

Sociology panel debates labor

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The Dolores Huerta Labor Institute visited Pierce College to bring awareness to student involvement in the labor force Wednesday, November 16.

The institute created a new initiative called 'Students Educating Piers'(StEP). Pierce students created posters expressing their perspectives on the labor force, according to Executive Director Shiguero Julio Tsuha.

"We can only thrive with student and faculty involvement," said Tsuha. "When individuals are actively involved, we can become real producers of knowledge."

A group of panelists including Emir Estrada, Dr. Jake Alimahomed-Wilson, Dr. Glenda Flores, Dr. Rebecca Romo, and Dr. Charles O'Connell, were invited by sociology Assistant Professor James McKeever to speak for 10 minutes on behalf to the institute.

Each panelist gave their perspective and shared their graduate dissertations on domestic labor with an emphasis on culture, racism, and sexism within the labor force.

Dr. Rebecca Romo was the first panelist to speak, for which she shared her personal experience as a single mother attempting to pay her way through college until she was finally able to achieve her PhD. Romo highlighted that without government services such as Women Infants and Children (WIC) as well as federal grants such as the Pell Grant; she would not have been able to complete her college career.

"If we allow these programs to be continuously cut, my story will be come more and more rare," said Romo.

Emir Estrada described her investigative research on Latino street vendors throughout Los Angeles, and the impact this underground form of labor has on the families and the culture. Estrada focused on the gender perspective of children street vendors of immigrant Latinos between the ages of 13-18.

Dr. Glenda Flores shared the primary aspect of her dissertation which brought to light racial tensions in inner city due to an influx of Latina teachers in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). Flores explained language barriers and standardized testing are the primary causes of racial tensions in the student-teacher relationship.

Dr. Jake Alimahomed-Wilson presented his theories on masculinity, or lack there of, in the labor force. Alimahomed-Wilson stated that some make workers feel introduction to women in the labor market is the cause of the destabilization of masculinity in male dominated careers.

The last panelist to speak was Dr. Charles O'Connell, a sociology teacher at Pierce, who primarily focused on labor in the public sector of the economy, emphasizing the decrease in unions since the Industrial Revolution.

The Dolores Huerta Labor Institute plans to hold events at all nine Los Angeles Community Colleges twice a semester beginning in Spring 2012.

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