

The GRIOT

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In the records of West African history, "Griot" (pronounced gree-oh) was the honored name bestowed on wise and knowledgeable story tellers entrusted with the task of documenting tribal histories and genealogies.

Celebration of Graduates

Joe Goings

On Saturday May 1, CSU had its annual Celebration of Graduates ceremony, sponsored by the Student Diversity Programs and Services offices.

Some of the offices that helped out were include the Black/African America Cultural Center, the Gay, Lesbian Bisexual and Transgender Resource Center and Asian/Pacific American Cultural Center.

There were other offices that helped out during the celebration as well like Business Diversity and Leadership Alliance and the Vice President for Student Affairs.

The celebration began with a welcome from the Vice President of Student Affairs,



Celebration of Graduates 2010

Colorado State University

Dr. Blanche Hughes and the President of the university Dr. Tony Frank.

Each of the graduates were recognized during the celebration, and there was a special "Class of 2010" video presentation, put together by Lauren Ramirez in the Native America Cultural Center.

A class photo was taken of all of the graduates. The photos are available online at <http://bit.ly/c4XXPE>.

The celebration ended with closing words from Bruce Smith, director of the Black/African America Cultural Center, and Guadalupe Salazar, director of EI Centro. The ceremony closed with a reception, and performances by Liyun Cecil and Matthew J. Cecil.

The Sponge Effect

Sara Anderson

There they are, with beautiful coffee colored skin, almond shaped eyes; representing struggle, strength, intelligence, beauty and power; they are Black Goddesses.

Their ancestors have fought through endless battles for freedom and rights.

They have been through trials and tribulations, unexpected misfortunes and mistakes.

They are role models and teenagers look up to them, wanting to model everything that they do.

They are supposed to look peaceful, have natural beauty, be nurturing, loving, and graceful.

Something is wrong with these images however, for these women that I see on television do not represent the glory and the power of being Black, they represent the stereotypical image that is a burden upon them.

They stand there in degrading bikinis in front of a mansion grinding their bodies to the beat of destruction in front of men.

They actually look pleased and content with what they are doing.

In the next scene, there are four women in a bubble bath kissing each other attempting to create a PG-13 porno.

Next scene: a woman on a pool table doing the splits with her most prized possession on display for the whole world to see.

Last scene: a woman bending over in front of a man waiting for her engine to be turned on; He slides a credit card down her back side, and she begins shaking it as if he had just hit the jackpot at a casino.

While these shameful images are being displayed on the television, these lyrics are being shouted in the background: "I said it must be ya ass cause it ain't yo face, you'z a tip drill (from rapper Nelly's "Tip Drill" song)."

In this situation, tip drill refers to a woman who is recognized for her physical assets and what she has to offer for sexual entertainment.

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Aisha Simmons: The No Documentary

Danielle McConnell

The month of April is Sexual Assault Awareness and the Office of Women's Programs and Studies is hosting a month long calendar of events to raise awareness. It is often believed that we no longer live in a society where rape occurs. Many don't realize that 1 in 4 women will be raped in their lifetime, and 1 in 3 women will be sexually assaulted in their lifetime.

The last week of April, CSU was honored with the presence of Aishah Simmons, the director and producer of the documentary, "NO!" Before the presentation of the documentary, students were given the opportunity to sit down and discuss with Aishah the inspirations behind her film and what she hoped people viewing it, and survivors, would gain.

This is a woman that grew up in a family of activists, so she has been raised to stand for change. She also is one that has experienced sexual violence. The initial influence for the film came from a trip to South Africa in 1994.

This was when major actions against apartheid were happening. There was a concern however that while apartheid was being shut down, no major advances towards decreasing sexual violence, or at least drawing attention to it, were being made.

This is when Aishah truly decided to start her film. It took her 11 years to make the film, due to lack of support from the community,



Aishah Simmons
Photo courtesy of:

www.notherapedocumentary.org/

and also a lack of funding. This film was one that Aishah hoped that the film would open the door for both women and men to have discussions about sexual violence.

Its focus is primarily on the ideas of acquaintance rape and exposing the hidden

truths of how rape or any form of sexual violence actually occurs.

The film was one that was very realistic and brought to the forefront the real faces, hurt, and the healing process of rape. These survivor's stories could be related to and that made the story even more powerful.

The women were everyday individuals, teenagers, and in some instances preteens when they went through their experience. There were some that told the whole story moment by moment, while others kept it simple and less descriptive, but every story held power.

The look in these survivor's eyes was one of almost heartache, despair, sadness, when recollecting that moment that may have happened so long ago. It was interesting to see the spectrum of stories from different individuals, but with similar storylines.

It is hard to believe that these stories so often go untold and unreported. I feel it is necessary that everyone be aware and know that this happens, and that it is very real. I feel that the most important message, said by Aishah Simmons herself was, "To get to healing, sometimes one must swim through the ocean of misery."

Negative Outlook on Women

Danielle McConnell

There is an unknown reality today about women being showcased as sexual objects, and disposable pieces of property. I am currently participating in the SAGE program here at Colorado State and have been training to be more aware of the wrongs that take place in the world with regards to gender, sexual orientation, and sexual violence. April is Sexual Assault Awareness month, and with that, I thought it was important to bring awareness about one of societies greatest downfalls today.

Within movies, commercials, and advertisements, women are constantly made the center of attention. Over the course of time these images have become more blatant, making it almost impossible for women to be seen in any other light, besides that of sexual prey. Even recently, Woody's has placed an advertisement in the Collegian, which displays a woman, completely naked, with only a Woody's sign to cover her chest.

This advertisement was supposed to showcase ladies night. How does a naked woman reflect ladies night? If anything it should be a naked man. This however is not the point: it is these kinds of images that allow for women to be seen as objects.

In today's society it is important that we realize not only the implications that the media brings to women, but also what needs to be done to fight against these issues. It is necessary that we recognized that these portrayals are wrong, and can in many ways reinforce unacceptable actions that take place today. I encourage everyone to not only get informed, but also to reach out to make change. If we spoke up about the things that need change, someone can't help but hear our voices. I challenge people to take a step forward. Not only to benefit the present generation, but also those that will follow behind us.



Photo Courtesy of:
knol.google.com/

Budget Cuts to Diversity

Danielle McConnell

Budget cuts at Colorado State University have allowed for many important programs and positions to be put on the **chopping block**. It has come to the students' attention that even the diversity and outreach position that currently exists is up or some scrutiny.

Dr. Blanche Hughes came into the office for a special Real Talk about how to **reorganize this position in the students' best interest**.

Currently one individual holds the position, which causes a great deal of miscommunications, and oftentimes a lack of properly taking care of the tasks at hand, holds the position.

Many students rarely know who this individual is, so they have no way of accurately handling business when it comes to an **organization's programming or outreach**.

The students proposed many things to help adjust the downfalls of the current position. The major concern was that whoever holds this position takes the time to be familiar with all advocacy offices and also organizations on campus.

Oftentimes there are organizations that have programming going on that no one on campus knows about, with the help of this position, there would be more availability for more outreach to students all over campus.

Many scholars also hoped that this would just be a position to help with programming but also one that takes care of many of the problems facing students surrounding diversity.

They want to be able to come to this office and express their concerns and things that they want to be done to improve any aspect of diversity or outreach. It is a hope of these

students that this position would finally handle the crisis facing these areas of our campus life.

The initial decision was to cut the diversity and outreach position completely, but after hosting a panel to allow for discussion about the position, it was concluded that this is something that is mandatory to the advocacy offices on campus.

ASCSU decided to hold the title of **"Department of community diversity and student engagement"**.

Their hope is that the title will allow students to feel more welcomed in the space and voice the opinions and concerns of the marginalized groups on this campus.

Later this summer there will be a forum, hosted by ASCSU, which hopes to properly form this position in the light the students want.

27th Annual Awards Banquet

Danielle McConnell

This year's 27th annual Awards Banquet brought out a bigger crowd than the Black/African American Cultural Center has seen in the years before.

It was great to see students' families come out and support their scholars as they received awards for outstanding student of the year, grade point average awards, scholarship awards, awards for the different organizations on campus, and of course the graduates were honored.

The office's very own Joe Goings

received an award for outstanding staff member of the year.

The Awards Banquet is set up each year to make sure that each scholar is honored for his or her achievements, and it continues to be a dominant factor in making students truly want to strive for excellence. The program had light refreshments, and entertainment that allowed for people of all age groups to enjoy themselves.

Although the program hit a few snags, some individuals having a different experience than others, overall the program was a success.

The office is open to suggestions that guests may have regarding this event, and would love to hear the feedback, so that we can make the necessary improvements.

In the years to come we hope to make the event even better, and continue to allow for students to feel successful and be honored for it.



GPA winners at the 27th Annual Awards Banquet

The Sponge Effect cont.

Who are these women? They are our mothers, sisters, wives and children. They hold the future of Black America's next generation. They are the "tip drills" and America has begun to view every Black woman this way.

Though the music may be considered creative and energetic, the women in the music videos are hyper sexualized, which is a far cry from the strong, smart, Black goddesses they should be.

These images that are portrayed in the media do not accurately represent the American Black woman. In the degrading music video "Tip Drill," the women shake their bodies for dollars and allow credit card swipes down their back sides to please Black men, just so they can be noticed for a single second of fame.

As Marla Shelton states in her 1998 book *Can't Touch This*, African American women's representations in rap videos highlight the limitations and progress of African American women and can also combat negative stereotypes in society as well as within the music industry.

The images that are displayed on the television communicate to its audience that she is a bitch, tramp, trick, whore, and slut, that wants attention through sexuality and money.

We buy their CD's and request their videos on television. We "bump" their music in our vehicles and sing along to the lyrics while in public, making a complete fool of ourselves: we support them.

Our children dance to their lyrics and beats; they are intrigued by what appears on the television screen. As consumers, we add to the negativity.

While it is a far cry from the reality of women, artists believe it is necessary because sex sells.

These people are those who either don't see a problem with how black women are being represented or they feel that arguing about this issue is waste of time. For instance when Ayana Byrd from *Essence* magazine interview hip

hop artist Talib Kweli, he glorified the meaning of 'sex sells' commenting that "Why not use ass and titty to sell music..."

Whether it's right or not, I feel that as a man, when I see it, I'm going to look, it's going to catch my attention. I believe an artist's responsibility is not to uphold the morals of society... An artist's responsibility is to speak honestly about what's going on and what people are going through."

Artist Nelly, the famous inventor for the video 'Tip Drill,' states "I respect women and I'm not a misogynist. I'm an artist. Hip-hop videos are art and entertainment... Women are in the videos by choice.

No one knows what a particular woman's situation is, what her goals are... No one can dictate other people's choices and situations." Obviously the music industry is more concerned about the profits they receive than our well being, or the music videos would banish.

While men view music videos as a critical component to the artists success, some women that are in the videos express it as a choice and do not necessarily see it as bad.

Video vixen Melyssa Ford replied simply in an interview by Byrd "People were trying to exploit me, but I decided to exploit myself and make all the money from my images, including those on calendar and DVD.

People may see it as a contradiction, but I don't. I'm eye candy, and that's as far as it goes."

However, this 'choice' ultimately silences and objectifies women; it is not an accurate depiction of Black women.

They feel it is okay to show their amazing bodies to the public and become role models for younger teenagers, allowing them to think that what they are doing is acceptable. These videos show false advertisement and as a result, they're characterized falsely.

Women and men agree with my plea

and recognize that this form of entertainment is horrid and disgusting.

Spelman college campus activist Moya Bailey writes that Black women are often depicted as hyper sexualized, and music videos exacerbate the problem -and that becomes people's perception of Black women everywhere...

There aren't really pictures of us in schools textbooks or things that counter the images that are seen in music videos... The media does an excellent job of keeping those more positive images about us away from people.

I would love for us to get rid of these horrid images and explicit lyrics that the media showcases, but, let's get real, it is never going to happen.

This is the real world and sex will always play a big part in it. So even though we can't censor the media completely, we can propose alternatives. Instead of participating in songs that degrade our image, participate in the one's that glorify the meaning of being Black.

For instance, African Arrested Development, who despises how the stereotypical



Photo Courtesy of:
music.popacademy.org/files/

The Sponge Effect cont.

Black men behave and glorifies how a beautiful Black woman should be treated: "...Until a group of brothers started bugging out, drinking the 40 oz, going the nigga route.

Disrespecting my Black queen, holding their crotches' and being obscene. At first I ignored them cause see I know their type, they got drinks and got guns and they wanna fight."

In this song titled "People Everyday", Arrested Development talks about how Black men disrespect their selves and Black women. Many of his other songs also hold this theme, with the most

respected idea that Black women are queens and we deserve to be treated that way.

Not all hip hop music has to be negative; it can also have a meaning to it other than becoming some fantasy object. I am writing this because I feel as a Black woman, this must stop! By participating in these invalidating acts, Black women are degrading the image of Black women.

Although most of the African American society views this issue as a minor one, I feel it should be addressed with seriousness. We are pushing ourselves beyond reasonable limits and soon we will

have no way to fix our mistakes.

How can something as negative as this be ignored and placed on the back burner? By Black women portraying themselves in a hyper sexualized way in music videos, they are proliferating the stereotype that does not accurately represent the American Black woman. You are worth more than a thong and high heels, or a three minute long video; they don't care about your face, they care about your body.

Cover yourself up; respect yourself more than others do. You are beautiful, inside more than out; take pride in that because sexuality only goes so far.

Crips and Bloods: Made in America

Danielle McConnell

United Men of Color and Campus Activities hosted a program entitled, "Bloods and Crips: Made in America." The video discusses the hidden history of a world of violence. It pinpoints not only the struggles that blacks faced but also, all the factors that led up to the separation of society, as well as, its demise.

Many African Americans, as well as people from other cultures, don't realize that the gangs existing in society today, are not all the same as they were back in the 60's. The initial idea came from a hope of wanting to belong somewhere.

Many Blacks were not welcomed in the same clubs and organizations that white Americans had and because of that they created their own. It was the news that dubbed these clubs as "gangs", creating a negative connotation to the newfound recreation of Blacks.

Through constant discrimination and disrespect, African Americans began to slowly revolt against the things that they no longer saw as acceptable. Through the violence came groups hoping to advance African

Americans and showcase a more non-violent approach towards making their concerns known.

The movie continues by presenting the idea that as Blacks tried to seek non-violent ways of life, their role models were stripped



Photo Courtesy of:
<http://badgals-radio.com>

away, either by being killed or assassinated.

This idea is pinpointed by the movie as the main reason for the demise of African American communities, and the creation of gangs that no longer stood for change, but simply to tear down that which is no different from themselves.

The program continued with an open panel of both scholars and academic professionals hoping to unveil the hidden truths, myths, and common misconceptions of the gang world. It is important to understand that with gang activity comes a whole different world, it is not only one that people sometimes choose but also is forced on them.

The panel also discussed the reasons as to why gangs exist in the first place. The finger is quickly pointed at the home, either through the lack of a father figure or the lack of a mother.

A woman, who specializes in the research of black feminists, brought up an interesting perspective on the woman's role in gang activity. She focused on not only the role of the mother and her absence in the home.

The other view she thought should be considered was one of women in gangs, because the video didn't really focus on that, but it does happen. The panel allowed for people to ask questions and get them answered in the best way possible. This event was a great opportunity for individuals to get insight on a world they may not know.

Cancun: The Scare Underneath the Sands

Danielle McConnell

Cancun has been one of the major hotspots within the last few years for all types of people. From students to parents, everyone is trying to get a little piece of sunshine in their few moments of serenity.

Although Cancun is known for its rays of sunshine, water, and relaxation, there are many unknown problems that take place in the streets of this vacation town

Many tourists haven't heard of the drug wars and gang violence that is currently taking place, but has also been in existence for a countless number of years before now.

It has become a major concern because now not only is the drug war hurting those involved, but also the innocent bystanders living in Cancun.



<http://www.sofiatour.net/images>

In 2009, 20,000 people were killed because of the drug wars. The fear now is that tourists are in danger.

As the drug war rises there is increased concern that everyday citizens of Cancun could be the unintentional targets of disaster on any given day.

It is necessary that as summer approaches; college students take into consideration where they intend to travel for a little bit of sun.

Cancun is a wonderful place to get relaxation, but at the same time, there are extreme possibilities that an individual could get stuck in a dangerous, or even violent situation.

Cancun is a high-Alert location right now, and has been for a number of months. I am hopeful that students will seriously consider other possible locations to spend their summer.

Consent Turns Me On

Gabrielle Ohaya

The month of April signifies a serious issue for many women. April is the official Sexual Assault Awareness Month and this year a significant amount of groups participated in raising the awareness.

Throughout CSU's campus, organizations have been putting on programs to increase awareness about the epidemic as well as educational activities that help people understand the statistics involving sexual assaults. This year's most valuable theme is the phrase "Consent Turns Me On" or "CTMO."

The celebrated term is supposed to clarify that sexual assault awareness month is

not in existence to preach abstinence but rather involved sexual acts where both parties are fully participating and able to give clear consent.

For their event for Sexual Awareness Month, the Liberal Arts department brought in Allan Johnson.

Johnson is a critically acclaimed author who focuses on privilege, power, and difference. In his speech he focused on the concept of patriarchy and the elements within patriarchy that harvests sexually violent behavior by men onto women and other men.

He focused on the fact that our society teaches men that they are supposed to

maintain power and control.

According to Johnson, in order to obtain that, women (and other men) must be placed in powerless positions to make room for men with power.

The fact that Johnson, as a man, was speaking about sexual violence in such a manner created an more inclusive environment for all genders. His examples allowed colorful visuals that kept his audience wanting to learn more.

EDITOR'S NOTES

Goodbye To A Great Mentor

Danielle McConnell

The end of the year brings both celebration and tears to many students on CSU's campus. For some it brought tears of celebration, as they moved on to a new arena of life, while for others those tears meant a goodbye to people that played a major role in their life.

Mrs. Bridgette Johnson has been an active member in the Black/African American Cultural Center for several years. The number of lives and hearts she has touched in that time frame cannot be counted, but if you ask a student about her, you are sure to get an answer that would shed only a small light on what she has done.

In my life specifically, she has acted as a strong mentor, counselor, and friend. She has helped me through many social and even academic difficulties that I have faced in the two years I have been at CSU.



Mrs. Bridgette & Her husband
Photo Courtesy of:
www.facebook.com

It is almost impossible to believe that come fall semester of 2010 she will not be here to once again share her kind heart and spirit on the new students preparing to start their college Journey.

She has helped me through many social and even academic difficulties that I have faced in the two years I have been at CSU.

It is almost impossible to believe that come fall semester of 2010 she will not be here to once again share her kind heart and spirit on the new students preparing to start their college

I am forever grateful for all the hard work and dedication Mrs. Bridgette offered to this office and she will be greatly missed.

Sleep: A Precious Commodity

Joe Goings

I still remember my first collegiate semester's schedule: MWF I had Psychology 100 at 8 a.m., an Honors seminar at 10 a.m., Speech Communications 100 at noon, and Biology 101 at 3.

On Tuesdays and Thursdays I had a class from 12:30 – 1:45 p.m., and I also worked the Black/African America Cultural Center, called Black Student Services at the time.

During those days, all I had to do in class was take notes and write a paper or two here and there. As for work, I wrote articles every now and again and worked at the front desk.

I got a lot of sleep in those days; a lot. And I loved every second of it. I always woke up refreshed and rejuvenated most mornings and had weekends completely free to sleep even more.

That was my life in the second semester of my freshman year as well. Again I say, all of

this sleep was rather wonderful.

My sophomore year was a bit different. I got a new position as an RA and I assumed the position of Editor of the GRIOT at BSS.

I was taking a normal course load at this time as well, but now I had more responsibilities.

Due to said responsibilities, I noticed a slight decline in the number of hours of sleep I got each night. It wasn't a big deal. I was still getting pretty good sleep each night.

But then came my junior year. Things drastically changed. My course load grew and so did my work load.

Classes were now at the 300 level and became much more challenging. The acquisition of multiple jobs and multiple responsibilities within those jobs make it seem as if there aren't enough hours in the day.

Well let me be the first to tell you:

there aren't. At this stage in my collegiate career, I have realized that sleep is elusive. It never seems as if you will get it, but when you finally do, you never know how long you will have it.

As I sit here and type this, I am thinking back on just this week, and I haven't gone to bed before 3 a.m. on any night. And I still have wake at 7 or 8 a.m. each day.

The days get really long in your junior year, but I wouldn't have it any other way. I enjoy having a full schedule. It makes me feel accomplished when I am able to complete the tasks.

Still, that all being said, I would love to go to sleep for a reasonable amount of time, but I still have things to do tonight. But when I do finish, I will climb into the bed and sleep like a rock for hours and hours, and wake up refreshed tomorrow morning for the first time in a long time. Now that's something to look forward to.

Creative Corner

Sanity: A conversation

Katherine Price

I don't think I have it all the time
In fact I'm sure of it
Too many times I've had these thoughts:
 "Am I jealous?
 Of what?
 Of who?
 Why is that?
 When did this happen?
 Why can't I shake this feeling?"
I sound crazed
But it drives me nuts
I'm convinced my sanity has long since left me
 Could there be two sides to me?
 On one side: my crazy thoughts,
 bouncing off padded walls in my head
 The "insane" me
On one the other side: level-headedness,
 A collected individual
 The "sane" me
 An obvious facade
So what am I to do with myself?
Because I can't escape these feelings
 My brain won't let them go
 And I would really like for it to
 But I don't have to ability to
Nothing can be done to resolve this
 May as well call it day now
 Today, the battle has been lost,
But tomorrow proves this war isn't over

The next issue of the GRIOT will be published in September 2010.

If you would like to contribute to the GRIOT send articles, drawings, poems or short stories to bss@lamar.colostate.edu

Visit the Black/African American Cultural Center in 204 Lory Student Center.



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Office Hours: 8:00 am— 5:00 pm

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