

RAMP ED

Director's Message

After 20 years of working for the Reading, Advising, & Mentoring Program, I am still inspired by the work we all do both within the program and across campus to help students attain their goals. Regardless of our status on campus, we each play a role in the students' college experience. RAMP participants take time out of their days to participate in program events and services including attending on and off-campus cultural events, weekly tutoring, group peer mentoring, and book club to name a few. RAMP tutors, several of who start off as participants in the program, have expressed their pleasure in serving their peers. The staff and faculty from various departments and offices at Cal Poly work together to coordinate and improve RAMP services. RAMP is the result of several pieces working together to meet the program mission and student goals.

For all that each one of you do to contribute to the RAMP participants' college experience, "Thank You!" A special thank you to Academic Programs and Foundation for sponsoring ten RAMP participants and tutors to attend the 25th Annual Unity Luncheon (photo below).

Calling 2017 Graduates

RAMP's annual Graduate Recognition Luncheon will take place on Thursday, May 18 at Kellogg West. In preparation, we request that RAMP students notify us if they are graduating in 2017 (winter, spring, or fall). Please email ramp@cpp.edu and specify what quarter you expect to graduate.



L to R: Esmeralda Velasquez, Denise Guevara, Matthew Potes, Alfredo Raygoza, Sarah DeAgüero, & Paulina Gonzalez at the Unity Luncheon

Winter 2017



RAMP participants attend *Motown* at the Hollywood Pantages

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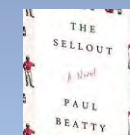
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"Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body."
Joseph Addison

LRC Corner

On January 31st, Cynthia Greco, Bronco Tutoring Coordinator, said good-bye to the LRC as she embarked on a new position at California State University, Northridge (CSUN). Cynthia began working for RAMP as a tutor fall 2004. The following fall, she began as an advisor for RAMP. In August 2014, she separated from RAMP but did not stray too far serving as the LRC's Bronco Tutoring coordinator. Cynthia now serves as the Student Achievement Coach for the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences at CSUN. While the LRC staff is sorely missing her, we know that Cynthia will be successful in her new position and CSUN is fortunate to have her.



Top image: Cynthia Greco with her husband, Martin

Bottom left: Cynthia, Rachel Dominguez, Dustin Johnson, & Len Vandegrift

Bottom right: Tutor & Peer Mentor Job Fair advertisement



Tutor & Peer Mentor Job Fair

The LRC Tutor & Peer Mentor Job Fair will be held week 1 of spring quarter on Tuesday, March 28, 11:00am-2:00pm. Representatives from several programs including ARCHES, Bronco Tutoring, EOP, MEP, Pre-College Programs (Educational Talent Search, Upward Bound, and Upward Bound Math/Science), University Writing Center, and RAMP will be recruiting for tutor and peer mentor positions. Depending on each program's needs, students may be hired to begin spring, summer, or fall 2017. RAMP will be recruiting for reading tutors/peer mentors to begin fall 2017. For information on the RAMP application process, visit <http://www.cpp.edu/~ramp/apply.shtml>.

RAMP Attends *Motown* at the Hollywood Pantages

In collaboration with our sister program, ARCHES, the Reading, Advising, and Mentoring Program traveled to the incredible Hollywood Pantages Theatre to witness the theatrical phenomenon *Motown: The Musical*. RAMP is so adamant about attending cultural events because as RAMP participant Carissa Tang aptly stated, “being in a theatre with hundreds of people watching, experiencing, and interacting with one another can not truly be recreated in a traditional classroom setting.” RAMP is dedicated to broadening the educational horizons of students beyond the university setting and exposing them to the wealth of culture in the surrounding community.

As we descended from the bus with twenty RAMP participants, the glamour of old Hollywood nostalgia engulfed us in an atmosphere of neon lights, the bustle of pedestrians, and the star painted sidewalks. We walked into the art-deco inspired theatre adorned in gold and silver ceilings and two dramatic staircases draped in red velvet carpet harkening back to the glory days of Hollywood luxury. RAMP Tutor, Wayne Page finds, “that the Pantages Theatre is a mystical place and just being in the building provides its own unique experience.”

As we sat in our seats, the lights dimmed and a group of singers burst onto the stage in shimmering gray suits to the rhythm and blues style of



RAMP Director, Laura Ayon with RAMP Participants, Jimena Estrada & Leslie Martinez

the early 1960's. The performers broke into a soulful number, gyrating to the classic Motown sound designed to bring the melodies of black music to mainstream America. One definitely felt transported to a different time period, as if watching a live Motown concert of that era. According to RAMP participant, Angel Perez, “the music was so cleverly picked to fit into the plot and it was sung so beautifully, that it seemed like it was sung by the artists’ themselves.” Audience members shouted praise with every high note and precisely choreographed dance move and sung along to their favorite Motown hits. RAMP participant, Jimena Estrada commented, “the performers were very talented and I appreciated the way they involved the audience throughout the show. My favorite part of the show was when everyone joined hands and began to sing along to Diana Ross’s song, *Reach Out and Touch Somebody’s Hand*. In a time when it feels like politics have been pulling people apart, it was nice to be surrounded in an atmosphere that was projecting kindness.” The elaborate costumes, period hairstyles, and film reels lent a certain authenticity to the performance, placing the audience within the historical

context of early Motown.

The play centered on the exploits of Motown founder, Barry Gordy, a struggling songwriter who risked family, reputation, and relationships for the dream of establishing a black-owned record label. The play begins with Gordy, who used the hit song he wrote for Jackie Wilson as a springboard for starting his own company. Motown was unique in creating an atmosphere of competitive excellence and artist development that churned out a litany of hits and successful artists such as: Stevie Wonder, Marvin Gaye, Diana Ross, Smokey Robinson, and Teena Marie. Gordy created an atmosphere at Motown that was very competitive. Although this competition spurred innovation, it also tended to pit artists against one another, creating internal fissures between artists and management. The meteoric success of Motown eventually led to its downfall. Many Motown artists were lured away by larger record labels offering more lucrative contracts. Although Gordy attempted to resurrect the former glory of the early Motown years by signing new acts with mass appeal, the company continued to hemorrhage money until it was ultimately sold to a larger record company.

Woven in between the incredible musical compositions were powerful references that highlighted how music not only influenced historical events but also mimicked and reflected events occurring in the broader society. RAMP participant, Devon Woodfine explained that, “not only was *Motown: The Musical*



Front row (L to R): Jimena Estrada, Tammy Wong, Ciara Bell, Danielle Labrado, Sarah Yoa, Ana Garcia-Lima, Massiel Cota, Angel Perez, Denise Guevara, Lauren Ramos, Laura Ayon. Back Row: Dustin Johnson, Keosha Johnson, Wayne Page, Kayla Williams, Ryan Kao, Carissa Tang, Andrew Russo, Peter Muhumuza, Sofia Carrillo, Devon Woodfine, Chris Ramos

entertaining and memorable, it also served as a lesson point on the not often referenced affect that Motown Records had on the advance of the Civil Rights Movement. Artists like Marvin Gaye, the Valadiers, and Mickey Woods were politically conscious of the injustices prevalent at the time, and boldly criticized U.S. behavior both domestically and abroad.” Carissa Tang remarked that if not for attending this event she would still be, “ignorant of the politics and symbolism of Motown, the music that imitates life and inspires art. Knowing that so many people were touched by and were nostalgic for what they enjoyed means a perpetuation of ideas associated with the music. This is the thing whose existence is political, but this is the sound. This is using a platform to spread more awareness, and this is the sound.” Many modern musicians owe a debt of gratitude to Motown performers who created space for politics in music; they proved you could remain true to your beliefs while still being highly successful selling artists.

The incredible amount of songs performed led to dialogue that was often limited and reductive.

Moreover, the play seemed to be highly reliant on the egotistical musings of Barry Gordy and often reflected his internal biases and a one-sided version of Motown history that often neglected the viewpoints of the artists. After all, Gordy never sang a note in his life but was somehow elevated to the stature of other renowned singers on the label, performing many of the most important numbers in the musical. Overall, the strength of the performance was the incredible vocal skills and choreography of the artists and the essential message of overcoming through music. As RAMP student, Sarah Yoa states, “the moral lesson of the play is that we are all people and that we should unite as one and love each other, and never give up.” Moreover, Motown was about connection. As Carissa put it, “Connection with the audience, connection with personal ideas, connection with the political movements, and connection with what can be affected with cultural representation.”



RAMP Director, Laura Ayon and Financial Aid Counselor, Crystal Steele.

Student Spotlight: *Esteban Molina*

Esteban Molina has been a RAMP participant for two years. He is currently majoring in History with a Pre-credential option. He chose History because he is passionate about it and wants to eventually become a history teacher and coach basketball. When asked how RAMP has influenced his college experience, he responded, “RAMP has helped me attend more campus activities, make connections with other students, and make new friends.”



According to Esteban, some of his favorite things about Cal Poly Pomona are, “the amount of resources available to students to help them succeed and graduate on time.” Moreover, he loves the BRIC because it has state of the art equipment and well maintained basketball courts. When Esteban is not studying, he loves to play basketball and watch NBA games. To relieve stress he says, “ I like to walk to the park and enjoy nature because it clears my mind of all stress.”

If Esteban could go back in time and give advice to himself as a freshman, he remarked, “I would tell myself to know exactly what to major in prior to coming to college. I entered as a business major and wasted time by not taking the history classes I needed to take as a freshman.”

Tutor Spotlight:

Sarayu Ramnath



RAMP Tutor/Peer Mentor, Sarayu Ramnath in Yosemite National Park for her summer internship.

In the fall of 2015, Sarayu Ramnath, an undergraduate student in Animal Science, joined RAMP as a tutor and peer mentor. When asked why she decided to apply to RAMP, Sarayu responded, “I was perusing the Kronos employment opportunities job website and I saw a paid tutoring opportunity listed,” and adds, “I had never heard of RAMP before, so I didn't know anything about the program. I applied, interviewed with Laura, Dustin, and Lauren and two years later, here I am!” RAMP Staff fondly recall Sarayu’s interview and how she won over their hearts with her wit and contagious humor.

Two years later, Sarayu is asked to reflect on what she likes the most about working for the program and replied, “It’s really hard to choose because I like everything about working for this program.” Yet, she is able to narrow it down to “many students on campus find it is a safe, supportive place to study. The tutors and staff are really phenomenal. We all work really well together as well as appreciate one another.” She

continues, “I love working with the students in the program and attending all of the events that this program offers (such as the Professional Spotlight, Book Club, and Crunch n Munch). I feel like RAMP is one big family, as cheesy as that is to say but I’m sticking to it!”

In addition to her involvement with RAMP, Sarayu is a contributor to the Women’s Resource Center’s production of the Vagina Monologues for the past 4 years. She finds her involvement rewarding because the Women’s Resource Center promotes, “empowerment, liberation, and self-love.” She also names diversity as one of her favorite things about attending Cal Poly Pomona and enjoys its small campus feel, despite its actual size.

Sarayu is earning her undergraduate degree at the end of winter quarter and plans to move to Northern California after spring break. “I just accepted an internship as a Marine Research Lab assistant with Point Blue, a conservation nonprofit based in the Point Reyes National Seashore about an hour and a half north of San Francisco,” she stated.

When asked if she could be a famous person for a day, she elects a certain controversial political figure to undo a lot the nation’s most recent executive orders and opt to work more closely with disenfranchised communities (all in one day). Her second option rests with a powerful female artist, Beyonce, “to experience what is it like to be a goddess amongst mortals.”

Sarayu’s presence and colorful personality will be deeply missed by RAMP.

Professional Spotlight: *Dr. Alvaro Huerta*



Dr. Alvaro Huerta speaks to RAMP Participants at Professional Spotlight event in the Bronco Student Center.

On Valentine's Day, RAMP welcomed Dr. Alvaro Huerta, faculty in Urban & Regional Planning and Ethnic & Women's Studies at Cal Poly Pomona, as the Winter 2017 Professional Spotlight. Dr. Huerta obtained his Ph.D. in City & Regional Planning from UC Berkley, his M.A. in Urban Planning, and his bachelor's degree in History from UCLA. Dedicated to his field, Dr. Huerta has contributed by authoring the book, *Reframing the Latino Immigration Debate: Towards a Humanistic Paradigm* (San Diego State University Press, 2013) and he is the lead editor of *People of Color in the United States: Contemporary Issues in Education, Work, Communities, Health, and Immigration* (Volume 4, Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO/Greenwood, 2016). He is also in the process of completing two additional book projects that focus on Latino politics and national immigration discourse and Mexican immigrants and their social networks in the informal economy.

During his presentation, Dr. Huerta discussed

migration as a universal human right and the need to shift the paradigm toward a more humanistic approach, but he also touched on his personal experience as a son of two immigrants from Michoacán, Mexico. His father, a day laborer, once took Huerta and his brother to work in Malibu. Dr. Huerta credits his work with his father as a pivotal moment that he decided to go to college due to the intensive labor he experienced. During the question and answer component of the Professional Spotlight, he was asked what made him decide to obtain his Ph.D and in response, Dr. Huerta mentioned his previous work in non-profit organizations and his desire to be in a better place to help, encourage, and educate those around him.

Dr. Huerta's talk can be found on RAMP's website: <http://www.cpp.edu/~ramp/our-services/professional-spotlight.shtml>

Students found Dr. Huerta's presentation to be inspiring and motivational. The following comments are from an anonymous survey:

"I am also a first generation American like Dr. Huerta. I feel like it is harder for me to graduate from college than other past generation Americans, because I have all the pressure in the world to be the first from my family to graduate. After hearing Dr. Huerta, he gave me more motivation and encouragement to continue and want to earn that degree. Attending the Professional Spotlight really helped me, because I needed some personal motivation."

"I feel that I benefited from the event because I got to see proof of a successful first-generation college student that now holds a Ph.D. and I feel that I learned from hearing of his experience."

"Dr. Huerta synthesized concepts from his background and with current events that made the talk more relevant to the conversation on our future."

"I benefited from the Professional Spotlight because it offered a perspective I was unfamiliar with. A perspective that involves immigration and someone who personally went through the process of immigration, be it themselves or a member of their family."

"Being present during the Professional Spotlight provided me an opportunity to realize and understand that, as a low income and first generation student, it is important to be educated to help out those who need help. It also makes me proud of being a student at Cal Poly Pomona."

RAMP offers a Professional Spotlight event fall and winter quarters. Speakers are typically from backgrounds similar as the students and share their story of perseverance. Lunch was provided by the Learning Resource Center.

RAMP Tutor/Peer Mentor *Selected for* Norman J. Priest Scholarship



RAMP tutor/peer mentor, Wayne Page, was selected as one of two 2016-17 Norman J. Priest Endowed Scholarship recipients. The scholarship is sponsored through the Foundation and "given to Foundation full-time student employees who embody the ideals of former Foundation Board member Norman J. Priest through their community service, leadership skills, and involvement in the Foundation." Wayne was recognized at the Foundation Board of Directors meeting on February 23rd and was presented with a trophy by President Coley and James Priest (Norman Priest's son). Congratulations on a well-deserved award, Wayne!

Book Club Reads *The Sellout*



RAMP Book Club Members Front row (L to R): Sarah DeAgüero, Tammy Wong, Lauren Ramos, Kathya Padilla-Tapia, Victor Romero, Cynthia Greco. Back Row: Jorge Lupercio, Jose Salcedo, Alfredo Raygoza, Dustin Johnson, Benjamin Rhee, Elizabeth Zangenberg, Rohan Mittal, Alfredo Lafarga.

During winter quarter, the Book Club read a comedic masterpiece called *The Sellout* by Paul Beatty. The novel is focused on a boy who grew up with a social scientist father that sacrificed many of his son's childhood comforts in the name of psychological discovery. His father was a proponent of real-life social experimentation to test his theories about race. Unfortunately, his son was often the subject of his controversial, and sometimes abusive experiments. The novel is set in the fictive town of Dickens (in what would be considered South Los Angeles), and is packed full of references to Los Angeles landmarks and lifestyle that made the novel familiar to many book club members. The main character, Sellout, is transformed from an urban farmer, disinterested in politics, to a staunch advocate of social engineering, when his father is brutally murdered by police. Sellout inadvertently follows in the footsteps of his father, when the town of Dickens loses its designation as a city.

In the midst of widespread gentrification in Los Angeles, many cultural enclaves were renamed

in an attempt to boost property values. However, Dickens was not merely renamed, but removed from the historical record. "One clear South Central morning, we awoke to find that the city hadn't been renamed but the signs that said WELCOME TO THE CITY OF DICKENS were gone" (58). Sellout began his experiment modestly by demarcating the boundaries of Dickens in white chalk and making replicas of old freeway and city signs that once bore the Dickens name. This simple action restored a sense of pride and belonging in the Dickens residents. He soon moved on to the more ambitious social experiment of segregating local city buses with signs saying, "Priority Seating for Seniors, Disabled, and Whites." Initially, the signs caused outrage among riders but soon, "people were treating each other with respect. Saying hello when they got on, thank you when they got off. There's no gang fighting" (163). Charisma, the local middle school assistant principal, noticed the profound impact of the segregated buses on

the people of Dickens. She remarked, "It's the signs. People grouse at first, but the racism takes them back. Makes them humble. Makes them realize how far we've come and, more important, how far we have to go" (163). The segregation signs on the bus proved to be so successful that Charisma agreed to let Sellout institute segregation at her middle school because, "Look, we've tried everything: smaller classrooms, longer hours, bilingual, monolingual, and sublingual educations, Ebonics, phonics, and hypnotics. Color schemes... Nothing works"(166). Sellout began building a fake "whites only" school directly across from the Dickens middle school. He created a fake poster and construction site for The Wheaton Academy Charter Magnet School of the Arts, complete with pictures of affluent white students engaged in state of the art learning. Six weeks after erecting the fake school, grades improved and behavioral problems declined. Perhaps the new generation had forgotten what real segregation looked like and implementing elements of Jim Crow served as a historical reminder of how race was enforced by custom, space, and law. Beatty describes the psychological impact of the fake all-white school by saying that there was a deeply ingrained, "colored person's desire for the domineering white presence, which the Wheaton Academy represented" (208).

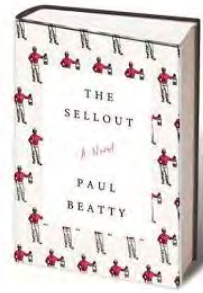
Book club members struggled with the ethical dilemmas provoked by a black man attempting to reinstate segregation as a means for community improvement. Moreover, what caused the positive effects of segregation on the community, the cohesion and cultural pride caused by isolation, or the specter of a "domineering white presence" haunting Dickens residents, keeping them in their place? At times, members were confused as to whether or not the author endorsed segregation as a

tactic or was using segregation as a platform to explore the internalization of racist stereotypes. However, whether or not we agreed with Sellout's strategies, the novel forced us to examine themes of gentrification, cultural appropriation, internalized racism, and how different groups of people of color often replicate tenets of white supremacy in their interactions with each other. Most importantly, the character Hominy, (an exaggerated real-life caricature of racist sambo/mammy imagery used historically to justify racism against African Americans), forced readers to come to grips with the power of visual racial imagery and its use to perpetuate power, enforce separation, and create public policy.

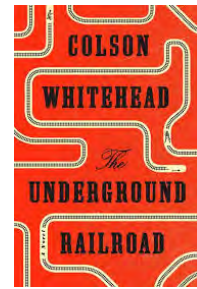
The book ends with a black comedian ejecting a white couple in the audience from the building because the show was for "blacks only." Sellout says he wished he stood up to the man and asked, "So what exactly *is our thing?*" (288). Possibly, the author compels us to first understand exactly who we are before embarking on any mission of social improvement. Maybe, the crux of any social movement starts from within, through self-examination. But, perhaps the most poignant inspiration of the novel is Beatty's insistence that we theorize from the vantage point of comedic analysis, which makes provocative topics deemed too controversial for mainstream discourse accessible, and at times, downright hilarious.

Next quarter, RAMP Book Club will read *The Underground Railroad* by Colson Whitehead. Spring Book Club will meet on Thursdays during U-hour on week 3, 5, and 7. "In Whitehead's ingenious conception, *The Underground Railroad* is no mere metaphor—engineers and conductors operate a secret

network of tracks and tunnels beneath the Southern soil. Cora and Caesar's first stop is South Carolina, in a city that initially seems like a haven. But the city's placid surface masks an insidious scheme designed for its black denizens. And even worse: Ridgeway, the relentless slave catcher, is close on their heels. Forced to flee again, Cora embarks on a harrowing flight, state by state, seeking true freedom." – Amazon.com



Winter 2017 Selection



Spring 2017 Selection

Financial Aid & Academic Success Workshops

Managing Test Anxiety	1/17
FAFSA/ CA Dream Renewal	1/24
Exploring Scholarships	1/31
Writing Killer Scholarship Essays	2/7
Exploring Scholarships	2/16
Stress Management	2/21
How to Keep Your Financial Aid	3/2

In collaboration with ARCHES and EOP, RAMP offered five financial aid and two academic success workshops. Spring 2017 Financial Aid & Literacy Workshop schedule will soon be available on our website:

<http://www.cpp.edu/~ramp/events.shtml>

Congratulations

RAMP Tutors/Peer Mentors, Nyla Simjee, Sarayu Ramnath, and Tammy Wong for their contribution and participation in the 2017 Vagina Monologues production.

Photographed from L to R: Nyla (red skirt), Sarayu (white jumper) and Tammy (white sweater)



Winter 2017 RAMP Tutors/Peer Mentors

Rutilio Alvarez	Sarayu Ramnath
Sarah DeAguero	Alfredo Raygoza
Alice Lu	Nyla Simjee
Jasmine Martinez	Rachel Walker
Wayne Page	Tammy Wong

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