

The Whole World is....

One World

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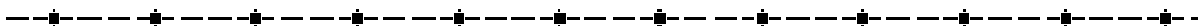
Fall/Winter 2010

CULTURAL CROSSROADS CALENDAR

Throughout the year, Cultural Crossroads presents a variety of programs, all designed to focus on the commonalities that cross cultures and unite peoples. Some programs are designed for children, some for intergenerational audiences, and some (like the discussions during the *Cultural Conversations* series) are intended for adult and older youth. All programs are presented in an interactive, participatory manner and foster imagination and the opportunity for sharing with others.

See the inside pages of this issue for reports on “The *Other* 1492” and “Observances of Death” – programs presented during October of this year – and other events.

Below are the programs remaining on our calendar this year. In addition, be sure to check our website at www.culturalcrossroads-kc.org/Calendar.html for a listing of events of multicultural interest throughout our area.



Monday, Nov 8 – “Dolls of the World” exhibit opens for two weeks at the Riverside Library.

This popular exhibit presents a fun and novel way of learning about different cultures.



Thursday, Nov 11 – “Fremont, USA” is an acclaimed film

produced by The Pluralism Project of Harvard University, about Fremont, California, one of the most culturally and religiously diverse towns in the United States, and follows the experiences of its citizens, as they learn about each other and find ways to live and grow together. A general discussion of the issues presented will be discussed after the film. Free showing at 7 pm at the Plaza Library, 4801 Main, KCMO.



Saturday, Dec 4 – Benefit Bookfair at Barnes & Noble Plaza Location – it’s a perfect

time for your holiday shopping and entertainment throughout the day while helping support our educational programs! Volunteer your time and talent or just stop by to purchase a book or a cup of coffee and say “hello” to our staff. **Shop online, too: bn.com/bookfairs from Dec 4–Dec. 9.**



Monday, Dec 6 – “Dolls of the World” exhibit opens for two

weeks at the Blue Ridge Library. By working with Mid-Continent Library system, we are able to bring these exhibits to locations around the city.



Thursday, Dec 9 – “Winter Holidays” concludes the year-long *Cultural Conversations* series at the Plaza Library. So many

cultures have important holidays and holy days during this time of the year...and most of them include the concept and ritual of “light” as an integral part of the celebration. This free program at 7 pm explores the diversity of many holidays of winter – and the common themes.



Sunday, Nov 21 – Interfaith Thanksgiving Dinner at

Johnson County Community College; Cultural Crossroads is a cooperative partner with several other community organizations. See details on our website and reserve tickets at www.JCCC.edu/ShopJCCC (Conferences and Workshops).

THE “OTHER” 1492 – A WORLD IN TURMOIL

Presentation by Barb McAtee

Cultural Conversations: October 14, 2010

The standard American story of 1492 is a social myth* that has been taught to most grade-school children in the United States for many generations. [*Ed.note: A myth is defined as a story embodying cultural history in a cultural context, which is intrinsic to that culture. (Joseph Campbell, in “The Power of Myth” with Bill Moyers, says “Every mythology has to do with the wisdom of life as related to a specific culture at a specific time.”) Such a myth conveys a culture’s “truth”-- no particular social myth is necessarily “right” or “wrong” but is commonly interpreted solely through the lens of a cultural context.] That mythology is peopled by several standard characters of American lore: the “fearless explorer” or the “primitive Indian” or the “freedom-seeking Pilgrim” – among other and later figures (like the “romantic cowboy” of the late 19th Century, a figure still portrayed in film today). The people of 1492 and our subsequent history were not so two-dimensional, however, nor was the historical climate so simple as these cultural myths would indicate.



In her presentation, Barb McAtee stressed the complex social environment of the late 15th Century, its root causes and long-lasting effects, and the importance of such elements to the standard myth of 1492. The historical context of Columbus’ voyage of 1492 was inextricably affected by the tumultuous events of the times. Europe was just emerging from the Black Plague, the deadliest pandemic in history, which claimed 30-60% of the population of Europe and created a series of religious, social and economic upheavals: labor shortages led to higher wages and the rise of the middle class, fear of “the stranger” (fueled by the introduction of the Plague into Europe from the Crimea and the introduction of leprosy by returning

Crusaders) led to persecution and riots against Jews and foreigners and, eventually, in 1478, to Papal approval of the Inquisition. Constant wars had depleted royal treasuries and gold and silver were in short supply. Before Columbus’ first voyage, Europe had about \$200 million worth of silver and gold (or about \$2 per person); by 1600 C.E., there was eight times that amount in circulation and money superceded land in providing power & prestige. The invention of the printing press provided for the spread of new ideas. In Spain, the Moors were defeated, ending a period of relative security for the large Jewish population. The ascent of Ferdinand and Isabella began the period the so-called “Spanish Expulsion” during which Spain’s large Jewish population were forced to either convert or be expelled.



The effect on Europe of Columbus’ landing in the Americas was probably more profound than a quicker route to the Orient (the original intent) would have been. Notwithstanding the many myths regarding the primitive nature of indigenous society, the Native Americans actually had achieved sustainable agriculture and the Europeans took many of those hitherto-unknown items back to Europe. The cultivation of crops in the New World caused a food revolution in Europe. In fact, eventually, three-fifths of the world’s crops came from New World, with 300 major foods being introduced into the European diet: potato, tomato, cultivated rice, coffee, chocolate, beans, squash, maize (corn), numerous fruits, berries and nuts, and spices unknown in the Orient. The availability of these foods, following the devastation of the wars and plagues of the 14th and 15th Centuries, created a new (and healthier) diet for the European population.

Early stories/myths about the native population of the New World are now known to have been incomplete: that the natives were hunter-gatherers without civilization or agriculture or that there was a sparse population. In fact, the native population had complex agriculture and civilizations. Early estimates were from 1 to 1.5 million people on the North American continent, but we now know that the population of Central Mexico shrank from 25 million to less than 2 million in the first century after Columbus. There was an estimated 90% decline of native populations over entire continent of North America. In most cases, because of the extensive trade networks of the native populations, European disease reached many tribes before the explorers made direct contact.

Throughout her presentation, Ms. McAtee provided handouts with a wealth of statistics and suggested a variety of books on the subject. (See box below this article.) She also raised questions for the participants to ponder and led a discussion among the participants, in which people shared their knowledge of the subject, their viewpoints, and suggested further reading.

Some of the probing questions she raised are: Can Columbus' voyage really be considered a "discovery" since there were people here – and since he was not the first non-American to reach North America? Who were the real savages and who were the civilized people? Who should write history? How should history be portrayed in school books? The presentation and the discussion among the participants did not presume to find final answers to these questions, but all agreed that it is necessary for us to look beyond our cultural myths and find a more balanced interpretation.

The "Other" 1492 – supplement

Barb McAtee's recommended reading list includes the following. She also suggests double-checking dates which appear in any particular published "timetables of history" book:

Axtell, James, *Beyond 1492: Encounters in Colonial North America*
Finkelstein, Norman H., *The Other 1492 – Jewish Settlement in the New World*
Jennings, Francis, *Invasions of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest*
Weatherford, Jack,
Indian Givers: How the Indians of the Americas Transformed the World
Native Roots: How the Indians Enriched America

In addition, one of the program participants brought and recommended this book:
Menzies, Gavin, *1421 – The Year China Discovered America*

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Speaking of books....

The Cultural Crossroads bookfair on SATURDAY, DECEMBER 4, at BARNES & NOBLE on the Country Club Plaza would be an excellent time to purchase interesting books.

If you are unable to come to the store on December 4, you can support our educational programs. Shop online from December 4 through December 9 by going to www.bn.com/bookfairs and enter our Account No. 10301703 with your order.

THANK YOU!

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“OBSERVANCES OF DEATH” Commiversity class: October 27, 2010

During the last week of October, as many in the country were preparing for the observance of Halloween, Cultural Crossroads staff presented an overview of the differences and the similarities in which several cultures observe death transitions and observances. The focus of Cultural Crossroads education is the commonalities shared by diverse cultures and death is, perhaps, the greatest commonality we all share. While not all cultures could be adequately addressed within the short time span of a one-night class, the

discussion included aspects of the Latin American *Día de los Muertos*, the Celtic celebration of *Samhain* (in many ways, the precursor of today's Halloween), Jewish customs (including the observance of "sitting shiva"), the various cultural and cross-cultural elements of Christian/Catholic customs, the basis of observances in the Baha'i Faith and Islam and customs found in various areas of Asia, including India, Japan and China. Small displays were used to illustrate how departed loved ones are honored through the *ofrenda* of *Día de los Muertos*, the *suidhe na mharbh* ("seat of the ancestors") of *Samhain*, and the often-commonplace displays of personal items which frequently appear in the typical home, all of which serve to keep us "connected to" those who have gone before us.



Ofrenda commonly include photos, candles, flowers and momentos, a *suidhe na mhardh* includes a place setting for the ancestors and candles and may include a photo and other items, and a personal display (which may be on a dresser or other furniture in the home) will generally include photos and personal items of loved ones.

“READING & RHYTHM”

Cultural Conversations: August 12, 2010

Cultural Crossroads staff read traditional “teaching” stories of universal ideas and taught dances from other cultures at the August *Cultural Conversations* at the Plaza Library. The evening coincided with “open house” night at the major school districts, so *Reading & Rhythm* presented an alternative for succeeding groups of young children. This program has been a favorite Cultural Crossroads program and has been presented in schools and libraries across the metropolitan area. Most cultures use stories, fables or myths as means of transmitting key concepts across the generations.

“TALK TO THE WORLD”

Cultural Conversations: September 9, 2010

All languages express the same concepts and just knowing some simple courtesy phrases can provide a bridge to people of other cultures. The *Cultural Conversations* program in September was *Talk to the World*, where people meet to compare and to learn, using language as a bridge, rather than a barrier. *Talk to the World* has been presented at benefit bookfair at Barnes & Noble – Plaza in October of 2009, at the Independence Heritage Festival and as a Communiversy class. It is now being developed for presentation in schools and libraries.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 4 - BENEFIT BOOKFAIR

BARNES & NOBLE on the PLAZA

Join us there - buy a book - drink a latte - be a volunteer !

EVEN IF YOU CANNOT COME TO THE BOOKFAIR ON DECEMBER 4, YOU CAN SUPPORT US BY SHOPPING ONLINE FROM DEC. 4 – DEC. 9:

www.bn.com/bookfairs (Account: #10301703)

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BECOME A MEMBER OF CULTURAL CROSSROADS !

To join our vision and make a difference for tomorrow, please complete this coupon and send with your check to: Cultural Crossroads, Inc., 3605 Blue Ridge Blvd, Independence, MO 64052

I/We believe in Cultural Crossroads' vision of a world of mutual respect among all peoples and support multicultural education programs designed to achieve that world and enclose the following contribution:

Individual (\$25.00) Family (\$35.00) Other (\$_____)

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Please send newsletters by regular mail email

Thank you for your support of our educational programs!

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Go to our website at <http://www.culturalcrossroads-kc.org/Newsletters.html> to read past issues of the *One World* newsletter and to see photos from past programs and festivals. Be a Fan on our Facebook Page at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Cultural-Crossroads/51570888935?ref=ts>.

Call or email if you can volunteer and be part of the fun! Cultural Crossroads offers opportunities for involvement as volunteers, board or committee members and, as a 501c3 organization, all donations are tax-deductible. (It's easy to donate to Cultural Crossroads online through the Greater Kansas City Community Foundation by using this link: <http://gkccf.guidestar.org/NonprofitProfile.aspx?OrgId=790>)

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