

Cornel West dares students to question the status quo



Photo by Harper Spires - Contributing Photographer

Cornel West's speech this past Wednesday received a standing ovation from a packed Kimmel Arena.

West addresses justice, love and politics in a powerful performance

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A crowd of diverse patrons filled Kimmel Arena to hear **philosopher, activist and author Cornel West** speak last Wednesday.

"I felt it was much more diverse than many other events on campus, so that was wonderful to see," said **Ben Judge, a senior political science student**. "I felt the atmosphere was incredibly positive and that people were very excited to see Dr. West."

The attentive audience paid rapt attention to West's every word as he explained the nation's need for the Socratic method.

"I question America," West said. "It's not about finding right. It's talking about it and being engaged with one another."

West said the Socratic method is the only way to truth and real freedom.

"I agree with his point, because it is only when we can critically question our society that we are able to understand the truth and know what is going on in our world," Judge said.

There must be a relationship between thinking critically and shedding tears, West said. He said he believes in order to find the real truth you have to love.

"Love is the ultimate non-market value in a market-driven society," West said.

West also shared his other ideas about what a market-driven society does to its people. According to West, although class is a dividing factor, money isn't the biggest prize to be won.

"The fetishizing of money is the paraphernalia of suffering," West said.

West challenged the United States to take care of the nation's youth. He spoke about impoverished children who smoke marijuana and get into trouble with the law. He said the children aren't the problem; the problem is they are the only ones getting arrested for it.

"If the middle class was as endangered as poor kids who go to jail, then there would be a different conversation," West said.

West said children aren't given enough opportunities to do right, but plenty to do wrong.

"Young people can't get into being a productive society, because there is not opportunity," West said.

West saved his talk on politics for last. He covered the dangers of partisan political parties.

"Democrats just want to do what it

takes to set themselves apart from the Republicans," West said. "Has anyone actually engaged in Socratic questioning?"

Judge, a hopeful future political leader, said he agrees with West.

"The best way that our generation can apply Dr. West's view of a functioning democracy to modern political parties is by never settling for the status quo and constantly questioning the actions of political leaders," Judge said.

Questioning the rules and values is the only way to discover if there is any reasoning to back them up, according to West.

"I'm not for chaos or disorder, but why are we trying laws out?" West said.

West wrapped up his speech with a

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