Dear CCDE Community:

Happy Spring! We all need a bit of a break from #snowmageddon2019!

This quarter we held our second "Generation Mixed Goes to School" Listening Party. This community engaged research project is in partnership with my co-author Allison Briscoe-Smith and funded in part by the Royalty Research Fund. In the student interviews, conducted early last fall, we talked about racial identity in schools, discipline, curriculum, and support for parents. The Listening Parties feature clips from the students on topics like discipline, affinity groups, and identity markers. We will host one more listening party on May 22nd, and to find creative ways to disseminate what we are learning from these inspirational youth.

Our community of scholars has been busy presenting research papers, workshops, and books throughout the country, on topics such as interrupting microaggressions, radical listening, and digital storytelling. Shout out to CCDE scholar and former research assistant, Marcus Johnson, for passing his qualifying exams; and he was in good company with Anna Lee Swan, a Communication Ph.D. scholar, and member of Communication and Difference Research Group.

Our Interrupting Privilege seminar partnership with the Master’s of Library Science (MLS) Program last quarter was a great success, and we hope to continue our partnership in the future. We are currently preparing for another iteration of Interrupting Privilege with our partners at the UW alumni association.

continued on pg. 2
We will bring together UW undergraduate students UW alums across our area to discuss and think through the challenges to equity that they are facing in their communities. We are also continuing our IP partnership with the Masters in Communication Leadership Program. If you are interested in finding more about these partnerships, email us at cnde@uw.edu.

In addition, we are working hard on organizing our annual conference, entitled “Racial Categorization & the 2020 Census,” June 5th and 6th. We will highlight scholarly and community engaged work on the topic, and explore how definitions of race change to accommodate or contest power. The Keynote lecture on June 5th will feature professors Christina Mora (UC Berkeley), Kim Williams (Portland State), and Nazanin Lajevardi (Michigan State) on the historical and political impacts of the Census. The following day we will have a series of panels of scholars, activists, policy makers, and journalists that will speak to these and other specific challenges of the 2020 Census, and will end with an interview between CCDE associate director and journalism professor Andrea Otanez and Gov. Gary Locke, who is in charge of the Census 2020 for Washington state. The goal of this Conference is to not only learn about to Census, but to collaboratively find ways to speak back to the Census.

We hope to see you at our Spring 2020 CCDE Events!

In solidarity,

Ralina Joseph, Ph.D.;
Director, Center for Communication, Difference, and Equity

The CCDE strives to be a space where our community of students, faculty, staff, and alumni gather to promote greater equity. Through research collaborations, networking opportunities, action-oriented classes, mentorship programs, and community engagement we engage in dialogue to think critically about race and its intersections, to interrupt privilege, and ultimately to change the structures of power around us.

If you are interested in supporting our work, contact us at CCDE@uw.edu.
UPCOMING EVENTS

"Generation Mixed Goes to School" Listening Party
May 22nd, 5:30-7:30, Kane 220

Annual Conference: Racial Categorization & the 2020 Census
June 5th and 6th, Ethnic Cultural Center
More information coming soon

Lecture “Memory and Place,” by Morehshin Allahyari, Trinh Mai, Sara Zewde, and Priya Frank, for conversation and art on the UW campus.
April 3rd, 7:30, Kane 130,
RSVP Required: https://events.uw.edu/c/express/1f1097c7-f5c6-4b4f-93fb-42b7a4a08297

RealTalk Tuesdays for UW Graduate Student, alternate Tuesdays, 11:30-1, CMU 129

RealConnection Thursday for UW Undergraduate Students, first Thursdays, 3:30-5:30, CMU 129
ACKNOWLEDGING A PAINFUL PAST
By Meshell Sturgis
CCDE Research Assistant

On January 14th 2019, a week before Martin Luther King Jr. Day, the Center for Communication, Difference, and Equity (CCDE) along with a host of campus partners, welcomed the Black History 101 Mobile Museum’s ‘Signature Series’ for two days in the Mary Gates Hall commons. Monday afternoon, Khalid el-Hakim, curator of the mobile museum, presented a lecture entitled, “The Truth Hurts: Black History, Honesty, and Healing the Racial Divide,” where he spoke about several of the items on exhibit. The message of mobile visit: although the truth hurts, we must look at the history made evident by the 150+ artifacts on display to fully understand the importance of great Black leaders like Martin Luther King Jr.

The lecture juxtaposed modern day instances of racism in offensive university mascots, party themes, and political campaigns alongside old advertisements for soap. Performing a media analysis of the advertisements, el-Hakim traced the imagery of black-face, where a young boy is scrubbed “clean” by the soap except for his “dirty” face to global advertisements for bleaching creams and then to modern day Dove soap commercials. Our own media scholar, Dr. Ralina Joseph, has similarly looked at the ways in which the images in our media carry racist tones in today’s world, like the Serena Williams cartoon or the image drawn by a child at Roosevelt High School. Regarding that image, drawn for the cover of the Roosevelt High School newspaper, Joseph states, “The student who made this illustration might very well not harbor any racial animus, but his drawing… show[s] how easy it is to spew the racist stereotypes that live deep within all of us … not because we’re ‘bad’ people, but because we live in a society that is racist” (2019). Having el-Hakim visit campus to talk about the history of racial divide in our country, is just one of the ways that the CCDE works to helps students learn how to unpack racism while at school, not just the racism of the past, but the kind present in our modern day lives as well.

From shackles, whips, and hoods, to photographs, newspaper articles, and autographs, the mobile museum filled the large study space with visitors and passersby all stopping to take in the artifacts that document the painful past of our country. el-Hakim’s visit and lecture resisted an over-commercialized national holiday, which precedes Black History Month in February. In remembrance of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., el-Hakim spoke about the Reverend’s bibliography, noting the lesser known works by Dr. King including Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story (1958) and Why We Can’t Wait (1963). He encouraged students to not just celebrate the man’s life, but to expose themselves to the reasons why he is celebrated. Furthermore, el-Hakim drew attention to those less remembered like Harry Belafonte and Elijah Muhammad asking students to celebrate those who worked in concert with Dr. King. el-Hakim’s campus visit critically asks how celebrating Dr. King’s on a sanctioned day, might allow some to participate in the false notion that racism is “solved” or “no longer” which is clearly not the case. While there is a discourse building around what is true and what is false, the Black History 101 Mobile museum works to preserve certain truths, even when those truths hurt.
Anna Lee Swan’s article “Transnational Identities and Feeling in Fandom: Place and Embodiment in K-pop Fan Reaction Videos” was published in Communication Culture & Critique. Anna is a Communication Ph.D. candidate and member of Communication & Difference Research Group.

Meshell Sturgis, Communication Ph.D. scholar & CCDE Research Assistant, has presented in four conferences, including the Western Communication Association, where she presented our collaborative paper entitled “You Are the Whitest Black Person I Know: Interrupting Microaggression.” Her co-authors are Jenny Cai, Jhanelle Cadiente, Jhasmine Cadiente, Naheed Aaftaab, and Ralina Jospeh.

Anjuli Brekke, Communication Ph.D. scholar & CCDE Research Assistant, presented her paper “The Sound of Yellow Rain: Resisting Podcasting’s Sonic Whiteness” at the Society of Cinema and Media Studies.


Prof. Jennifer McClearen, will be an Assistant Professor of Sports, Media, and Culture, at Department of Radio-Television-Film at the University of Texas at Austin starting Fall 2019. She is a Communication & Difference Research Group alum.
WAS “CRAZY RICH ASIANS” TRULY A SUCCESS?
By Jhasmine Cadiente; CCDE Community Engaged Scholarship Fellow

I remember seeing the preview for this movie and the excitement I felt when I announced to all my friends and family that I would see it. The movie was released in U.S. theaters on August 15, 2018. After watching the movie, I was beyond happy and impressed. Even after that day, I went back to the movie theaters to watch this movie two more times. I loved this movie, but not everyone does.

In the article, “Crazy Rich Asians”: Director Jon M. Chu hopes to inspire other storytellers, open Hollywood doors," Chu describes his personal struggle of tackling his own identity, with his key message of the movie: “Everyone’s trying to find their place.” (Yamato 2018) With the movie being an all-Asian cast, it was almost certain that this movie would be a success all over Asia. However, this movie was the last thing that China wanted to see. Why? This romantic comedy had earned $173 million in the United States and was a hit in Singapore theaters, as this was where the movie was set, but China’s industry data show that the film made $1.2 million. (Rodeen 2018)

Although the film was a hit in the United States, the poor performance in China alludes to the current China-U.S. relationship, where Chinese film industry veteran Wei Junzi says, “‘you think you know about China, but in reality, you don’t.’” (Rodeen 2018) As this film had an all-Asian cast, this gained excitement for those abroad, but in China, as well as other places in Asia, an all-Asian cast is less valuable because they can see “all-Asian- faces” every day. Furthermore, the film displays extremely wealthy Chinese Singaporeans and their entitlement, which may have turned viewers away, especially in a country with a widening wage gap. (Rodeen 2018)

Another reason that the film did not perform well in China is that the government decides when a movie will open. According to the NPR story, “Why ‘Crazy Rich Asians’ Missed The Mark In China’s Box Offices,” Ben Fritz says, “it opened a few months after it did here, so, of course, piracy has been a big factor for people. People in China who want to see it may have pirated it online or via DVD.” Most people that truly want to watch a movie and cannot wait for it to come to theaters will find ways of watching it.

Although there are many reasons as to why this film was not as successful in China than it was in the United States, the bigger picture is looking at geographical and cultural differences. Personally, as an Asian American watching the film from the United States, I think that the storyline of the film, as well as the overtly extravagant and expensive lifestyle of the main characters, is entertaining.
I found myself excited to watch this movie and proud to be an Asian American. I found myself relating to Chu’s main message of trying to find my place, but this may not be the case for everyone. Based on where I was raised and the cultural norms of the United States, I find this film exciting and enjoyable. I feel like I can fit in because there are so many Asian Americans in the United States that long for representation, especially in cinema. I can say, “Wow, I’m so proud to be an Asian American,” after watching a successful movie like this one. How does that apply to people outside of the United States?

For Singapore, it was a hit because the movie was mainly filmed there. And, although the cast of this film was mostly Chinese-Singaporean, it dives into a different perspective than many people in China. Also, the film sparks pride in the Asian Americans living in the United States, but can be different for people outside of the country. As a film produced in the United States, there is the perception that it is no longer authentic. Disney’s 1998 animated classic “Mulan” is another upcoming film that is aimed at Chinese audiences, which boasts having an almost entirely Chinese cast. (Rodeen 2018) The success of this film, however, will be based on authenticity, as Wei states, “Will this be just another movie about Chinese culture, with you Americans’ own interpretation?” Chu may have been trying to reach Asian Americans, in which the struggle to find one’s identity in America is one faced by many, but he hit a dead-end when trying to reach those outside of the U.S.

References:


Photo credit: Sanja Bucko/Warner Bros. Entertainment, via Associated Press