

# Book launch at Elon has ties to Periclean Scholars work in Mexico

Simone Jasper  
Senior Reporter

On Friday, the Periclean Scholars at Elon University held an event to launch the book "Aqui & Alla/Here and There." Campus and community members gathered as author Blanca Zendejas Nienhaus and others with connections to the book spoke.

At the event, Nienhaus gave a brief overview of the book and noted its association with the Periclean Scholars class of 2013.

Elon's Periclean Scholars program is a part of Project Pericles, a national nonprofit organization that encourages colleges and universities to prepare students for global citizenship. At Elon, the Periclean Scholars program consists of civic engagement courses that culminate in a class project, which focuses on combating an

issue somewhere in the world.

The Periclean Scholars class of 2013 identified health concerns in Chiapas, a state in Southern Mexico. Nienhaus and her husband Brian Nienhaus, assistant professor of management and mentor for the Periclean Scholars class of 2013, guided the class through its project locally and in Mexico.

"The class of 2013 wanted to partner with Mexico, and it wanted to partner with Chiapas," said Thomas Arcaro, professor of sociology and director of the Periclean Scholars program at Elon. "And the end product was so much more bountiful than anyone could have imagined."

In the book, the author tells the childhood story of Trucila Perez, who immigrated to North Carolina from Chiapas so her family could reunite.

Perez goes unnamed in the book, but she

spoke at the book launch. She thanked her mother, also present at the launch, for bringing her to the United States.

"I never dreamed in my life that I would be a part of a book," Perez said. "I never thought that I would come to this country and be able to do something like drive a car, own a cell phone."

Perez graduated from Blanca's community program, Plaza Comunitaria. The program offers educational services to Mexican immigrants in Alamance County.

While 50 percent of the proceeds from the book go to Nienhaus, the other half supports the Hogares Sanos Project, a community health initiative started by the Periclean Scholars class of 2013 that serves the Latino population of Burlington.

Nienhaus explained the role she and her husband had in the Periclean Scholars project.

"I think that for the first time the Periclean Scholars were put in a position to realize that they were surrounded by a large Hispanic community," she said.

Thomas Price, a member of the Periclean Scholars class of 2013, agreed.

"Blanca was already involved in the community in a number of ways," he said. "It was through her and her husband that we really understood the challenges of immigrants in Alamance County."

At the event, Javier Diaz de Leon, the consul general of the Mexican Consulate in Raleigh, briefly described Blanca's success.

"She must be proud of where she is and where she comes from," Leon said. "She is also part of this community. She's Mexican, but she's also a Carolinian. Being in the Carolinas means being part of a diverse, multiethnic community."

# Dialogue remembers Martin Luther King with topics of service, awareness

Simone Jasper  
Senior Reporter

At the Martin Luther King Difficult Dialogue on Thursday night, participants discussed social change on Elon University's campus, as well as on a national and international scale. The event, hosted by the Multicultural Center in a Lakeside conference room, consisted of student-led discussions that examined Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s achievements and speeches.

During the dialogue, Continuing the Spirit of Social Justice, attendees identified that King's legacy affects all people and that awareness leads to societal transformation.

The student leaders who presented topics and asked questions to facilitate discussion included junior Clarisse Abayisenga, the student program coordinator for the Multicultural Center's Diversity Emerging Education Program (DEEP), junior Jasmine Turner and senior Jordan Joshua.

To open the event, Abayisenga presented information about King's life, focusing on his passion to serve others. Discussion participants shared how King's words contribute to their understanding of service.

"I think it's important to realize that to have a fulfilling life means that we have to contribute to others," Turner said.

Abayisenga then showed a segment from King's famous "I Have a Dream" speech. Afterward, attendees said that King's message impacts people from all backgrounds, not just those who experience racial inequalities.

"He could never be dead because his words are alive," Abayisenga said.

Turner and Joshua then led separate discussions about two of King's other speeches.

Turner read an excerpt from King's eulogy for victims of the Birmingham church bombing in 1963. To put the speech into context, participants talked about the social constructs of the civil rights era. They also spoke about today's injustices, including economic inequalities.

In modern times, Turner warned attendees to think before judging people from other cultures.

"We have to understand the society and its interworkings before we point fingers," she said.

Joshua introduced excerpts from King's 1965 commencement speech at Oberlin College. He directed the group's attention to the speech's analogy about fictional character Rip Van Winkle, who slept so long that he missed changes in his town.

According to Joshua, King made an important comparison between the tale and people who ignore societal problems. Joshua

said that, unlike Rip Van Winkle, King identified disparities during his lifetime and found ways to combat them.

Attendees said that King's example applies to modern situations across all groups.

"I think that it's not only an issue for minorities, but that it's an issue for the human condition," Abayisenga said. "As people, we have to open our eyes that there are things going on not only in our community but around the world."

To address this concern on campus, Joshua encouraged students to take advantage of Elon's study abroad opportunities.

"We are all blessed to be in this situation, in this traditional four-year college with an excellent education," he said. "But not just an excellent education, the number one study abroad program."

Joshua, who studied abroad during his time as a student, said that becoming globally aware helps students to facilitate changes.

"Studying abroad pushes you outside of that invisible boundary that you put yourself in," he said.

Community member Darrius Richmond agreed that awareness is beneficial and said that the Rip Van Winkle analogy was the most impactful part of the discussion.

"If you don't recognize what's going on, you can't advocate," he said.

## The Acorn Residence Inn



fully furnished and  
all utility inclusive

single and one bedrooms  
are available

prices start at only  
\$475 a month

call  
(336) 516-4777

acornhousingelon.com