NCORE Conference: Five Days of Education

Asian Student Organization

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Between May 25 and May 30, eight students from Metropolitan State University attended the National Conference on Race and Ethnicity in American Higher Education (NCORE) in Washington DC. There, they learned about race and ethnicity, as well as leadership through workshops, lectures and networking. There were over 100 workshops and lectures, plus keynote speakers.

“NCORE strengthened my understanding of the dynamics of oppression at the individual, group, cultural and system levels,” said Abdou Manjang. “I am able to examine the impact of oppression in a global level … The experience made me focus on learning and developing my multicultural competencies in a social justice change agents.”

Shen Yang said leadership skills were on the curriculum at NCORE. “One of the workshops I attended was called, ‘Not My Race, Not My Problem.’ It was about how to be an ally and how to organize over social media using cross cultural networks.”

According to Yang, the seminars had varying attendance based on the topic being discussed. “Some seminars were half filled, some were packed, with people trying to listen from the hallway,” Yang said. “One such workshop, ‘Under the Affluence: Shaming the Poor, Praising the Rich and Jeopardizing the Future of America’ was like that. It was about how the poor get scapegoated as if we're living in a survival of the fittest type of society and those who are poor are not the fittest.”

NCORE provided attendees with a look at cultures outside of their own. Lee Vang attended one such workshop. “I attended a workshop on how to help and better understand Pacific Islanders,” Vang said. “I went to school with a few [Pacific Islanders] in high school, but always thought that they had a similar culture to mine. We do have similarities yet have our differences and their culture is very unique. There are many different types of Pacific Islanders and there are over hundreds of languages and dialects.”

Vang also learned about the ties bonding Pacific Islanders to their family. “They are the most family-oriented people that I know of. Their family is their priority and they will drop everything just to help out their family … Their stories were very inspiring because they were able to take care of family business and graduate with their PHDs.”

While students were able to learn about other cultures, NCORE also provided one student with the opportunity to teach others about their culture and ethnicity. “I’m glad that I attended this meeting because when I attended one of the workshops I was asked if I was Chinese, Vietnamese or Cambodian,” Valias Chang said. “I had to explain what Hmong people were and what my culture was like. I was happy to tell and explain the story of how Hmong citizens were brought over to the States and why.”

Keynote speakers can provide interesting perspective at conferences. “There were … keynote speakers in the main hall every day,” said Camellia Kalra. “One that I went to was with Adrienne Keene, the blogger behind, NativeAppropriations.com, speaking along with Suzan Harjo, a Native American activist who fought to get rid of a few racist sports mascots.”

This conference gave students the opportunity to interact with students from different universities. It helped provide opportunities for networking and building new friendships. “My first evening was spent attending the Student Scholars & Student Reception which was hosted by Georgetown University,” said Lisa Garcia. “The event was facilitated by the Southwest Center for Human Relations Studies executive committee members, honored their student scholars, provided an opportunity to network and discuss issues affecting students in higher education. The conference provided tour bus transportation to the University. During the ride I had the opportunity to get to know a little bit about Wisdom, a young black man from California. I later found out, during the award ceremony, that Wisdom was one of the student scholars and was helping to educate other young black men on his campus.”

Many students who attended the conference said they would recommend this conference because of its exceptional workshops, speakers, leadership and ideas. “I would definitely recommend this conference to anyone and everyone, especially to those who want to change the world for the better,” said Pang Cha Moua. “The sessions are very professional and you learn a variety of information from the amount of sessions the conference offer. I look forward to attending the National Conference of Race and Ethnicity again in the future so I can build on my knowledge and perspective even further, as well as meet more people and make more friends from a diversity of backgrounds.”

Photo: ASO Conference.jpg

Caption: ASO members pose at the NCORE conference.

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