

# Open forum analyzes identity

By Christine O'Brien  
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Members of the Black Caucus hosted an open forum Wednesday night in the HUB-Robeson Center to analyze African American identity. More than 40 students attended the round table discussion entitled "Am I Black?"

The discussion leaders asked attendees what each considered his or her cultural background to be. While attendees embraced their black heritage, some found it difficult to place themselves under just one cultural history.

"I'm thoroughly happy with the event turnout," Ryan Brown, co-chair for the Black Caucus Black History Week committee, said. "The whole premise of the event was to determine how people classify themselves and why they

classify themselves in that way." Brown said that the black community shouldn't classify themselves as only one type of heritage, and should embrace a multi-racial background.

"Yes, I am black, but I'm so much more than that — black is a generalization," Brown (freshman-architecture) said. "I'm not just of one culture. Classifying yourself as one erases all others — there's no need for that."

Brown said the Black Caucus serves the Penn State community by incorporating minority groups into the larger majority.

"There's no order when it comes to African versus American. I belong to both communities. I accept my African heritage, but I grew up in New Jersey," Ugochukwu Onyianta (senior-sports journalism) said. "I don't see anything wrong with

embracing two communities." Individual opinions ranged from an emphasis on history and cultural background, while others placed more importance on the future of the movement.

"Anytime you can get people in a room to discuss their opinion, especially on a topic that everyone doesn't necessarily agree with, but they come to hear what other people say — it's a good program," Greta Poku (senior-crime, law and justice) said.

Onyianta, a member of Penn State's Black Caucus, urged unification of black organizations, saying that the Black Caucus works closely with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People but can be more open to the greek community and minority organizations.

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Steph Witt / Collegian

Mark Rose, formerly of Spitalfield, plays the guitar and sings during his acoustic set at SOZO, 256 E. College Ave., on Wednesday night.

# Local, national acts rock SOZO

By Chris Zook  
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

With songs ranging from mournful memories of friends passed away to quirky ballads about JT Woodruff's cat, the audience at SOZO heard it all.

Five acts played to a small crowd of students Wednesday night at SOZO, 256 E. College Ave. Woodruff, of Hawthorne Heights, was one of the major attractions along with Mark Rose, formerly of Spitalfield, and The Story Changes. Local acts British Phil and On the Run opened the show.

Woodruff played several original songs, along with the only cover song Hawthorne Heights was ever able to agree upon, he said. He also took advantage of the small crowd to talk about his background.

"I'm a pioneer of the guitar," he said. "Nobody in my whole town played the guitar."

He also provided background for some of his songs. One, he said, was a memorial to several close friends who had passed away, including Hawthorne Heights's former guitar player Casey Calvert and Avenged Sevenfold's drummer Jimmy "The Rev" Sullivan, among others.

The dark mood of this memorial was offset by a song Woodruff says many of his fans have described as "romantic" — only it's about his hairless cat.

Jason Novak, of Emporium, Pa.,

drove several hours to see Woodruff and Rose perform. After his band played a past show with Spitalfield, he said, he wanted to see Rose perform again.

Looking at the audience of about 20 people, Novak said he expected the show to be "pretty intimate" between the musicians and the crowd. Tim Musser (junior-marketing) also came to see Rose. Though he enjoyed Rose in his earlier projects, Musser said he enjoys Rose's solo efforts, too.

"I've been into his stuff since he was in Spitalfield," Musser said. "He's been going in a different direction since Spitalfield."

As for Woodruff, Musser said he thought Woodruff would be more laid back than when he plays with Hawthorne Heights.

"You expect him to be a lot more mellow," Musser said.

John Green, who plays with On the Run, enjoyed opening up for the touring bands, he said. But, then again he added, he enjoys performing anyway.

"We'll do just about anything," Green said. "It's about messing up without people noticing."

And though the majority of the bands that played Wednesday night were acoustic acts, that didn't keep The Story Changes from playing something harder.

"This isn't a coffeehouse," singer Mark McMillon said. "It's a rock 'n' roll show."

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# Greek group holds discussion on homophobia in community

By Anita Modi  
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Ten students sat in groups of two or three — some whispering quietly, some completely silent — all waiting for the start of a program intended to encourage open discussion about an uncomfortable subject.

"Homophobia in the Black Community," an event hosted by the Gamma Nu chapter of the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., was held Wednesday night in the Willard Building as a part of its annual Ebony and Ivory program.

The event opened up with an activity that asked the participants for words that they associated with the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community, culminating with the idea that most connotations are negative and derogatory.

Participants addressed homophobia specifically in minority communities by responding to video clips and quotes with their own personal experiences, opinions and questions.

The discussion was facilitated by Mark Gardner, advisor of the Urdertones at Penn State, who introduced the event as a forum

for open and honest communication among its participants.

"We're not trying to preach," Gardner (graduate-college student affairs) said. "We want this to be a self-reflective exercise. We want people to stop and think. How might I have silenced a friend with something I said or did? How might I have hurt someone based on what I perceived about them?"

Participants related homophobia to oppression, talking about how discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation was equivalent to discrimination on the basis of race, class or gender.

One student said homophobia is amplified in minority communities because of their strong value for masculinity and the perception of homosexuals as threats. Minorities who have been oppressed by the majority population in turn oppress people within their own communities that don't fit in, perpetuating a vicious cycle of hurt, the student said.

Yet, homophobia is not addressed as often as racism or sexism in today's world, said Mannie Moses (sophomore-hotel, restaurant and institution management).

"Everyone knows it exists, but no one wants to talk about it," Moses said.

Gardner said student hesitancy toward discussion about LGBT issues prevents the acceptance of students of different sexual orientations on campus. Homophobia is just one of the social barriers that the Ebony and Ivory program hopes to highlight this year. Other discussion-based events scheduled throughout the semester relate to domestic violence and rape, classism and perceptions of minority groups on campus, said Avery Kellam, president of the Gamma Nu chapter.

Kellam (senior-telecommunications) said the Ebony and Ivory program used to involve a week of events held every April to raise awareness about race relations and societal differences. This year, however, the program will last the entire semester and offer opportunities to promote understanding and acceptance of differences through social justice.

"We don't just want to talk about race relations anymore," he said. "Social justice is about fixing them."

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"The Daily Collegian's news is relevant to where I go to school. I like to know what's going on. When I was looking for a job, I turned to the Collegian Classifieds."

Chang Zhou (senior-business)

"I look for specials and coupons in the Collegian."

Alex Philpott (senior-advertising)

"I don't get my Penn State news from anywhere but the Collegian. It keeps me up to date on Penn State events... plus I like doing the crossword too."

Ross Trudnak (freshman-marketing)

"The Collegian keeps me updated on what's going on around campus - that's how I learn about everything. The stories actually relate to me. I don't ever read the other papers."

Sarah Rogers (freshman-division of undergraduate studies)

"The Daily Collegian has the stuff I want to read about. It pertains to me as a Penn State Student. If I see a good deal in an advertisement in the Collegian, I'll go to that place over other places."

Austin Rothermel (senior-chemical engineering)

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