Associated Students President stabbed in hate crime – it was a story that made national headlines and shocked many members of the Chico community.

Former Chico State A.S. president Joseph Igbineweka was featured on the likes of CNN and The Huffington Post after he was stabbed six times April 18, 2010.

Igbineweka, 23, was walking home from a party early in the morning when two men yelling racial slurs approached him. One assailant stabbed Igbineweka six times and both fled on foot.

Igbineweka suffered injuries to his neck, chest, abdomen and lower left arm where a major tendon in his hand was severely cut, disabling the use of his ring and pinky fingers.

Despite the event, Igbineweka, who moved from Nigeria to Richmond, Calif., when he was 14, said his outlook on diversity acceptance in the Chico State community hasn’t been tarnished.

“Anywhere you go you can get stabbed,” he said. “It’s not just confined to Chico State. I know for sure that’s not what Chico is.”

Although media coverage of Igbineweka’s stabbing described the crime as racially driven, student concern and reaction over the attack portrayed a community
intolerant of any sort of violence.

On the same day of Igbineweka’s attack, a Facebook community page titled “Chicoans Against Hate and Violence” was created as a forum for members of the Chico community to speak out against acts of violence in the community.

During the week following Igbineweka’s stabbing, 1,000 yellow armbands with messages such as “Get well soon, Joe” were distributed throughout Chico State and at events such as the Black Leaders on Campus unity rally and a candlelight vigil sponsored by the Peace Institute.

“I feel honored,” Igbineweka said of the support he received after his stabbing, but he hopes the community continues to have a unified voice against racial violence.

One of Igbineweka’s main campaign platforms as president was to bring better lighting to the campus and to the surrounding student-populated neighborhoods. He hopes that the attention he received from his stabbing not only helps reinforce lighting policies in Chico, but also prevents future attacks in the community.

“It’s something we need to speak out against,” he said.

Although Igbineweka has mostly healed, graduated and moved to Oakland, Calif., he still regularly visits Chico to see his doctor for his hand.

Recently, his doctor gave him the choice for surgery to transfer a healthy tendon to his left hand; otherwise his ring and pinky fingers would remain permanently curled under.

“I think I want to do it because I want my hand back,” he said. “I can’t lift anything heavy.”

Until then, he must use a rubber device that wraps around his hand to stretch and strengthen the muscles in his left wrist and hand.

As a result of his injuries and medical visits, Igbineweka has accumulated many health care expenses. While the Crime Victims Compensation Program and the Butte County Medical Services Program have helped to cover some of the costs, Igbineweka will have to pay for the rest out of his own pocket.

“I have to spend money to go to therapy,” Igbineweka said. “It’s probably going to cost me more now, because as soon as I go through surgery, I’ll have to quit my job for therapy. It’s frustrating.”

Despite all of this, Igbineweka has not let the stabbing and his injuries prevent him from moving on in life, he said.

Since the stabbing, Igbineweka has been enjoying the company of his visiting Nigerian family, especially his mother, whom he had not seen since he moved to California.

Currently, Igbineweka is working in San Francisco for the Department of Housing and Urban Development’s subsidized urban housing program for low-income seniors, many of which come from mixed cultural backgrounds.

Most of the people Igbineweka helps tend to stay within their own ethnic groups, and part of his job is to diversify the groups, he said.

“They want us to actually plan events with them and get them out of their apartments,” he said of HUD. “Our job is to actually make them feel at home.”

While Igbineweka enjoys having a set income working with HUD, he does not plan to pursue a career with it, he said.

“I think what I’ve done at Chico State is really reserved for something else,” he said.

He hopes to take a year or two off and prepare for law school.

“I always want to do something big,” he said. “I want to set a goal, something high for myself.”

Carter said his goal was for the 69 individuals to “step out of their comfort zones and to promote a pay-it-forward synergy” throughout the Chico State campus.

By the middle of day one, Carter
knew he would achieve his goal. He said he could already see many participants opening up and becoming more comfortable speaking amongst others.

One such faculty member was Stephanie Hamel, an associate professor of communication studies. Hamel said she had always been committed to issues of diversity in her classes and in her research, but she wanted to find something new at the summit to take back to her classes.

“I left totally committed to the integration of knowledge of diversity in my classes and research,” Hamel said.

Before the summit, Hamel said she had thought campus-wide efforts regarding diversity and integration were much more prevalent than they actually are. Throughout the weekend, Hamel and many other staff and faculty members came to the conclusion that diversity education efforts need to be increased.

“I realized that things have to change, and they have to change now,” Hamel said.

One of the most popular and informative components of the summit was the student panel. The panel featured seven students devoted to increasing diversity acceptance and awareness on campus.

Topics of discussion included integration of minority students on the Chico State campus and the hardships minorities face getting into and succeeding at college. The panel was asked questions such as, “If you got to run Chico State for a semester, what would you focus on?”

Krystle Tonga, a senior double majoring in sociology and political science, said she would focus on eliminating stigmas, educating people about access to resources, and unifying the Student Learning Center and Disability Support Services.

“Sometimes the best way to learn about diversity is to feel diversity,” said Ann Schwab, mayor of Chico and career staff member of Community Action Volunteers in Education.

Through listening to people speak about the hate they have felt through acts of discrimination, Schwab said she could feel their pain. She now sees the true importance of promoting open minds and understanding diversity in the CAVE office and its programs.

Schwab said she wants to spread knowledge that diversity is not always immediately apparent and that it is more than skin color or economic status. Schwab said she realized that being a high-achieving student or being blonde can also be diversity factors.

By the end of the weekend, Carter said he was more than pleased to have seen some of the quietest individuals at the beginning of the retreat break out of their comfort zones. He said he saw staff and faculty members make connections they wouldn’t have normally made on campus, and also saw a new passion ignited in the hearts of many individuals.

Tracy Butts, an associate professor of English and coordinator of multicultural and gender studies, said she wants members of the Chico State campus to know they do not need the permission of others to make the campus a more inclusive community.

“We each have an equal stake in Chico State’s future,” Butts said.

Butts said she is excited for the campus’s bright future and wants to see increased involvement from faculty and staff in diversity integration. She applauded Carter, Tray Robinson and Amy Hormann for their efforts in making the first summit such a success.

By the end of the weekend, minds had been altered, goals had been set and passion was inspired.

The success of this year’s summit has already led to the approval of plans for the 2011 Faculty and Staff Diversity Summit.
A mother of two boys, a young man who loved poetry, a 1-year-old child — many of the people commemorated on the 12-square-foot blocks of the AIDS Memorial Quilt might not have much in common, but they are all victims of the deadly disease that has claimed more than 25 million lives since 1981, according to AVERT, an international HIV and AIDS charity.

Twenty blocks from the quilt were featured on Chico State’s campus Oct. 20 and 21. The exhibit was free for students, faculty, staff and the Chico community to view.

The quilt is an ongoing project started in 1987 by the NAMES Project Foundation. Its mission is “to preserve, care for, and use the AIDS Memorial Quilt to foster healing, heighten awareness, and inspire action in the struggle against HIV and AIDS,” according to the quilt’s official website.

The quilt was brought to Chico State with support from the Office of Diversity and Student Health Service. Cathy Felix, director of Student Health Service, said having the quilt on campus is for raising awareness about AIDS.

“Bringing the quilt here creates a greater impact for prevention,” Felix said. “Students will see that AIDS still exists. Even though we don’t talk about it as much anymore, we shouldn’t forget about it.”

Sara Cooper, Chico State Spanish professor, encouraged her students to attend the viewing of the AIDS Memorial Quilt and the reception held Oct. 20 in the evening.

Society is bombarded with fleeting visual images and messages that leave people feeling disconnected from the world, even with an epidemic like AIDS, Cooper said.

“However, when we are given time to spend with very personal outpourings of love and memory and grief, we feel for the victims and those left behind,” Cooper said.

One of Cooper’s students attended the viewing of the quilt and was much more affected than she thought she would be.

“I thought the quilts weren’t going to portray the person and their life,” said senior Alexandria Fultz. “You could really see who the person was from the quilts.”

Bringing the quilt shows students that AIDS victims are more complex individuals rather than members of a category like “sick” or “well,” “gay” or “straight,” Cooper said.

The first day the AIDS Memorial Quilt was on campus coincided with Spirit Day, where people were encouraged to wear purple to honor the recent suicides of gay teenagers as well as the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, questioning community as a whole, Felix said.

She also expressed that having campus activities that raise awareness for social causes gives students a balance between schoolwork and will help them become more well-rounded individuals.

“My favorite quote is from John Dewey,” Felix said. “‘Education is a process of life.’”
A quiet place to study, convenient housing, support with school, help finding a job after graduation and a home away from home are all elements of a great college experience.

The Mathematics Engineering Science Achievement Program, a comprehensive recruitment, development, retention and graduation program at Chico State, provides this support and community to disadvantaged students. According to the MESA Engineering Program brochure, MEP encourages participation by student groups with low eligibility rates for four-year colleges.

MEP offers many programs from recruitment to admissions from high schools and community colleges to financial aid and scholarships, creating a comprehensive experience for students. MESA even has student housing in University Village to provide these students with housing options.

“In the past 10 years, $1.8 million in scholarships have been given to students in the college of engineering,” said MEP director Paul Villegas.

MEP offers a study area in the O’Connell Technology Center for students to use, which is open 24 hours a day. The study area gives students a quiet place to collaborate even when the library is closed.

“Students have to take two calculus classes and physics before they even get to the major engineering classes,” Villegas said.

Perla Garcia, a senior studying mechanical engineering, has been part of MESA since she attended Chico High School. She said the program has helped her in multiple ways.

“We have tutors, which are very helpful, and are constantly getting e-mails from Paul about scholarships that we can apply for,” she said.

While MEP offers many programs, one of the greatest benefits is intangible. MEP provides a network of students to study and build friendships with, Garcia said.

“It is great to have people who come from the same backgrounds as you,” she said. “It’s like a built-in support system.”

MEP recruiters also reach out to students who might not have thought about the benefits of being part of a support system like MEP, such as Juan Rocha, a senior civil engineering major. He was approached at the end of his senior year to attend Chico State and be part of MEP.

“I’m really glad I was recruited,” said Rocha. “This program helps students who have struggled and want to change for the better.”

Villegas said programs like MESA are important to Chico State because if the campus is not diverse then students aren’t prepared for the workforce.

“Diversity increases exposure to new cultures and understanding. We all learn from each other that way,” he said.
A GLIMPSE AT THREE NON-WESTERN RELIGIONS
A Celebration of Traditions, Beliefs and Values
By Jaclyn Persey

HMONG

While many religions are predominantly associated with some form of a god, the Hmong religion bases its teachings and way of life on spirits.

The Hmong Student Association composed of about 25 Hmong students, believe that these spirits affect the soul of each member of the religion and can pass from one world to another.

“Everything that happens in the spirit world is directly related to the human world,” said Teng Xiong, president of the HSA.

Hmong students view sickness as the soul being sad or scared. The only way to heal the sickness is to seek out a shaman, or healer, instead of Western medicine.

They also believe that even after a person passes, they are still present in the human world.

“Whether you are living or dead, your soul is still there,” Xiong said.

With such strong beliefs in the well-being of one’s soul, the HSA wants “to become an effective support group” where Hmong students can confide in one another, Xiong said.

In the past, the HSA primarily focused on informing high school students about the importance of a higher education.

“Since we focused so much on high school, we lost touch with our peers,” Xiong said.

For this reason, the HSA has decided to switch gears and allow Hmong students on campus to connect and eventually expand and spread knowledge of the religion.

“We are currently breaking down and rebuilding right now,” Xiong said.

MUSLIM

Chico State is home to a vast array of religious associations, one being the Muslim Student Association.

The MSA is a group of students who practice Islam, a religion designed around loyalty to Allah and the Five Pillars. Comprised of about 20 active members, the MSA aims to educate and introduce Islam to members of the Chico State community.

“The main problem is unintelligence associated with the religion,” said Rami Siyam, president of the MSA.

The Islamic religion began about 1,400 years ago when the Quran — the Islamic holy book — was revealed to the prophet Muhammad from the angel Gabriel. As the years passed, the Quran, along with information from the life of Muhammad, descended through generations making the religion what it is today.

This semester, during the last week of Ramadan, a month of fasting, the MSA hosted a Middle-Eastern dinner. More than 100 students, faculty and community members gathered to share the experience.

“The point of fasting is not just refraining from food and water, but a test of one’s patience and perseverance,” Siyam said. “Ramadan encourages equality.”

Muslims dedicate themselves to their community, family and others. They base their beliefs on sustainability, not wasting resources and equality. To members of the MSA, Islam and the Quran is their life, and they hope to bring it into their beliefs on sustainability, not wasting lives of others.

“Islam is not those five minutes of prayer, but your whole way of life,” Siyam said. “It is everything in life.”

Members of the Hmong Student Association perform a traditional religious dance during Multicultural Night in the BMU Auditorium.

The Cross Cultural Leadership Center provides members of the Muslim Student Association a quiet place to pray on campus.
Sikh

Immigrating to America means leaving one’s familiar culture; however, by moving to Yuba City, Calif., many Sikhs from India have been able to keep a few aspects the same.

Sharing a similar climate with the Punjab region of India, Yuba City has become one of the largest Sikh communities in America. Sikhs have moved to Sutter County for the agricultural land and to live near others of the religion.

“Because we have a different culture, we want to be close to one another,” said Charn Singh, founder and past president of the Sikh Student Association at Chico State.

Compared to Hinduism and Islam, Sikhism is a young religion, dating back about 500 years. Sikhs’ beliefs revolve around equality and following the teachings of their book, the Guru Granth Sahib.

Students of the Sikh Student Association and Sikh religion believe there is one God; however, there are many paths to him. They view their religion as a path for enlightenment.

“It’s living your life to having a purpose and a meaning,” Singh said.

A major component to the Sikh religion is “Khalsa,” or pure ones. Sikhs don’t believe in smoking, drinking or cheating. They want to keep themselves pure and make their bodies a temple.

For this reason, Singh explains that Sikhism can’t be practiced alone. It is a religion focused on support groups and family.

“Sikhism holds me up to the higher standards as I go through life,” Singh said.

Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Chico Celebrates 103 Years of Service

By Jennifer Leslie

There is a small white chapel that sits inconspicuously on the corner of Ninth and Linden streets. “Bethel A.M.E.” is painted in pink over the front entrance of the building, and to the right a placard reads, “Built in 1867, African Methodist Episcopal Church, Founded in 1907.”

The Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church is the oldest church building in Chico, and is registered with the state of California as a historical point of interest.

According to the “Blacks in Chico” historical collections of Michele Shover, professor emerita of political science at Chico State, Rev. James Grey formed the first church in Chico on four acres of land four miles north of Chico that were donated by Gen. John Bidwell in 1859.

In 1862, the four acres were exchanged for one half-block of land on what is now the corner of Sixth and Broadway streets, and a new church building was erected in 1867. Rev. Peter Powers, one of the first African American residents in Chico, joined the church in 1870 when it became the Methodist Episcopal Church, South Chico.

The church moved yet again in 1908 to the corner of Sixth and Flume streets and was renamed St. Andrews African Methodist Episcopal Church, and eventually moved to its current location in 1956, where it became the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal church.

Today, Bethel AME has about 60 members of its congregation and provides multiple services to the Chico community.
“Although we are a small church, we are a mighty church at heart,” Rev. Robin Hood said.

In addition to providing a meeting space for two addiction support groups, the church coordinates with The Salvation Army of Chico to give out baskets of food and other goods to members of the community during the holiday season, provides a backpack and school supplies giveaway, and will soon be returning to providing warm meals from their food pantry.

“We just like to be a beacon of light for the community, be there for people in need,” Hood said.

The church also hosts the annual black commencement program for Chico State graduates, and served as a meeting place for the establishment of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. monument at Community Park, said Charles Coleman, Bethel AME’s minister at large.

“For many years the Bethel church has welcomed people of various nationalities and cultures to participate in the worship services and other events,” Coleman said.

The Rev. George J. Strong, pastor of Bethel AME after its final move in 1956, helped the church become a center for civil action programs in Chico during the civil rights movement.

Although the African Methodist Episcopal name means that the church was organized by people of African backgrounds, Bethel AME is a place of great diversity, Hood said.

“We are a church fathered on the teachings of Jesus Christ and there is no color or ethnicity in Christians,” he said.

“That’s why we treat everybody the same and that’s why everyone is welcome to our services. If you need help, we look at the soul or spirit of that person – it doesn’t matter what your background is or where you’re coming from.”

Bethel AME celebrated its 103rd anniversary Nov. 14. For more information on the African Methodist Episcopal Church, please visit www.ame-church.com

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**The Burdens of Being An Undocumented College Student**

*By Melissa Duralia*

If an undocumented student wants to pursue a degree at a California public university, he or she cannot receive any governmental financial support and is required to finance his or her education independently. This situation is likely to make even the most dedicated student feel helpless, especially when tuition costs continue to rise.

Financial aid advisers at Chico State, like Elizabeth Alaniz, see the hardship this puts on students.

Many students facing this issue have lived in the U.S. since they were small children, Alaniz said. They see themselves as Americans who want to become an integral part of the U.S. workforce, she said.

To help alleviate pressure on undocumented students, AB 540 was signed into law October 2001 and allows qualifying students to pay California in-state tuition at public universities. AB 540 students must finance their own education, though, as they are not eligible for any financial aid.

Alaniz tries to look at both sides of the issue of amnesty in situations like this.

“If you look at the big picture, it will hurt us more if we do nothing than if we do take action,” she said. “Right now there are more undocumented students since more than 65,000 are graduating from high schools nationwide.”

According to the Chico State website, students may be eligible for AB 540 if they meet certain requirements, including having attended a California high school for more than three years and having graduated from a California high school or having received a GED certificate.

Students must also be registered or plan to register at a California public university and agree to sign an affidavit saying they will apply for legal residency as soon as they are eligible.
Unfortunately, even if a student qualifies for AB 540, this decrease in tuition is still not enough of a deduction for some families. There is no easy answer to this problem, but the proposed California Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act SB 1460, which was recently vetoed by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, could have been a step toward change. The passing of this bill would have enabled undocumented students to be eligible to compete for financial aid in California public universities.

At this point, most students rely solely on select scholarships for undocumented students in addition to community support, Alainiz said. Her church, St. John the Baptist Catholic Church in Chico, held a dinner and dance fundraiser to support undocumented students in September, but there is not enough of this type of support to go around, she said.

Teresita Curiel has worked for 15 years in academic preparation programs for seventh through 12th grade students, including the California Student Opportunity and Access Program and the Mathematics Engineering Science Achievement program. Her experience in the field of education has shaped her views about access to education for undocumented students, she said.

Young people who live in fear of deportation may think admitting they are undocumented by signing the AB 540 affidavit is a huge risk, she said.

“Are we going to punish youth in a time when we should be looking for ways to invest in them, so as to improve their futures and the California economy?” Curiel asked.

If students are able to find the means to pay for tuition, their problems do not stop there, Curiel said. Many undocumented students hope the system will change by the time they graduate, but most are not holding their breath.

Upon graduation, undocumented students have only a few options: move back to their country of origin where they can legally work, concentrate on moving through the immigration process, an often time-consuming process that can take years to maneuver through — or simply live in fear of deportation, hoping for amnesty.

It is a complicated waiting game for undocumented students, because even if they are able to finance their college education, their hands are still tied after graduation.

To Qualify For AB 540:

- Attend a California high school for three or more years.
- Graduate from a California high school or receive the equivalent General Education Diploma.
- Register as an entering student or be currently enrolled in a California Community College, California State University or a University of California.
- In the case of a person without lawful immigration status, sign a statement with the college or university (not with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services) stating that they will apply for legal residency as soon as they are eligible to do so (this requirement does not apply to those with legal residency).

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