

Colored Chalk Outreach Event

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Engaging students of color through conversation boards on campus

In the Fall of 2013 a group of male Black students at UCLA released a spoken-word video on YouTube that highlighted the lack of opportunities for students of color, particularly Black males, at UCLA. (search for “black bruins” on YouTube) The video was viewed over 2 million times during the next few months. Clearly people wanted to talk about issues of race and justice and Destino at UCLA wanted to enter into the conversation.

The idea was simple: put a chalkboard up on campus and ask students write answers to questions. Professor Robert Romero of the Chicano/a studies Department at UCLA suggested “It’s hard being _____ (ethnicity) at UCLA because...” and “What does God think about your ethnicity?”

Destino students were asked to answer these questions themselves and relate their answers to Jesus’ story at the Destino weekly meeting in the week leading up to the outreach. Then they signed up for times to stand by the board and ask

people questions about the answers they were writing. After hearing people’s responses, students and staff were to ask permission to share what they thought about the connection between God and ethnicity.

The chalkboards were assembled and placed in a location between the Chicano/a Studies Department and the building that houses the

tutoring center for first generation college students and students from low-income backgrounds. Some people walking by noticed the board but most had to be invited to participate by someone standing there.

The greatest challenge was transitioning a conversation about ethnicity and justice to a conversation about Jesus. During the training students were

instructed to draw on aspects of Jesus like his humble birth to an immigrant family or intimidation from Jews or living as part of an oppressed people group. A few conversations went beyond social issues to spiritual issues, but perhaps more intentional training or conversation guides would have been helpful.



After two days of standing by the chalkboards for a couple hours each day, there was a culminating event where a Destino student shared her testimony of racial injustice at UCLA and a staff answered the questions on the board from the Christian perspective. Even though students had been inviting most of the people who filled up the board, only a couple came to the event from that.

The greatest wins were: 1) seeing new believers ask people questions about their thoughts on faith and ethnicity and 2) showing Destino students that they have an important role to play on campus in helping people think about race and justice in light of God's kingdom.

For questions regarding this outreach contact James Medina at james.medina@cru.org