

RUDY CABRERA: ON PEACE WITHIN AND SPOKEN WORD



By Kou Nyan
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Kingston, R.I.- He stood in front of a room where over 50 seats were filled with students and faculty. Dressed in baggy jeans and a dark t-shirt, he was surrounded by silence. Then he lifted his head and gently said, “For the revolution to happen, we must learn to fight together.”

Rudy “Rudacious” Cabrera of Providence, a poet who describes himself as a spoken-word artist, was the guest speaker for the diversity week event, “Using Spoken Word, Music and Art to Promote Nonviolence.” The event took place October 5, 2011 in the Hodge Forum in the Multicultural Center. The facilitators of the event were Dr. Diane E. Kern and Professor Kay Johnson from the School of Education, and Dr. Paul Bueno de Mesquita from the Department of Psychology and the Center for Nonviolence and Peace Studies. The event focused on artistic ways to promote nonviolence, but to Cabrera, the key elements of peace were humility and unity.

Cabrera was born and raised in Providence. He attended Central High School. He became involved in the arts his freshman year after his mother told

him to find a hobby because he was constantly getting into fights and receiving detentions, suspensions and failing grades. He participated in his school’s theatre program. After being applauded on a monologue he recited for the school’s play “The Runaways”, he knew he wanted to perform and he had two mentors to help.

Cabrera’s 11th grade English teacher, Trish Botkin, always listened to him.

“She didn’t try to say she understood where I was coming from,” he said. “But she was willing to listen.”

Botkin introduced Cabrera to Ricardo Pitts-Wiley, the founder of the Mixed-Magic Theater, who helped Cabrera begin his acting career.

Cabrera said peace is when one has a value of himself which turns into a value for people. One cannot honor, respect and love others unless one can do so for himself. Cabrera found peace within the arts, specifically, poetry.

“It (poetry) became therapeutic,” he said. “I feel like it gave me purpose in life which helps me with my depression.”

Cabrera started poetry during open mike nights at the Black Repertory Company in Providence. He found it easier to communicate emotions and thoughts through poetry than conversations. Through poetry he could speak about his aunt's death and the lessons she taught him before she passed. Another advantage of poetry for him is putting his rebellious nature into positive energy. Despite its emotional intensity, Cabrera found poetry to be fun.

Although peace must start within, Cabrera stressed the importance of working together to strive for peace. He said two of the greatest advocates for civil rights, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X, knew they needed one another.

"For every one person who gets the attention," he said. "There's a branch of people who got them to that point."

Cabrera talked about Mahalia Jackson, a gospel legend, who encouraged Dr. King to tell everyone his dream. Dr. King's response became one of the most well-known American speeches.

Everyone's an advocate for peace said Cabrera. Though this generation is striving for peace, there are not enough people doing so. People are in it for themselves, Cabrera explained, which causes more division. Many desire to be a leader rather than support the cause.

"I don't believe this is done from a place of malice," he said. "Just a place that doesn't know any better."

He said that the older generation made some mistakes that they need to take responsibility for.

"Some old folks like to put the blame on today's generation saying 'it's

you,'" he said. "But you (older generation) raised us."

He said that in order to have peace the older generation should learn to listen to the youth and not be quick to judge their views. That is why, said Cabrera, the relationship between Ricardo Pitts-Wiley, his mentor, and him worked.

"He never condemned me for the music I'd listen to or the fashion I was into," said Cabrera. "The judgment of Ricardo Pitts-Wiley was based on my actions not my clothing."

Cabrera said that when it comes to peace there needs to be a balance between the older generation and the youth. The youth should humble themselves and listen to the older generation.

Working together to strive for peace is very important to Cabrera. Humility is the most significant element that will help this generation accomplish peace. Humility means being able to put judgments aside, listen to one another and know that there is a time to be a leader and a time to be supportive.

