:00-1:00~ **Where Western Design Meets Eastern Culture** "Brown Bag", Multicultural Center -F03 Room 2

1:00-2:30~ **Heavy Metal Islam: Youth Culture & Religion in the Middle East Today**—Huntington Room, USU-224

2:00-3:00~ **Travel Tips-101**—Career Development Ctr. -BH-250

3:30-5:00~ **GOOGLE:earth Puts Geography on the Desktop: Remote Sensing in a Nutshell**—Faculty Development Ctr. Library-5th Floor

6:30-7:30~ **The Peoples of Central Asia: from Imperial Subjects to Independent Citizens**—Dr. Ali Iqmen—Huntington Room, USU-224

Thursday 11-16

Arlington West Display: Reflections on the Iraq War—"temporary cemetery" representing soldiers killed in Iraq—University Central Quad

10:00-12:00~ **Chinese Calligraphy: A Microcosm of Culture & Art Form Par Excellence**—Dr. San-Pao Li—Huntington Room, USU 224

12:00~ **Arlington West documentary & panel**—Huntington Room—USU 224

2:00-4:00~ **Easter Island: Archeological Field Research**—Dr. Carl Lipo—Anatol Center, East Lib. AS-110

4:00-6:00~ **Hiroshima/Nagasaki Peace Exhibit** Multicultural Ctr. F03 Room 2

Friday 11-17 International Thanksgiving Potluck & Cultural Celebration Located between FCS & Nursing Bldgs.



GOT CULTURE?

Museum of Latin American Art MoLLA

628 Alamitos Ave. Long Beach, CA

More info: (562)437-1689

www.molla.org

Bowers Museum of Cultural Art

2002 N. Main Street, Santa Ana-

More info: (714) 567-3600 Cost \$4

Pacific Asian Museum

46 N. Los Robles Ave., Pasadena, CA

More info: (626) 449-2742

Skirball Cultural Center ***FREE***

2701 N. Sepulveda, L.A More info: (310)

440-4500 www.skirball.org

Watts Towers Art Center

1727 E. 107th St., L.A. More info: (310)

847-4646

Japanese-American National Museum

369 E. 1st. Street, L.A. More info: (213)

625-0414 Students: Cost \$3

Southwest Museum of the American Indian

234 Museum Dr. (Exposition Park)

L.A. More info: (213) 221-2164

Cost: \$3 with student ID

California Heritage Museum

2612 Main St. Santa Monica, CA

More info: (310) 392-8537

Museum of Tolerance

9786 West Pico Blvd. L.A. More info:

(310) 553-9036 www.wiesenthal.com

S.T.A.R. PROJECT

Training workshop will be on Saturday,

February 17, 2007 in the MCC's

Conference Room, F03-02.

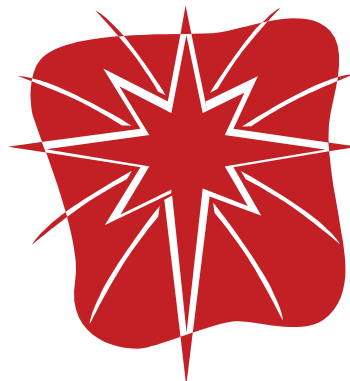
From 12:00-noon to 6:00 p.m.

The workshop is **free!** Please call

the MCC to sign-up or come on in!!!

Deadline to sign-up Feb. 14th, 2007

☎562-985-8150



S.T.A.R. Project received the rare honor being officially designated as a "Promising Practice for the Nation" by President Bill Clinton's Commission on Race. The S.T.A.R. Project was selected as one of only three programs in L.A. to be visited by Advisory Board members of President Clinton's "initiative on Race" Commission.

We are continuing the good work that S.T.A.R. provides for our students.

BOOK AND VIDEO REVIEWS

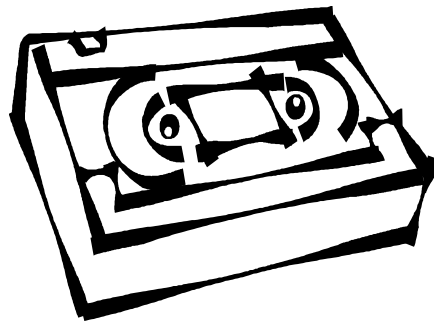
The Three Burials of Melquiades

Estrada

(2006)

Oscar® winner Tommy Lee Jones directs and stars in this poetic and striking modern-day Western. Peter Perkins (Jones) is a veteran cowboy who embodies the values of the old west, living in a small Texas town bordering the U.S. and Mexico. He hires Melquiades Estrada as a ranch hand and quickly befriends the man. But when Estrada is gunned down under mysterious circumstances, Perkins takes justice into his own hands and kidnaps a trigger-happy border patrolman (Barry Pepper - *Saving Private Ryan*), forcing Perkins to unearth Estrada's body and accompany Perkins on horseback on the long and

treacherous journey through the frontier mountains and back roads of Mexico to bring his friend's body home. Pete forces Mike to participate in his cross-country ritual of duty--a voyage of revenge and redemption that will change both men forever, and bring some semblance of meaning to the senseless death of Pete's good friend.



It is there, amidst some of the most beautifully bleak landscapes in recent American film, that Jones and screenwriter Guillermo Arriga (*Amores Perros, 21 Grams*) set their existential quest for meaning. The film focuses on the honor-bound commitment of Pete, the foreman of a Texas ranch (played by Jones with a heavy heart and deep moral conviction) to return the body of illegal Mexican immigrant ranchhand, Melquiades Estrada (played in flashback scenes by Julio Cedillo) to his preferred resting place in the Mexican wilderness. Tommy Lee Jones outdoes himself with his story of friendship and compassion.

Paradise Now

(2006)

Two men, best friends from childhood, are summoned to fulfill their agreement to be suicide bombers for the Palestinian cause. Khaled and Said (Ali Suliman and Kais Nashef, both making striking film debuts) believe fervently in their cause, but having a bomb strapped to your waist would raise doubts in anyone--and once doubts have arisen, they respond in very different ways. *Paradise Now* is gripping enough while the men are preparing for their mission, but when the set-up goes awry and Khaled and Said are separated, it becomes almost excruciatingly tense. The movie passes no judgment on these men; impassioned arguments are made for both sides of the conflict. This is a work of remarkable compassion and insight, given the shape and sharpness of a skillful thriller. Its psychological portrait goes beyond the Palestinian/Israeli conflict and resonates with fanaticism and oppression throughout the world, be it related to a religious, nationalist, or tribal cause. A stunning film from writer/director Hany Abu-Assad.

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One of the most moving films
I've seen in some time!

Director of Multicultural Center

"El Triunfo"

"The Triumph"

Jesus "Chuy" Santillan, 2005 graduate from CSULB, has had his first feature short film accepted into the [East Los Angeles Film Festival](#) and will be shown on:

Nov. 11th, 2006

at the

Pico House

on

Olvera Street in Los Angeles.

[One of our own stars in it too! Rafael Gonzalez]

For more information call:

562-746-8501

FACTS THAT FOCUS "I HAVE A DREAM" AUGUST, 28, 1963

The "I Have a Dream" speech is imprinted on our minds—We see and hear the compelling presence of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. standing at that podium. But who else delivered civil rights messages from that *same* podium and on that *same* day?

The answer reveals that the movement for social justice was always a cross-cultural coalition of support.

Bob Dylan, this Jewish-American singer/songwriter (aka Robert Zimmerman) also delivered his own powerful message that day. In the documentary, "No Direction Home", Dylan recalled, "I was up close when King was giving that speech—to this day it still effects me in a *profound way*."

Joan Baez, this Mexican-American singer brought her voice to the occasion. She sang a passionate "We Shall Overcome."

Peter, Paul, and Mary, a European-American folk group added their harmonies in support of civil rights.

Mahaila Jackson, a preacher's daughter, roused the spirit of the crowd with her gospel singing. (Malcolm X noted that Ms Jackson was "the first negro that negroes themselves ever made famous.")

Harry Belafonte, Jamaican-born American actor/singer brought his rhythms to the occasion.

NEWSLETTER FALL 2006

MULTICULTURAL CENTER
1250 N. BELLFLOWER BLVD.
LONG BEACH, CA 90840 -1005
BUILDING - F03 ROOM - 03
CONFERENCE ROOM - F03 - Room - 02

Phone: 562-985-8150
Fax: 562-985-8149
E-MAIL: cschulth@csulb.edu

YOU ARE
MY OTHER ME

We're on the Web
WWW.CSULB.EDU/MCC



C.S.U.L.B.

CSULB Demographics Spring 2006

	32,140	Students	
	12,573	Males 19,567	Females
Native American	184	0.6%	
African-American	1,835	5.7%	
Mexican-American	5,705	17.8%	
Other Latino	2,423	7.5%	
Asian-American	5,852	18.2%	
Pacific Islander	192	0.6%	
Filipino	1,822	5.7%	
Caucasian	10,779	33.5%	
Total Identified	29,452	88.8%	
International	1,094	3.4%	
Unknown	3,348	10.4%	

Student Population came from:

- 56 California counties (30,609)
- 50 Other states/territories (437)
- 92 Foreign countries (1,094)

DIRECTOR'S COLUMN

Continued from page 1

who hold intense disagreements with my stand. I don't, for a minute, doubt or discount your sincerity in challenging me. Here's what I promise. Give me a *fair* chance to speak and I guarantee that you'll have a *fair* chance to question my views. In fact, I want your group to choose a representative who will *join me* on the platform so that I may dialogue directly on issues of your concern." Whether this *honoring option* for the opposition is actually taken up is not the point. What matters most is that a *true gesture of respect* was being offered. It takes time, a long time, to develop trust. And it takes great courage to share suffering (especially in full view of your "enemies")

The second strategy I call forth is "Shared Sacredness." One of the most overlooked, and underutilized resources for civility may be found in world religions. Often a crucial part of our cultural and ethnic identity is woven in with the wisdom

and purpose provided by faith systems. To honor another's religion (say by quoting from the insights in its holy scripture) is to honor a person at their heart's core. I am not talking about "conversion" here, but rather "global ethics" and an ecumenical compassion, which may be shared from a rich variety of sacred sources (both ancient and modern.) Indeed, perhaps one of the key disconnects we find in discussing enduring "political crisis" is that we virtually ignore the religious dimensions organic to these complex issues. We seldom, if ever, seek out "spiritual leaders" who are part and party to the crisis. Yet without *their* guidance and *their* support, or *their* having a place at the policy-making table, our "political" solutions remain shallow and without the root system that religion may supply. Finally, for me, a "crisis" harkens back to its own root meaning, that is of providing us with "a turning point." Just as "civility", if approached with renewed energy and hope, may yet refashion our relationship to public discourse.

The Multicultural Center will soon be inviting small groups to come together for further conversations on both *crisis* and *civility*. If, however, you have a personal interest and want to contribute to the transformation of conflict into "constructive crisis", then please contact us.

A true Covenant of Civility is not some list fraught with prohibitions of conduct, nor one that seeks to silence opposition. A deeper promise of civility is the promise to approach controversy and crisis with deepening respect and an honoring of a universal human heart.

