



HONORABLE MENTION

Volume III, Issue II

Spring 2007

Raving about the Symphony

"The performance was fabulous! Afterward I was fortunate enough to meet the conductor and one of the violin players!"

-Mary C. Drobnis

"I hadn't heard Scheherazade before. It was quite a nice piece, very "theatrical." The pre-show lecture was excellent."

-Anonymous

"It was a good performance. I grew up with classical music, so it was nice to go to a classical music concert again. Thanks for the tickets!"

-Anonymous

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HTCC Offers Students Unique Opportunities to Present Research



Back from left: David Resilien, Tracey Walker, Jennifer Cost, Cameron Cherry.

Center from left: Nathan Cleckley, Robert Gonzalez, Jolene Bourdages, Alison Primoza, Holly Hempel, Alex Uzdavines, Rebecca Bazzil.

Front from left: Phillippe Louis-Jean, Andre Da Metz

By Rebecca Bazzil, Mesa College Honors Student

Before becoming involved with the Honors Program at Mesa College, I never knew there were opportunities to conduct, present, and defend my own research at the community college level. At the annual Honors Transfer Council of California (HTCC) Student Research Conference held at the University of California (UC), Irvine this spring, I was able to do just that. It was my honor to simply be invited to be a part of this event, entitled "Building Bridges". This research symposium was an outlet for community college students not only to present their research, but also to meet and greet those important leaders, colleagues, and peers that will become part of our academic network. It was very rewarding for me to defend my months of research in the form of an oral presentation, and to have won the "Outstanding Abstract Award" for my project.

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The Gentrification of National City

By Andre Da Metz, Miramar College Honors Student

A year ago I was invited to attend the Honors Transfer Council of California (HTCC) Conference, which is held annually on the campus of the University of California (UC) Irvine. The conference is a place where students throughout California get the chance to present their work in front of an audience of peers. Topics presented at the conference range from a wide variety of ideas and issues.

I was invited to speak at UC Irvine on a topic of my choice. Immigration was the main topic of the issues forum. Having my own opinions about the issue, I wanted to bring new aspects to the debate, something widespread, yet not directly portrayed thoroughly by the media. So I found an issue that is happening in San Diego County. It is the issue of the gentrification of National City.

Gentrification by definition is when a low-income community is changed by developers to suit a more middle class taste. This process usually involves a migration of current residents who are forced out due to rising housing prices. National City is the second oldest community in San Diego County and 65% of its residents rent instead of own their own homes. With the median household income of National City residents being around \$33,000 (\$20,000 less than the national average) and the median housing price at \$430,000, leaves a dilemma for many residents who someday wish to own their own home. Naturally the housing prices of the entire county have been rising throughout the years. In fact, they have more than doubled since the year 2000. Foreclosure rates have been particularly high in National City and the city has done little to accommodate low income residents. For instance, out of the 376 new housing units planned by developers in 1999, only 9 of those units were built for very low income families. 34 units were built for low income families, leaving the majority of new housing units-- 249 for upper income families and 84 units for moderate income families.

I felt it was a good story, so I put hours of research into it. I tried to get various sources to enhance my argument. I read over government documents from San Diego, Chula Vista, and National City that I found at the UCSD Geisel Library. I looked over their municipal websites, which have their city minutes publicly available for all to read. I read the history of National City, which I obtained from the San Diego Historical Society and by visiting the historic archives and the National City's public library. I looked for relevant stories by reading the *San Diego Union Tribune* and voiceofsandiego.org. I set up a few interviews. One interview was with an Urban Planning professor at UCSD another with the Sweetwater School District and one with National City's Planning Department. At first I didn't know if I had a story or not, I had to find out if the poor were really being "forced out" if not purposely then inadvertently by new development. Then what are the City's plans for the future? I needed to determine if "gentrification" was really taking place that is if a migration due to financial pressure was indeed occurring.

National City depends on three main industries, the Navy Ship yard on its bay, the international port, and the National City Mile of Cars. These industries provide much of the financial resources to keep the city going. They also employ most of the City's residents. The median household income is set on the wages these industries provide and if land values increase without increasing wages then migration could occur. New development will bring higher paying jobs into the city, but will also attract employees who qualify for those jobs, so an answer will be in education. National City has built a new library along with educational training facilities, such as a branch of Southwestern College in its new education village in the city's downtown. This could be a solution that is provided by the government of National City. But, the question of gentrification and forced migration still remains.

Giving a lecture to an audience made me very nervous, even after the many minutes of practice and extensive research for the event. I had to speak for twelve minutes and after that I had five minutes to answer any questions the audience might have. I made a pamphlet that outlined everything that I planned to talk about because of the lack of a projector. My lecture seemed smooth, though I remained very nervous throughout my entire speech. Afterwards I was delighted to have people come up to me and ask me questions about my topic, a circle formed and people seemed very interested. Two girls told me that they were from National City and complimented me on my work. Another student asked me what she could do on behalf of the issue of gentrification. After spending much time on my work, having people interested in the issue I proposed made the time and experience well worth it.

What the Tour of the Tijuana Maquiladors Meant to Us

By Jessica Hurtado and Adriana Labrada,
City College Honors Students



Never have we been so affected by a tour like that of the “Tijuana Maquiladora Tour.” This tour took place on Saturday, April 21, 2007 as part an Honors class. During the tour we witnessed the effects of foreign owned factories in the communities of our homeland. Currently, Tijuana, Mexico consists of 550 *maquiladoras* (factories that produce equipment, materials, and components for foreign corporations). On this tour we visited Tijuana’s industrial area where Sony, Panasonic, Sanyo, Phillips and Pioneer factories are located. On another site, right above one of Tijuana’s impoverished communities, Ejidos Chilpancingo, stands the remains of the building of the “Metales y Derivados” maquiladora. This maquiladora recycled used car batteries and melted its remains into metal scraps. “Metales y Derivados” released extremely hazardous toxins into the environment’s air, water, and soil. Community activists began organizing to shut down the maquiladora. In 1994, “Metales y Derivados” was finally shut down.

A maquiladora owned by San Diego resident Jose Kahn, has caused \$10 billion dollars in damage. However, the damage has gone beyond this amount. The release of toxic waste is unrecoverable and has been affecting the community’s health to the extent that diseases caused by the toxins are now being passed through generations. Today, the impoverished community of Ejidos Chilpancingo, Tijuana, is embedded in land filled with lead, arsenic, cadmium, and antimony. These heavy metals that are also known to be carcinogens are increasing the occurrence of cancer in the community.

The most ALARMING part of visiting “Metales y Derivados” is that community activist organizations have not been able to contact any of the previous employees. Is there anyone that has survived the years of exposure to these chemicals from working at “Metales y Derivados?”

As student activists at San Diego City College, the hidden issues and the reality we have been exposed to about these foreign corporations has taken us on an emotional rollercoaster. We discovered that we felt angry, afraid and sad that this is a reality we continue to live with. We became angry towards the industry and the main facilitator of maquiladoras, a very well-known agreement referred to as NAFTA. We have become afraid because there is a continuous attack on communities of color, predominantly indigenous communities. Overall, a great feeling of sorrow is unsettled in our hearts. An important Nahuatl concept we have learned throughout the year and continue to live by is, “In Lak Ech” translated to “You are the other me.” However, the concept of “In Lak Ech” has a much deeper meaning; the sorrow that is unsettled in our hearts reflects how we are connected and the fight for human rights and justice for our communities is also our fight.

Thanks from a Former Mesa Honors Student now at Fordham University

By Miles Lelevier, Former Mesa College Honors Student

I recently transferred to Fordham University from Mesa College. I think the Mesa Honors Program had a big impact on my admission to Fordham and I want to thank you. Being part of the Mesa Honors Program did a great deal for me. Not only did it let me take part in some sort of club, but it was also very helpful when it came to things like providing a writing workshop for college applications.

In the Honors Program you are surrounded by a number of other students all in similar situations many of whom also plan to transfer. I feel anyone who has the opportunity to become part of this group should really take advantage of it. Everything was awesome. Thanks for having me as part of the Honors Program!

Honors Negotiates a New Transfer Agreement with Mills College

By Alison Primoza, Honors Transfer Coordinator

Negotiations with Mills College over the past few years have finally born fruit! City, Mesa, and Miramar honors students are now included in the recently signed honors transfer agreement with Mills College. Mills is a prestigious liberal arts college in Oakland, California, established in the nineteenth century for women. It now offers coed graduate programs. The campus is a beautiful forested oasis in the heart of Oakland. It has a great nursing transfer program and numerous other highly ranked programs.

For years, leading up to this agreement, negotiations took place between key members of the Bay Area Honors Consortium (a sub-group of Honors Transfer Council of California community college honors programs from Northern California) and the Dean of Admissions of Mills College. This group was able to gain concessions for their students with an informal hand-shake agreement. This agreement was limited to students certified by local Bay Area honors programs. When District Honors Transfer Officer, Alison Primoza, became President of the Honors Transfer Council of California, she made it one of her priorities to work out a signed agreement with Mills that would include all the honors programs in the HTCC, including Mesa, Miramar, and City Colleges.



This past February, this goal became a reality when she traveled to Mills College and worked with Mills Dean of Admissions, Debbie Woods and Provost Mary-Ann Milford to hammer out a final agreement that would benefit Mills College and California Community College honors students.

The purpose of the agreement is to enable students to make a smooth transition to Mills College—offering students enhanced advising and closely articulated course planning within the admission process. The agreement offers priority admission to students who have completed their honors program requirements (15 units of honors with a minimum transfer GPA of 3.25). It *guarantees* a renewable (contingent upon satisfactory academic progress) annual scholarship ranging from \$10,000 to \$12,500 to certified honors program students with a 3.5 or better GPA. They



have designated an honors liaison: Associate Dean of Admission: Transfer, to provide personalized transfer planning advice to HTCC students regarding Mills College admission and graduation requirements. They have also committed to providing HTCC students with beneficial services such as campus tours of Mills College, information workshops, financial aid and scholarship information, transfer counseling, pre-admission advising, and invitations to cultural events. Mills is great college for students who are looking for a small personalized college experience in a gorgeous setting. For more information on Mills College visit <http://www.mills.edu/> and take the photo tour. You can also contact Alison Primoza aprimoza@sdccd.edu 619.388.2351.



Left: SDCCD Honors Transfer Coordinator Alison Primoza (left) tours Mills College with a student guide.

Top left: The clock tower at Mills College.

Above right: The campus green and building.



Honors Encourages Both Mother and Daughters

By Debra London, Mesa College Honors Student

I began attending Mesa College when I was 41 years old. Now, at the age of 44 years young, I am graduating with an Associates Degree. I feel enormously privileged to have had the opportunity to attend Mesa College and participate in the Honors Program.

We are so incredibly fortunate in this country, and I am grateful every day for the amazing system of higher education that has been made available to me. I have made the most of every moment at Mesa, seeking greater challenges at every turn. In high school back in the 1970s, I believed that college was for other people, and that I was not worthy of a college education. It was neither encouraged nor discouraged in my family. My school did not have an outreach program for students who did not know how to approach college. I didn't even know why people were taking a test called the SAT. I thought the kids who knew about these things must be the ones for whom college was intended, and that I did not deserve that experience.

Twenty-seven years later, I am graduating and transferring to SDSU with the highest GPA possible and Honors classes as a bonus! The Honors Program has enhanced my experience at Mesa on many levels, not merely academically. It marked me as a student who seeks a higher level of instruction. It tells my professors that I am not just here for the credits, and that I value their experience and the information that they have to give. It tells the college that I am looking for more than the basics of an education.

The Honors Program challenges students, instructors, and faculty alike to be greater, to expand their creativity, and to seek a higher level of success. The Honors Program raises the bar for all who follow. The greatest honor of all is hearing my grown daughters tell me that I am inspiring them to stay in school and complete their educations.

Through College Algebra, writing assignments, and science experiments gone terribly wrong, we have supported and strengthened one another. We have shared so much together as parent and child, but sharing this experience, as adults together, has enhanced all of our lives and our relationships far beyond what most families can attain. This is yet another blessing in an already abundant life! When my family sees my accomplishments as an Honors student, their pride shows on their faces and fills my heart. I know that the Honors Program at Mesa College has forever impacted not just my own life, but the lives of those around me.

Changing Times, Changing Minds: Recollections of a City College Honors Student

By Alberto Li, City College Honors student

In San Diego's ever changing landscape, San Diego City College stands out as a beacon of inspiration and change for its students. With local issues such as immigration and labor, the City College Honors Program leads the way in progressive thinking and curriculum steeped in critical thought. This program, with its class size limits and specialized attention, helps to enrich the academic atmosphere of its students. Presentations from esteemed book writers such as Sonia Nazario, the author of *Enrique's Journey* and trips to Tijuana to discuss border and social issues with international study students at Cetus University, all play a role in the rich, fostering, and unique environment that is the City College Honors Program.

As an adult who had been away from formal education while serving in the military, I was a bit nervous about returning to school. I thought that the majority of the students would be fresh out of high school and perhaps lacking in the experience and maturity that many of the older students have gained. Well, it turns out I was very wrong and really was making assumptions and generalizations (one of the many things that the Honors programs works to undo) that were unfounded. The Honors classes turned out to be one of the most diverse learning environments I had been in. It seems like all the students in the program work full time jobs in addition to their extra honors work, making the group a hardworking and close knit learning team that help each other widen their understanding of the world through their ultra diverse backgrounds.

Honors Transfer Council of California Conference Worth Attending

By David Resilien, Miramar College Honors Student

I had a good time at Honors Transfer Council of California (HTCC) Student Research Conference held at the University of California (UC) Irvine. My presentation was about the Electoral College and I focused on the presidential election of 2000. I was a little nervous at first but ultimately everything went well. I didn't think the audience was going to be interested in such an obscure topic but they were.

At the end of the presentation members of the audience asked some very good and pointed questions.

It was a good public speaking experience. I recommend it to anyone who plans on having a future in teaching, politics, business, etc. It's good practice for any job that requires conveying your ideas to others and convincing them to agree with you.

Even if you don't make a presentation, the UC Irvine conference is a good event to attend as a spectator. After my presentation, I checked out other presentations. There are so many topics that there's bound to be something to interest everyone. After the presentations, you can talk to the presenters and meet people who share common interests.



What's Happening in Honors Contracts at Miramar College

By Krista Potter, Honors Program Assistant

Here's a sampling of some exciting projects:

- **In Administration of Justice, Honors students investigate forensic techniques in criminal investigations and compare them to media portrayals. Students also do research on the use of computers in criminal investigations and on community oriented policing.**
- **In Economics, students are researching globalization, its benefits, its drawbacks, and communication technology's effects on it.**
- **In Legal Research, students are studying the controversy of the federal income tax. Is it constitutional or not?**
- **In Political Science, students do research and present to class the theme "Green Politics: Ecology as Ideology," the history of its development and an analysis of its current situation.**



Hays Receives the Jack Kent Cooke Scholarship

Mesa College Honors Student Autumn Hays is the 2007 recipient of the Jack Kent Cooke scholarship.

A self-described "dreamer" Autumn will be transferring to UCSD to obtain an M.F.A. or Ph.D. in Art History in the spring of 2008. It is her wish to become an art professor and practicing artist.

Before Autumn was diagnosed with dyslexia and bi-polar disorder, she had been put into special education classes. Once diagnosed, she was retested and placed into Gifted and Talented classes. She has excelled ever since. Congratulations Autumn!

“Displace Me” Changed My Life

By Autumn Hays, Mesa College Honors Student

In the fall edition of *Honorable Mention* readers learned about a screening of *Invisible Children*, a film by three local San Diego college students, about the abduction of children into a rebel army in Uganda. This screening inspired the Honors Club and many other campus clubs and organizations to hold more screenings of the film to foster awareness, help promote a movement and spark a mission to change culture, police and lives. During our most recent screening, just two days before it was to take place, I became aware of an event that *Invisible Children*



was hosting called “Displace Me”. It was a protest to help stop the war in Uganda. My sister Abarisha Hays, our friends Marilyn Evenrud, Andrea Moran, fellow Mesa Honors student Kristin Care and I set out to one of the 15 designated places in the USA to join the over 68,000 people who were willing to become “displaced”. On April 28, at 3 pm, we arrived at the L.A. fairgrounds, armed only with what was requested of us: a sleeping bag, cardboard boxes, crackers, a water bottle and art supplies. We were asked to create shirts with a red X across the front and a photo of ourselves. The purpose of the event was to experience first-hand what it is like to be one of the 1.5 million people forced to live in refugee camps, to create an awareness of this, and to let it be known that we want peace.

wrist bands and a kit for the event. We dropped off our water bottles and saltine crackers for redistribution later and made our way to the open field. We found an open space and began to take our pieces of cardboard and construct a hut for ourselves to block out the sun. We realized quickly that this wasn't as easy as we had thought it would be. But, after some trial and error, the five of us managed to create a small shelter with enough shade to keep us from overheating. Once we built huts, we pulled out our art supplies and began to decorate them, putting messages on it about how we felt about the war. Already thousands of people were at the event constructing their shelters. It was an amazing sight to see –a large grassy field covered in box shelters –all of them creativity decorated.

The night held many treasures, such as speakers including Jason Russell (one of the film's creators), 21 minutes of silence for the 21 years of the war, messages from those in the camps explaining their gratitude and many more impacting events.

The crackers and water were redistributed in the way people in the camps receive food. Men got the crackers and women a water bottle. This was a bit difficult for us as we had no men in our group, but we managed to trade and we ate 1/2 pack of crackers each. We woke up the next morning to clean up our mess and write a letter to our local officials. I left this event changed. I was honored to be part of this experience and I don't want it to stop there. Kristin Care and I plan to start the Mesa College Invisible Children Club next semester in order to continue the movement that we have now become a part of. If you would like more information on *Invisible Children* and the “Displace Me” event please visit www.invisiblechildren.com.



As we entered we entered our site, we were given



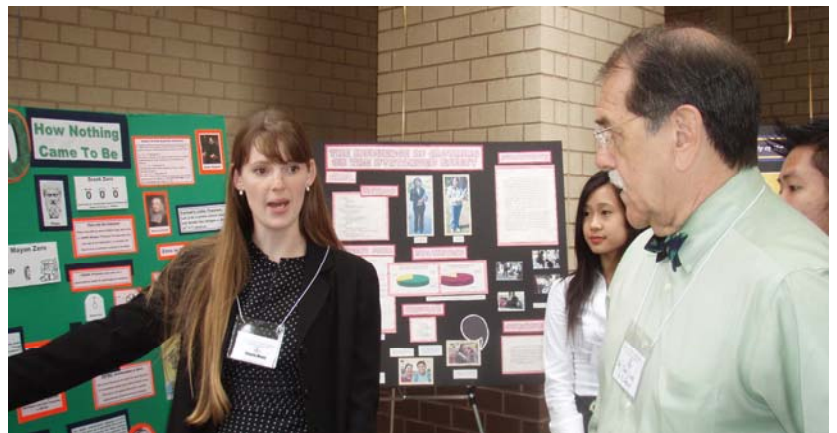
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It is my privilege to represent Mesa College for its achievements in the honors program, as well as the under-represented talent at the community college level. However, I was not the only one representing our colleges Philippe Louis-Jean and Kevin Davenport participated in the Issues Forum to discuss the pros and cons of Immigration and Border Security in a student panel debate format. Pierre Valdez won the 3rd place poster prize for his work. Melissa Vera, Ian Pilling and Rachel Lafavre, who performed Jean Paul Sartre's play *No Exit*, also set high expectations for future students at Mesa. experience.

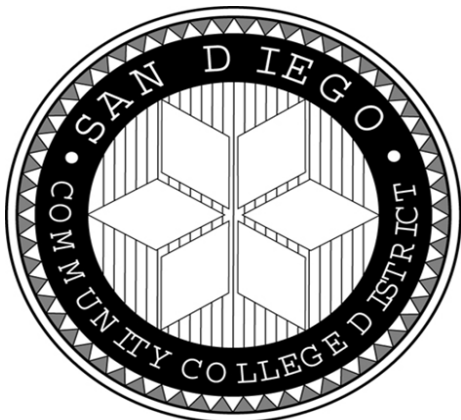
Porter, David Resilien, and Tiffany Starkey did an excellent job on their research. I heard from many of them what a fun and exciting event this was and that their 'bridges' to the future were now even stronger after having this experience.

My experience at the HTCC Research Conference was personally and educationally enriching. Education has always been a priority in my life, and I have always worked diligently to achieve my fullest potential. Universities like UC Irvine have upheld their responsibility to engage students at all levels in the learning process, and my life goal is to become a researcher and a professor who leads the way to the ideas of the future at a university such as UCI. Any program that helps students reach their full potential should be highly acclaimed and developed as best as possible. The Honors Program at Mesa College, Phi Beta Kappa and the HTCC are such opportunities that foster critical thinking and other skills that can be applied to many areas of life by exposing students to challenging ideas and new ways in learning.



Mesa College Honors Student Angela Muniz discusses her poster at the HTCC conference.

Top photo: Mesa Honors Student Pierre Valdez explains his poster to a student.




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