

California State University, Long Beach Carpenter Performing Arts Center

Project Title

Banned, Blacklisted and Boycotted: Censorship and the Response to It (The B-Word Project)

Applicant Organization and Contact Information

Carpenter Performing Arts Center
California State University, Long Beach
Michele Roberge, Executive Director

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Project Overview

California State University, Long Beach (CSULB) and its partners will explore the issue of censorship through a variety of artist residency, performance, and classroom, and community activities.

Key Outcomes

- Increased understanding and appreciation for what the Carpenter Performing Arts Center (CPAC) has to offer both the campus and the local community. We anticipate that perceptions of CPAC will change over the course of the project.
- Mutually beneficial and sustainable collaborations between CPAC, academic departments (i.e., professors and students), campus organizations, and off-campus entities.
- Increased discourse about, engagement with, and knowledge of censorship in art, science, and mass communication.

Project Partners (Campus and Community)

Arts Council for Long Beach
California State University, Long Beach
Carpenter Performing Arts Center (CPAC)
Associated Students, Inc.
University Art Museum
Center for First Amendment Studies
Department of Dance
Cole Conservatory of Music
Department of Art
Department of Philosophy
Department of Philosophy
College of the Arts
Provost's Office

Artists (Visiting Artists, Faculty Artists, Student Artists, Community Artists)

The artists to be involved in this project have all dealt in one way or other with issues of censorship and limits on artistic expression:

Bill T. Jones, Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company
Holly Hughes, performance artist
John Fleck, performance artist
Karen Finley, performance artist
Tim Miller, performance artist
Negativland, musicians
Ken Gonzalez Day, artist
Judy Chicago, artist and performer
Sweet Honey in the Rock, singers
Girl Talk, musician (pending)
Patssi Valdez, artist (pending)
Kenneth Anger, filmmaker (pending)

Project Summary Narrative

Banned, Blacklisted and Boycotted: Censorship and the Response to It (The B-Word Project) is the first major interdisciplinary collaboration led by the Carpenter Performing Arts Center (CPAC). The topic was selected for its potential to integrate curricula and events in a meaningful way, enrich the university's scholarship and service activities through the thoughtful introduction of relevant guest speakers/artists, and position the theatre as an active participant in academic programs. The role of CPAC has evolved during the process of crafting this project. Initially, it served as a catalyst/convener, soliciting interest from diverse areas. Now, CPAC's role has expanded to include partner/collaborator in this capacity; it will coordinate all activities and facilitate productive relationships among partners.

The Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company will reconstruct a piece from their repertoire. Reading, Mercy and the Artificial Nigger, based on a short story by Flannery O'Connor; and will engage dance, theatre, music and comparative literature students. During the rehearsal process, company members will be in residency, guiding the students through the same creative process used to create the work and using Mr. Jones' choreography to portray and comment on the characters and plot of the story. Censorship issues will be discussed in relation to the story, title and characters of the piece.

Negativland, a three-member band famous for making music in defiance of copyright laws, has felt the burden of censorship and was sued by the band U2. Negativland will lecture and demonstrate their creative process in a Music course, and will perform a concert for the general public. This course will also be visited by Girl Talk, a musician who specializes in remixing pre-recorded music. Girl Talk will demonstrate his creative process for the class in a workshop setting: students will then create a new piece of music which may be used for new choreography by dance students. Sweet Honey in the Rock is an internationally acclaimed a cappella ensemble steeped in the sacred music of the Black church and songs of the struggle for justice everywhere. These singers will perform on the CPAC stage and also engage students and general public audiences with workshops and conversations.

The NEA 4 (Tim Miller, John Fleck, Holly Hughes, and Karen Finley) are performance artists whose grants from the NEA were rescinded in 1990. Calls for the elimination of the NEA and the decency clause enacted by Congress resulted in great public uproar. Individually, their performance art deals with controversial issues, sexuality, freedom of expression, and artistic integrity. They will perform and work with students in COMM441, History 486, Philosophy 361, and the Visiting Artist Program in the Art Department.

Several existing courses and the Visiting Artist Program will be modified to maximize the benefit of visiting artists, and new courses will also be offered. Censorship and Body Politics in Dance will take the form of readings and research, cross-modal assignments, lectures, guest speakers, artists in residence, dance making/art making, field trips to exhibits and performances. Digital Ethics will look the evolving effect of the Internet on free speech, the arts, and the concept of intellectual property, studying remix culture and artistic appropriation. The musicians of Negativland and Girl Talk will conduct workshops within this course on digital music. Chicano Latino Studies 490 and Art History 458 will look at the work and legacy of muralist David Siqueiros. Behind the Devils Rope: The Merritt Garden Project will explore the gardens created in Japanese internment camps in WWII. Censoring the Cinema will screen films and study the Hollywood Blacklist of the 1950s and films censored for anti-war, sexual, obscene and/or indecent content. A film screening and panel discussion on the censorship of the theory of evolution will be offered for biology students and general public.

Expected Outcomes and Evaluation

(1) Increased understanding and appreciation for what CPAC has to offer both the campus and the local community. We anticipate that perceptions of CPAC will change over the course of the project. Specifically, faculty, staff, students, and community organizations and members will become more familiar with CPAC events and the benefits of bringing artists/speakers to campus. More people will come to see CPAC events as relevant to their own professional and personal interests.

(2) Mutually beneficial and sustainable collaborations between CPAC, academic departments (i.e., professors and students), campus organizations, and off-campus entities. We anticipate that over the course of the project, CPAC will facilitate partnerships between various campus and off-campus stakeholders. For example, CPAC will work with faculty to identify artists whose work compliment and augment course curriculum. The goal here is to develop and strengthen sustainable collaborations, ones that can extend over time, well beyond the time frame of the proposed project.

(3) Increased discourse about, engagement with, and knowledge of censorship in art, science, and mass communication. We anticipate that as a result of this project more campus and community members will engage with the topic of censorship and that those already interested in the topic will find opportunities to engage at a deeper level. We believe that people will become more knowledgeable about various forms of censorship and improve their critical thinking skills.

To measure the project's success, Dr. Beth Manke, a CSULB professor in Human Development and program evaluator, will develop an evaluation strategy during the planning phase of the project and then oversee the implementation of evaluation activities in consultation with

program staff. The goal is to construct and put into practice ongoing assessments that provide regular feedback that can be used to improve/augment the project as it is being executed.

To maximize student involvement, Dr. Manke will offer a program evaluation course in conjunction with the project. Specifically, students, under the supervision of Dr. Manke, will use various qualitative and quantitative methods (e.g., online surveys, one-on-one interviews, focus groups, analysis of written documents, etc.) to collect information about the project's impact. Students will also be involved in data analysis, report writing and the ongoing presentation of findings to project partners. It is expected that as part of the course, students will also have the opportunity to address issues of censorship.

What follows are just three of the many evaluation activities that would likely be implemented to assess project impact:

A. Initial online surveys of all students and faculty to document baseline perceptions of CPAC and peoples' knowledge of censorship issues in arts, science and mass communication. Information from the baseline surveys would be used to develop/augment proposed project activities.

B. Analysis of written coursework to document student debates surrounding censorship and their engagement with the topic.

C. Focus groups with community members about their involvement with the Censoring the Cinema Film Series, performances and lectures. The goal would be to identify ways to facilitate community involvement in campus-based activities.

Working with Dr. Manke and the students in her course, the Project Coordinator will collect all written material related to the *B-Word Project* events including programs, surveys, course reports, and keep record of any artwork produced. Video recordings of all performances and selected activities will be made through the College of Continuing and Professional Education. Our goal is to create a video documentary of the entire project for on-campus distribution and to be included on the CSULB website as a recruiting tool.