

diversity 2006 – 2007 lecture series XII

2006

October 18, 2006



Sherman Alexie

Author, Poet and Screenwriter

“Without Reservations: An Urban Indian’s Comic, Poetic & Highly Irreverent Look at the World”

Sherman Alexie is a prolific novelist, poet and screenplay writer. A Spokane/Coeur d’Alene Indian, Alexie grew up on the Spokane Indian Reservation in Washington State. He teaches while he entertains reaching audiences interculturally and intergenerationally. Following the publication of his first book, *The Business of Fancydancing*, Alexie was described as “one of the major lyric voices of our time” in *The New York Times Book Review*. His work is portrayed as “cutting to the heart of the human experience.”

Alexie’s screenplay, *Smoke Signals*, based on his book, *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*, is the first feature film produced, written and directed by American Indians. He is working on the screenplay adaptation of his novel *Reservation Blues*. *Men’s Journal* called him “the world’s first fast-talking, wisecracking, media-genic American Indian superstar.”

2007

February 7, 2007



Nikki Giovanni

Poet, Author, Activist

An Evening With Nikki Giovanni: Reflections on Race

Nikki Giovanni is one of the most widely read American poets, recognized for her use of poetry to inspire individual change and growth. She is deeply committed to human rights, equality, and the understanding of art both as the reflection of society and as its accompanying influence. Giovanni has written more than two dozen books, including children’s books and essays. Her book *Racism 101* includes bold controversial essays on the situation of Americans on all sides of various race issues. She insists on telling the truth as she sees it, maintaining her place as a strong voice for the Black community.

Giovanni’s three most recent volumes of poetry, *Love Poems*, *Blues: For All the Changes* and *Quilting the Black-Eyed Pea*, were winners of the NAACP Image Award. Currently she is a University Distinguished Professor at Virginia Tech, where she has taught writing and literature.

March 14, 2007



Paula Crisostomo

Social Activist, Community Leader

The Struggle for Equity in Education: A Defining Moment in Chicano History

Paula Crisostomo, as a high school student in the ‘60s, led 20,000 Chicano students from five East Los Angeles high schools in the first major protest against racism and standard teaching in their schools ever undertaken by Mexican-Americans – a watershed in the struggle for equal rights. Her story has been made into a 2006 HBO movie, *Walk Out*, directed by Edward James Olmos. The story, told through Crisostomo’s voice, illustrates a seminal point in the fight for educational equity in the Chicano community.

This event has also been the subject of numerous books and featured in the PBS documentary *Chicano: Taking Back the Schools*. Crisostomo is the Director of Government & Community Relations for Occidental College in Los Angeles, providing leadership and direction for the college’s community outreach, including local and federally sponsored services and government relations.

March 21, 2007



Vali Nasr

Author, Professor, Consultant

The Many Faces of Islam: Conflict, Faith and Politics (Location: Fountain Street Church)*

Vali Nasr is a leading expert on the Islamic world and Muslim politics. He has advised Congress senior policy makers, and often lends his expertise to CNN, BBC, *Newshour with Jim Lehrer* and NPR. As a consultant to the Department of State, he has provided testimony to the U.S. Senate and is a major contributor to the ongoing public debates on such critical issues as Islam and democracy, Islamic extremism, anti-Americanism, America’s relations with Iran and the war in Iraq.

A Professor and Associate Chair of Research at the Department of National Security Affairs at the Naval Postgraduate School, Nasr is the author of several books on politics and Islam, most recently, *Democracy in Iran* and *The Shia Revival: How Conflicts Within Islam Will Shape the Future*. Nasr offers a singular understanding of conflicts within Islam and their potential global effects.

For information, please call (616) 234-3390.

- Free and open to the public, however due to limited space, seating will be on a first-come basis.
- Small fee for on-campus parking.
- *Lectures begin at 7:00 p.m. in the Grand Rapids Community College Applied Technology Center Banquet Rooms (corner of Fountain Street and Ransom Avenue) unless otherwise noted.
- A book signing will follow Nasr’s lecture.

Bob and Alecia Woodrick
Diversity Learning Center
Grand Rapids Community College