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Black History Month read-in celebrates diversity

By Tasawar Shah (<https://www.dailylobo.com/staff/tasawar-shah>) Published 02/20/18 8:55am

Editor's Note: In the original version of this article, Tracey Williams name and major were spelled incorrectly. That has since been corrected. The Daily Lobo apologizes for any confusion.

Project for New Mexico Graduates of Color at the University of New Mexico organized a "read-in" in honor of Black History Month.

Held Thursday, the event invited readers from all walks of life to read and share with the audience any kind of publication of their choice created by African Americans. The pieces ranged from political speeches to scholarly works.

PNMGC Project Assistant Glenda Lewis said she decided to host a reading event in observance of Black History Month, because it is "something that is currently not being done. It's something that allows students to use their voice."

"You can see many other kinds of events, but not reading. Therefore, I thought to work on it so that we can highlight and appreciate the literary works of the black writers and activists," she said.

Edith Sanchez-Saenz, the lead graduate project assistant, said the five speakers showcased at the event were randomly selected and anybody interested had the opportunity to read.

"The main purpose of the event was to contribute to Black History Month, but as you know we are a student-led program for the students of color, and we try to be as diverse as possible and be active in promoting actual respect to people from different ethnicity, race, languages and culture," Sanchez-Saenz said.

Mark Narvaez, another graduate project assistant at PNMGC, kicked off the event by reading an excerpt from former President Barack Obama's speech after the Charleston church shooting in 2015.

"I chose (the speech) with a purpose," Narvaez said. "As you know we (had) another similar sad incident of school shooting in Florida (recently)."

Tracey Williams, a biochemistry graduate student read Maya Angelou's poem, "Still I Rise," repeating the lines: "You may shoot me with your words,/You may cut me with your eyes,/You may kill me with your hatefulness,/But still, like air, I'll rise."

Peter Njagi, a graduate student from the Department of Language, Literacy, & Sociocultural Studies, read a satirical piece called, "How to Write about Africa" by Binyavanga Wainaina.

The piece read, "Africa is the only continent, you can love," but Njagi reiterated — do not forget to write about Africa's rainbows and renaissance.

Timothy Mondloch, an undergraduate in the psychology department, read an excerpt from a Fred Hampton speech.

"You can murder a liberator, but you can't murder a liberation," he read.

Brother Siddiq Abdallah and Zero Bey were the two speakers from outside the University. Abdallah read his original piece, "Black Love," while Bey read "Her Middle Passage" by Tamara Love.

After reading "Still I Rise," Williams said, "I hope that (the) things we did today resonate with you and when you walk away, it will be still in your mind and body and you learn to appreciate one another."

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