

Pacifica Graduate Institute Alumni Weekend

Celebrating National Hero Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.



The Panel listen while Dr. Willow Young, Professor PGI shares her memories of the March on Washington



The Panel with Dr. Jennifer Selig, far right

THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SELMA TO MONTGOMERY MARCH,

a turning point in the civil rights movement, also became a moment to commemorate the life and work of Nobel Laureate Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., a national hero, brilliant scholar, peacekeeper, and orator.

“As the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, ‘The arc of the moral universe is long but it bends towards justice;’ and I am very appreciative of Santa Barbara’s many community leaders bringing us together during this holiday weekend to commemorate an American hero, remind us of our long history of fighting injustice, and encourage each of us to work towards positive social change for all,” shared SB Mayor Helene Schneider.

While a National Day of celebration was held January 19th in honor of Dr. King, the season of celebrating his life works began in early January with the release of the award winning movie *Selma*. Following that, Pacifica Graduate Institute joined numerous local organizations in remembering Dr. King and the historic events that surrounded his civil rights leadership.

A few of the organizations joining in area celebrations of Dr. King were The Santa Maria/Lompoc Branch of the NAACP; United Domestic Workers; The Martin Luther King, Jr. Committee of Santa Barbara; Santa Barbara Ring and Shout; Santa Barbara Women’s Political Committee; P.O.D.E.R.; The Fund for Santa Barbara, and Pacifica Graduate Institute.

Part of *Coming Home*, an alumni weekend celebration hosted by the Pacifica Graduate Institute Alumni Association (PGIAA) and Pacifica Graduate Institute (PGI), was a screening of *Finding the Gold Within*, on Saturday, January 17th. *Finding the Gold Within* is a new feature length documentary that follows students involved in a mentoring program, Alchemy, Inc., which uses mythology as a reference

point for discussions about social justice and personal development. Following the screening, a reception was held to honor its filmmaker, Karina Epperlein and the six young men at the center of the film. Alchemy Inc. was founded by PGI alumnus Dr. Kwame Scruggs. The screening and event were sponsored by the Fund for Santa Barbara.

During Coming Home’s Chancellor’s Reception, two people were honored for their community building work. Jill Griffin received the Wendy Davee Award for Service and CASA Publisher Mark Whitehurst the Chancellor’s Award for Excellence.

Pacifica dedicated Sunday, January 18th, to honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Following an invocation by Reverend Maren Hansen and introductions by Dr. Stephen Aizenstat, Chancellor for the Institute, Dr. Jennifer Selig gave a multi-media

presentation on Dr. King. It was followed by a panel discussion, moderated by Selig. On the panel were PGI Trustee Thyonne Gordon; SB Mayor Helene Schneider; First District Supervisor Salud Carbajal; Willow Young, Chair, Counseling Psychology, PGI; Aaron Jones, Asst. Director of Community Affairs, UCSB Student Services; Reverend Wallace K. Shepherd, Jr., Pastor, Second Baptist Church; CA State Senator Hannah-Beth Jackson; and Bernardo Nante, Prof. of Philosophy of Religion, *Universidad del Salvador* in Buenos Aires.

“I was present at the ‘I have a dream speech’ at the Washington Monument in 1963... I arrived on a bus,” described Willow Young, Pacifica faculty member. “It was a Wednesday, a working day... There was singing on the bus, singing at the event... It seemed like music was everywhere. There were old people, young people, and families on blankets... People brought picnics... Whenever Dr. King would speak, his



Darius Simpson



Reverend Maren Hansen



PGI Alumna Dr. Jeanne Martin



Finding the Gold Within student muses: Darius Simpson, Brandyn Costa, Imani Scruggs, Stacey Starr, Tyler Jones, and Shawntrail Smith with Filmmaker Karina Epperlein



Dianne Travis-Teague, Pacifica Director of Alumni Relations; 1st District Supervisor Salud Carbajal; CA Senator Hannah Beth Jackson; PGI Chancellor and Founder Dr. Stephen Aizenstat; SB Mayor Helene Schneider; Thyonne Gordon, PGI Trustee; and Bernardo Nante, Prof., Universidad del Salvador, Buenos Aires



PGI alumnus Dr. Kwame Scruggs with PGI Professor Dr. Ginette Paris

voice would boom.” Young was 13 years old when she participated in the famous March on Washington.

Each panelist was asked what they personally were doing to resist complacency and fulfill the “Dream.”

“Pacifica Graduate Institute began in Isla Vista nearly four decades ago.

Called into service to tend returning vets from Vietnam

as well as attending to the struggles of our community’s youth, Pacifica found it’s mission, *anima mundi collende gratia*, which means ‘for the sake of tending the soul in and of the world,’ related Pacifica Founder and Chancellor, Dr. Stephen Aizenstat. “From those early days as a counseling center, to today’s actuality as an established Institute of Higher Education, Pacifica continues in its commitment to social justice and global sustainability.”

Offering a dynamic response, State Senator Hannah-Beth Jackson shared, “Dr. King’s speech reached our highest ideals... calling us to be the best humanity allows... the call is to reach to become more than we are...what we aspire to.”

The weekend gathering of alumni was headed by Dianne Travis-Teague, Pacifica’s Director of Alumni Relations.

“Pacifica Graduate Institute Alumni/ae are



PGIAA Board President Tom Lyon, Dianne Travis-Teague, Pacifica Director of Alumni Relations; Wendy Davee Award for Service recipient Dr. Jill Griffin; and PGI Chancellor Dr. Stephen Aizenstat

tremendous forces in the world community. They help determine who, what, how, and when with dedication and commitment to make a difference for the sake of tending Soul in and of the World. For many alums, their Pacifica years serve as a cornerstone for career, business relationships, and community commitment. The numerous and varied contributions of our alumni/ae enhance communities worldwide with a rich tapestry of soul-tending,” Travis-Teague shared.

Written by the CASA Team

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