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Darryl Babe Wilson: My Existence

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Local Landscapes



Photo: CHC Library

Tom Izu

Years ago, if someone asked me to think of the word “landscapes” I would see blank, white pages from the art classes of my childhood and remember how nervous I felt when asked to fill them with beautiful and meaningful scenes of the Santa Clara Valley. I would remember that even with the encouragement of enthusiastic teachers, I was still overcome by a growing anxiety, unable to make a connection of any sort between the teachers’ vision and

the increasing emptiness of the white pages that stared back at me. I recall the decision reinforced in those moments, that I would learn about outer space and become an astronaut.

That is the story of my art career, its beginning and end summed up by one word: landscapes. But fortunately for me, that word has been given other connotations now thanks to writers such as Darryl Babe Wilson. A member of the Achumawi and Atsugewi indigenous peoples of Northeastern California, Darryl Wilson visited CHC a year ago and spoke with us about how the original nations of California keep their histories alive by telling stories about the landscape, through the words of their “knowledge people.” He recently gave us his permission to print for the first time, in this issue of *The Californian*, an excerpt of one of his essays that shares several examples of these “wisdom” stories about the land which were told to him as a child.

I realize that I have always longed for the connection Wilson describes in his work. He was taught by his elders to see and feel a connection to the landscape of his childhood; the mountains, valleys, forests, and rivers of Fall River Valley all had stories to tell him about how to carry out his life in the right way and what his duties and obligations were to his land and people. In my childhood spent here in Silicon Valley, I saw growing freeways, sprawling suburban housing tracks and spreading shopping malls and felt no connection to or meaning from them, nor did I get any stories from them that told me what I should be doing. Even when I was told how things used to look and what my parents and others long before used to do in landscapes of the past, I couldn’t see the evidence of any connection between what I saw in the present and the stories they imparted to me. I decided knowledge of the land referred to learning about some other place, possibly in some other time, but definitely not in my neighborhood, in the present time. Perhaps this is why I could not paint landscapes of the valley I came from because I didn’t feel I belonged to it, nor it to me, but I could dream of Mars,

Venus, and other far away places and make up my own landscapes, the more unearthly, the better.

Things changed when I stumbled across the field of community history. Reading the works of writers and historians, and hearing the voices of regular people recorded in oral histories, all of whom lived in the area during one of its many historical phases or studied the Santa Clara Valley region, made me understand that there was more to landscape than pretty scenes. I learned from these “knowledge people” how to sift through landscapes and find within them the record of the changing interactions between nature and people, and the value of the things left behind that can tell tales, some very unpleasant, and others full of wonder and hope. I could see a purpose and meaning in the very things that used to seem mundane or invisible to me, whether they were old buildings, abandoned lots, or rusty scraps of metal left on a trailside. I could imagine a role to play in capturing these stories and helping others see the region and land from different eyes – new ones, and old ones as well. Perhaps altogether, these stories could wrestle from our landscape a way for all of us who live in the valley to feel connected to the land, to each other, and to our common future, no matter our differences in culture, and family history.

I still can’t paint landscapes, but I can listen to the stories they have to tell through people with knowledge of them. I haven’t regretted my decision not to become an astronaut and leave Earth yet – there are too many things still hidden in the landscapes of our valley right here and now to find.

In this issue I discuss the exciting plans for the rehabilitation of a historic structure – a Willis Polk, Mission Revival Style architectural “cottage” next to the CHC building – that will make it into a place for oral history and community history work in conjunction with the Social Sciences and Humanities Division and the College’s Institute for Community and Civic Engagement. A newly remodeled cottage can become a wonderful link between the campus and community, creating a viable and powerful community history program.

This exceptional opportunity, however, comes at a challenging time. Our public education system, including the community colleges, faces some of the most difficult budget limitations in recent history. What will happen in the next few years and how it will impact our center is not clear and only time will tell. But I do know that there is much to do, much to plan for, and many new and old stories to gather from our communities. With all of your help there is always hope.

Cover: Jema’wehelu’tiwiji.— *Burney Falls, California. 1937.*
From the Eastman’s Originals Collection. Department of Special Collections, General Library, University of California, Davis.

CALENDAR

May 3 Field Trips: Bay Area Public Gardens
(see page 4)

May 6 Al Young – reception for California’s Poet Laureate at CHC, 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.
No charge to public and students (see page 10)

May 8 Francisco Jimenez – reception for author and professor at CHC, 1:45 p.m. to 3:45 p.m.
No charge to public and students.

May 10 Field Trips: Pioneer Airports of the Bay Area
(see page 4)

May 17 Field Trips: Bay Area Public Gardens
(see page 4)

May 26 Memorial Day Holiday observed —
De Anza college closed

May 31 Field Trips: Historic California Lighthouses
(see page 4)

June 7 Field Trips: History of the Golden State
(see page 4)

June 14 Field Trips: Historic California Lighthouses
(see page 4)

June 21 Field Trips: History of the Golden State
(see page 4)

June 27 Spring Quarter ends – CHC closes for Summer break

CHC and De Anza History Department awarded funds for Oral History Program

The California History Center has launched a multi-year oral history project for De Anza College in fall quarter 2007. Working in conjunction with the campus’s history department, CHC has received “seed” money from the college’s Strategic Planning Funds by way of the Institute of Community and Civic Engagement and the Social Sciences and Humanities Division. “We are excited that our project has been received well and with much enthusiasm, not only by campus members but also by many members of the local community,” exclaimed David Howard-Pitney, member of the CHCF Board and a campus history instructor. “I believe we have struck a deep chord in many, and we are reaching back to our own roots as an organization, tapping into the desire of campus and community individuals to capture the stories that mean so much to them, their families, and their communities,” stated Tom Izu, CHC Director.

Anne Hickling, a member of De Anza’s History Department, will assist with the coordination of the project, providing training for instructors and community members in oral history techniques. Hickling has already conducted three workshops on the campus as well as one in the community. She has over 20 years of experience conducting oral histories and has used them to help make history come alive for her students at both De Anza and San Jose City colleges. “Having students do oral history related work has become one of my favorite parts of teaching,” stated Hickling.

Hickling’s own interest in becoming an oral historian goes back to her own student days, “I have always been interested in people’s stories... I can remember my own, first oral history

assignment in high school of my Irish great aunt about her life with her sisters on a homesteaded ranch in Mendocino, this had a big impact on me.” Based upon her personal experiences and her years of classroom work, she believes that oral history projects are an excellent way to involve students in historical work. “Students become ‘proto-historians’ and history becomes a skill to be practiced, not something that is just studied. It makes history an active learning assignment,” added Hickling.

Hickling sees an inherent good in providing people of all backgrounds and experiences the chance to tell their stories and document those of others, “It records specific histories when much of history tends to be over-generalized, and most importantly to me, it gives voice to those that many times have been left out of history.” As a former student activist during the 1970s and a feminist, she believes this last point is a very important one. “I used interviews for a section of my Master’s thesis on San Jose’s underground paper of the 1970s, *Sedition*, one of many at the time which often had more accurate reporting than the networks about the Vietnam War and Watergate,” Hickling explained.



Anne Hickling will assist with the coordination of the Oral History Program.

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EDUCATION

California History Center State and Regional History Academic Program

The following courses will be offered spring quarter 2008 through the California History Center. Please see the History class listings section of this Schedule of Classes for additional information or call the center at (408) 864-8712.

BAY AREA PUBLIC GARDENS

Betty Hirsch

HIST-53X-95 ■ 2 UNITS

The San Francisco Bay Area is graced by an array of public gardens. Among their developers are well-known historical figures such as James Duval Phelan, William Bourn and John McLaren. Students in this class will visit a variety of gardens and discuss how the garden serves as an art form and how gardens reflect both horticultural and human cultural trends in the region. In addition, students will address some contemporary concerns brought about by limited rainfall, possible water rationing, and associated environmental, political, and social issues.

Lectures: Thursdays, April 24 & May 8,
6:20 - 10:00 p.m., CHC

Field Trips: Saturdays, May 3 & 17



San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge, San Francisco, The Pacific, Golden Gate Bridge and Golden Gate Entrance to San Francisco Bay.

HISTORY OF THE GOLDEN GATE

Chatham Forbes

HIST-54X-95 ■ 2 UNITS

The great river system of California flows through the Golden Gate of the San Francisco Bay, as do the twice-daily Pacific tides. This narrow strait was a key to economic and military power in early American California, and the water highway for the riches of the Mother Lode, and for produce and manufactures of the Bay Area and Central Valley.

Lectures: Thursdays, May 29 & June 12,
6:20 - 10:00 p.m., CHC

Field Trips: Saturdays, June 7 & June 21

HISTORIC CALIFORNIA LIGHTHOUSES

Betty Hirsch

HIST-53X-96 ■ 2 UNITS

The earliest lighthouses were simply bonfires built on hillsides to guide ships. The first built lighthouse served the old world city of Alexandria, Egypt in 285 B.C. The first American lighthouse came to life in 1716 at Boston Harbor. The first California lighthouse was built on Alcatraz Island in 1854. This lighthouse used a Fresnel lens, which focused light rays into a sheet of light that could be seen twenty-two miles away. Initially, ten lighthouses were built along the California coast. Forty-four more were built between 1854 and 1950. Twenty-six are still standing. Today, ten are open to the public. All are now automated. This class will visit lighthouses on the San Francisco Bay including Fort Point, Point Bonita and East Brother.

Lectures: Thursdays, May 22 & June 5
6:20 - 10:00 p.m., CHC

Field Trips: Saturdays, May 31 & June 14



Days of wings and roses in San Jose, California.

PIONEER AIRPORTS OF THE BAY AREA

Chatham Forbes

HIST-51X-95 ■ 2 UNITS

In the early twentieth century, Bay Area airports played an important part in the history of aviation. Transcontinental, trans-Pacific, and round-the-world flights were launched from local fields. Aeronautical science was advanced by scientists in local institutions.

Lectures: Thursdays, May 1 & May 15,
6:20 - 10:00 p.m., CHC

Field Trips: Saturdays, May 10 & 17

My Existence

by Darryl Babe Wilson

A Native Californian shares “wisdom” stories of the local landscape

“Bing!” A soft, deep voice nearby invaded my dreams and startled me. Dreams vanished into whatever startled dreams flee into – some where distant, making it almost impossible to retrieve them. *Wehelu*, an Elder Chief, was standing near in the early hush. It was so early I thought that I was alone there in the breathing landscape. I did not hear him coming — either that or he just materialized. Auntie said “power people can do these things.” Being the granddaughter of a

With a beautiful pink morning silence wrapping around us like a blushing cocoon, we stood there in awe of life. Night bird functions ceasing, day bird functions beginning, fire sun rays deflecting from low clouds on the eastern horizon.

medicine woman/doctor, she must know because her mother and father must have known and her grandmother must have shown her through her everyday eventful life.

Wehelu decided that it was time to give me a lesson of history, of devotion, of respect for “the way,” of “the law” written into the landscape, mountain power literature. The mountains were vivid. Birds flitted in the fields and a bright red one flashed into pine tree foliage, deer breathed little, momentary clouds of steam in the chilly morning. A small puff of steam came with the Elder’s words, too.

I was quiet, listened intently, and learned something of landscape literature. As he spoke, my life came into focus and my world came into brilliance.

Later when Aunt Gladys said that every stream, every mountain and valley, every tree and every rock had a name and “everybody knew something of this,” I understood. “When they gathered to hunt, they named a certain place and hunters knew where to gather before sunrise. The land was like a map of a city. There were no mistakes – because if it was fall and the father failed to go hunting and failed to get deer for drying and storing for the long winter — that could be hard on his family. So, to go to the wrong place to gather for hunting or to be late could be a disaster. That is why everybody must know and be responsible.” That time we were in her kitchen and she waved a fork for emphasis – like a symphony conductor.



*Author, educator and storyteller, Darryl Babe Wilson visited the California History Center in March 2007 to share his wisdom about California landscapes and the nature of knowledge. Wilson is Achumawi and Atsugewi and was born and grew up in the Northeastern part of California. His people are often referred to as the Pit River Nation. His lyrical memoir, *The Morning the Sun Went Down* (Heyday Books, Berkeley, 1998) was critically received. Dr. Wilson has taught at a number of universities and colleges including Foothill and De Anza colleges. He has graciously allowed us to publish this excerpt from an unpublished essay.*

In the morning mist *Wehelu* (Chief, Captain) began a lesson in landscape literature.

“See that pile of rocks half way up the mountain?” He lifted an old, worn, dark hand and pointed with a crooked finger.

“Yes.”

“Don’t look at it, study it. There is a lesson to be learned there. Just study it a while”

With a beautiful pink morning silence wrapping around us like a blushing cocoon, we stood there in awe of life. Night bird functions ceasing, day bird functions beginning, fire sun rays deflecting from low clouds on the eastern horizon. Then he continued.

“See near the top of the rock pile? You can clearly see a bandana our elder ladies use to tie their hair down. Today Elder ladies still wear them. Just below that you can see

Long ago the tribe was sent to the mountain top to put prayers to the Great Powers and make ceremony. The ceremony, the songs, the prayers were to the great powers of our lives. They were an appeal asking that goodness would forever come to our people.

a chiseled face — a nose, chin and eyes. It looks like an elder lady sitting there looking back across the valley. See the skirt covering her bent knees? She looks worried.

“In our way, we are told to never look back or you will never reach your destination – and when climbing a mountain, don’t sit down or you will become good for nothing and people will shun you.”

I made a promise to myself not to sit on the side of the mountain and look back. I wanted to be good for *something*, besides I didn’t want the grammas and grampas of my life to shun me – ordinary people, okay. *Knowledge people*, no way!

“The legend concerning that woman is important to know: Long ago the tribe was sent to the mountain top to put prayers to the Great Powers and make ceremony. The cere-



Watak’jose. Warner Range, Modoc Co.; August 1925. From the C. Hart Merriam Collection of Native American Photographs, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

mony, the songs, the prayers were to the great powers of our lives. They were an appeal asking that goodness would forever come to our people. By not reaching the mountain top and making her plea – not doing her part, the prayer was incomplete and could not be accepted by the powers. She was turned to stone so we would always remember and not forget to complete our duties and responsibilities.

“As the morning star was just rising, they left the village. She tired or was curious. She sat down and looked back towards her village. The Great Powers made her into stone. She will forever be there looking back across the valley. And we will forever remember why – because her prayers were never heard by the powers of the universe and her ceremony was never performed. A very precious part of the prayer was not fulfilled. Our life’s basket is missing a strand, and today that is so.”

I finally breathed and looked around. *Wehelu* vanished?! No, he was near the timber across the field. He stepped into the forest and was gone. I had so many questions.

One of auntie’s thoughts came back to me. Our little summer “running gang,” hovered around her kitchen waiting for *wahach* – not learning how to make it, but drooling a lot and thinking if the fire was hotter, *wahach* would cook faster. The fire was never altered by our thinking, but obeyed the wishes of auntie. When auntie was cooking *wahach* she knew that she had our attention – like the judge in the court.

“You fellas must learn and practice silence and power. Be like my father, he did not go into or through the forest. He *became* the forest.” That is how *Wehelu* did it. Across the field and became the forest. He must have had that silent power.

Alone, but for the morning, the birds, the rivers, the sky, the sunrise, the mountains and valleys, I thought about that beautiful story and the prayer unfulfilled. I dreamed and saw a young woman with a light-blue bandana holding her hair in place working her way up the mountain to make songs and a prayer ceremony, completing the obligation ... My thoughts drifted, floating upon the breeze, shifting direction with a breath this way, then that – sometimes swirling. My day dreams in thick and everlasting freedom, were restricted only by the morning stars. Silence came in crescendos then came in lulls. I again looked to Stone Woman seeing *that* young woman shuffle past her to the mountain top. In a while, Stone Woman stirred, then got up, adjusted her dress, tucked a loose hair under her bandana with her left hand, looked to the mountain top, then turned back picking her way

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towards her village. The young woman completing the prayer-ceremony, Stone Woman was “released” by the Great Powers.

Standing there in the vast silence with my dreams, I looked around and had a revelation – how much white man has changed the names of the landscape, but does not know the landscape literature. There, that mountain. It is called Soldier Mountain by these intruding people who entered our homeland with an Army, and claimed our homeland for themselves. It is really, *Simlek*. It is a place of ceremony. There the ancient river recently identified by an anthropologist because he fell into a pit near the river, Pit River. It is really *ItAjuma*, Big River. It has brought salmon to our people for all seasons.

There is the great mountain where *MisMisa* lives and is therefore most powerful in our world, now called Mt. Shasta, but it is really *YetAko* or *Wa’ika*. There, the mountain called Burney – where native ceremonies have taken place for ages and eons. It is really Apooha. There, the beautiful falling waters where medicine men and doctors seek great powers. It is called Burney Falls by the Americans and other foreigners. Really it is *Jema’wehelu’tiwiji*. On the eastern side of the homeland is Warner Range, a range of mountains between the homeland and the great basin, named after a surveyor, Warner. It is really *Watak’jose*. It is also a gathering place and a hunting grounds. On the south western corner of the homeland is Mt. Lassen, really Fire mountain, *Yet’cha’mah*. Ramsey pronounced it *Yeta’jenna*. To the west is McGee Peak, really *Ju’waco*, the place where wildlife emerged. So invading, vain people, longing to eliminate my people from the human race and from memory, changed the names of the landscape, animals and people to their personal satisfaction.

The invading populations are, yet today, as lost as Columbus was over 500 years ago. Yet they ignore the true identity of the landscape, the animals. Americans label these things as they wander along. They degrade the oral histories and oral literature as “made up, myth.” Taking away the *tijtiwa* (real, genuine and in its place putting something foreign. The name of the tribal people is included in this criminal activity. And it is a criminal act because many native people have forgotten that before Columbus the people were *Iss* and *Aw’te*. They cling to the foreign label “Indian,” and with bared fangs, growl at who ever says Pit River is not a true identification. I worried and my heart discolored but I dreamed the more. How do I tell the people who refuse to listen that natives never were “traditional enemies,” that the term was made up by anthropologists and the American military to try and keep us from uniting?



Bo-ma-Rhee. Fall River Valley, Shasta Co.; October 1925. From the C. Hart Merriam Collection of Native American Photographs. The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

It was kind of funny seeing auntie standing in the shade of a juniper tree near the rim of the great canyon. All of the other times we saw her she was in the kitchen making beans, frying deer meat, cooking *wahach*, or cleaning house. She just seemed out of place without flour on her hands – but it was unusual only to us boys who used her home as a place to feed – then run some more. She did a lot of things we just never witnessed. My mother had “gone on ahead,” so Aunt Gladys was a kind of “mom” to us boys.

We were near the rim of the great canyon on the Fall River side. One slip and it is over a thousand feet straight down! We were throwing rocks way out and listening for them to hit other rocks far below. Flat rocks would go farther

...it was like when Little Rabbit and Old lizard were in a contest shooting the moon with arrows. They found lizard's arrow, broken. They said it was from bouncing off of the moon. Little Rabbit said his arrow did not return because it went clear through the moon.

but often caught the wind funny and begin to “butterfly.” There never was a winner in our contest of seeing who could throw the farthest – it was like when Little Rabbit and Old Lizard were in a contest shooting the moon with arrows. All of the beings were there to watch and judge. They found Lizard's arrow, broken. They said it was from bouncing off of the moon. Little Rabbit said his arrow did not return because it went clear through the moon. Everyone went home satisfied that Old Lizards broken arrow was proof that he hit the moon and no arrow was proof that Rabbit's arrow missed, so Old Lizard was proclaimed the winner. Everybody trudged home, talking and laughing.

Summer, the heated landscape was

everywhere. The fragrance of sun-warm juniper berries wrapped around us. No wind to stir the trees. Auntie began a lesson. “See that place across the canyon where it looks like a rock slide? Coyote did that. I will tell you that story some day.” Auntie was thoughtful and silent while we threw rocks as far out over the canyon as we could.

“You fellas come over here. I will tell you the story today and when you hear it again you will remember.” And she took us on a journey of Old Coyote who was racing across the country searching for a woman that he could hear singing in the east. He raced along not looking where he was going and at the last second saw the edge of the rim, and started falling over. He turned and fought his way back up to the rim but made a small rock slide – and “never did find the woman as far as I know.” From her lesson we thought that we were not supposed to be like Coyote, and not listen for women singing in the east. But, as we grew older, the girls singing in the east got prettier and it got harder not thinking like Coyote.

One day in high school, for I don’t know why, I began a journey seeking landscape literature. An elder took me to the Fox and Coyote jumping rock near the hot springs in Big Bend.

“At this time they were going to find out if good or if bad would rule our lives for the rest of time. Coyote represented bad, Silver Fox represented good. They got way back, and from a marker, took a run and leaped as far as they could. The rule was to land on the rock and mark your landing. As it turned out the rock marked the landing. Their foot print was in the rock.” He took me over and we examined the rock. There were imprints in the stone. “Dog feet,” I thought.

“This print belongs to Coyote. This print, just a little bit farther represents Silver Fox. Since Fox outjumped Coyote, the rule is that there would be more good than bad. But that is not the way it looks sometimes....”

We wandered through soft, brushy hills in the oak forest then scrambled up to the road. He jumped into his old pickup and hurried towards home. I waited for the dust to settle and the hush of the forest to return with bird whistles both distant and nearby. Soon a little squirrel dashed across the road, its tail straight up, little puffs of dust coming from its scurrying feet. There was a rustling in the brush. In breathless silence I studied the landscape, moving my eyes from left to right, sweeping up and down like a flashlight. Silence. Silence – not even a distant bird. My heart went, thump, thump! An ear wiggled and slowly turned searching for a sound and danger. I waited like daddy taught me, not breath-

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ing. As if by magic a foreleg! Then a deer stepped out. A mature doe, dusty grey, ears tuning to catch every sound and every silence. For a moment she was a statue, big brown eyes studying the world. Then in an instant she bound across the road and effortlessly flashed up the steep hillside and became the mountain.

An early-evening, delicate-blue mist moved in signaling it was time to head for home. I knew that the roar of the engine and the slamming of the truck door would disturb the silence again, but the life could listen as the old truck rattled away in the distance. I received another lesson, this one in living landscape literature – Landscape literature, a series rapidly growing to encyclopedic proportions.

Dark, blacker shadows, *Laisiki* (before dawn). The black mountain range in the east had a silver-green silhouette. North Star, ever watchful, governed the churning universe. Coyote’s Cane continued its huge spin around the North Star. Quiet, thick silence. Without breaking a branch or turning a leaf, daddy and I, like two mountain lions, crept to the fishing hole on the sleeping river. River giggled softly. Moon, from the top of a pine, silently watched our shadowy stealth.

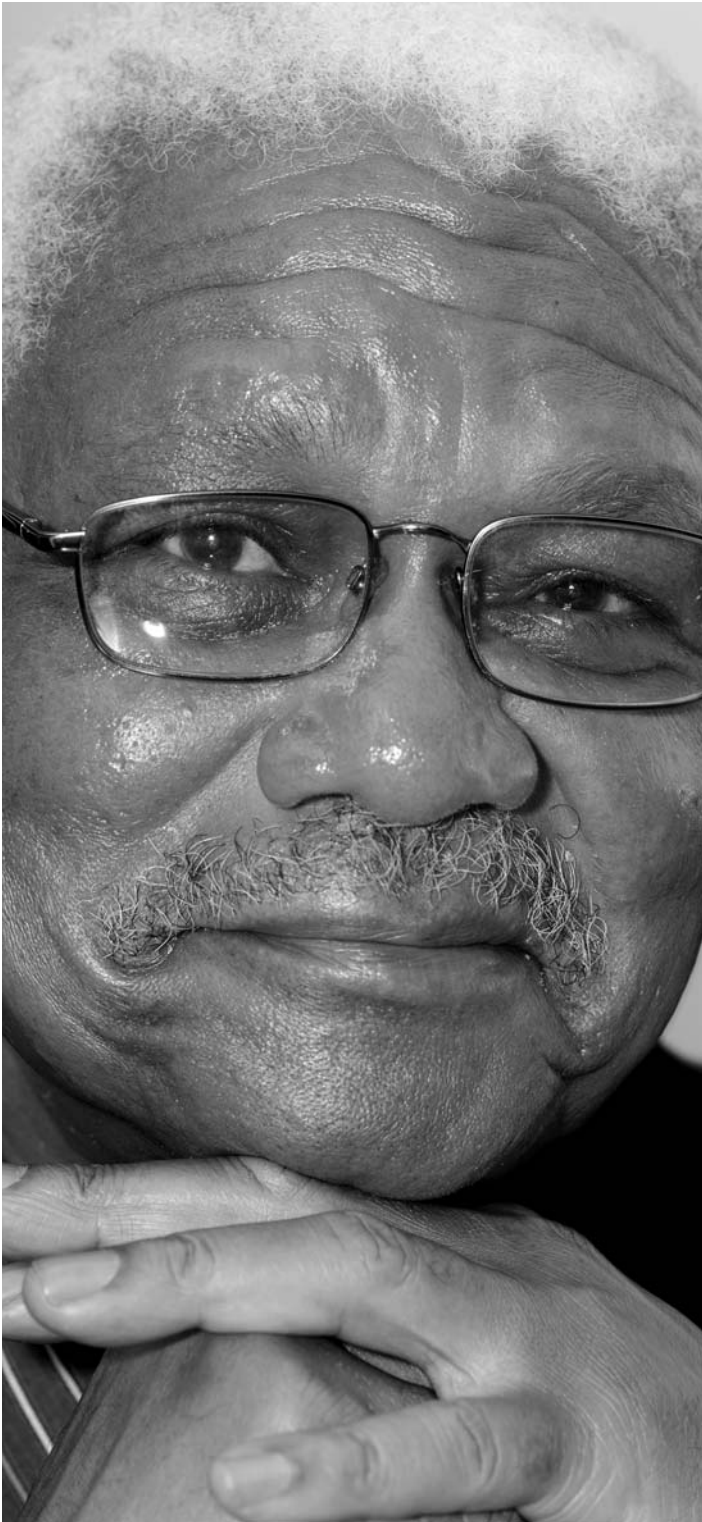
Daddy pointed to the silhouetted eastern range then raised one finger. That meant for us to maintain our silence but to see the distant range because he was going to tell me a story. Hunting a trout for dinner, we again became the shadows and the landscape. Daddy softly moved to a position where he could see any fish with the first rays of light. My job was to remain motionless. Hard to do this getting up long before the sun, creeping along the river in the darkness, then being stone quiet. But I was going to hear a story from daddy.

After he speared a trout and old sun came up, he told me to remember that distant ridge because Ramsey knew a history of giant lizards – like alligators or dinosaurs that lived here long ago. I was happy that it was long ago because if there was an alligator in the river and a dinosaur looking, I would run. I was just in first grade and really wanted to run anyway, and if daddy broke to run and scare me like he did sometimes for a laugh, I’d run clear to Redding — unless I ran into a dinosaur.

Delicate dancing morning was still chilly. Soft-grey mist hovered down river. Birds just began singing and noisy blue birds were flitting from limb to limb in the awakening forest shadows. River seemed to surge and ripple with a soft bubbly roar. Through the dawn, we headed for home — walking this time, not sneaking. It was a lot easier. I carried the fish part way.

The Memorable Al Young, California's Poet Laureate

by Cozetta Guinn



Al Young, California's current Poet Laureate will visit the California History Center on May 6, 2008 from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. for a reception in his honor as part of De Anza College's "LitFest: A Multicultural Literary Arts Festival." He was appointed to his post on May 12, 2005 by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger who stated, "Al Young is a poet, an educator and a man with a passion for the arts. His remarkable talent and sense of mission to bring poetry into the lives of Californians is an inspiration."

Young is a prolific writer, has numerous works of poetry and fiction as well as screenplays, and has received many awards and honors (please see a list of his work and honors at <http://alyoung.org/>). He has taught poetry and fiction writing at a number of universities nationwide, including the universities of California at Berkeley, Santa Cruz and Davis, and Stanford University, among others, and has traveled throughout the world to lecture and perform.

CHCF Board member Cozetta Guinn reflects on her memories of Mr. Young and his participation in reading clubs in the Peninsula region of Santa Clara County.

On May 6, 2008, poet, author, essayist, screenwriter, singer, and cultural ambassador, Al Young will make a return visit to the De Anza College campus for an appearance from 4-6 p.m. in the California History Center. For anyone who has not had the chance to meet California's current Poet Laureate it is an opportunity to meet a literary giant. For many people in the San Francisco Bay Area, Al Young is a living treasure. The mere mention of his name will bring a smile to the face of those who adore his work because, for over 40 years, he has shared his writing - engaging, informing, and inspiring his many readers and listeners.

Not only does Mr. Young have the gift of writing with many publications to his name, but also the ability to captivate an audience with his reading and singing — with musical accompaniment — of works of poetry and prose. Many years before taking on his role as state Poet Laureate, Young presented and taught his writing at prestigious colleges and universities in the United States, Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, also acting as cultural ambassador for the United States Information Agency. During his 30 years in the Palo Alto area, Young was in demand as a speaker and contributor in book clubs, classrooms, and auditoriums. Doris Richmond, a former employee of the Palo Alto Library, remembers fondly the many occasions on which he read to audiences there.

In 1984, the Peninsula Book Club, a literary organization founded the year before and made up mostly of African American women, chose Al Young's novel, *Sitting Pretty* (set in Palo Alto), as their last reading choice for the year. The novel found an enthusiastic reception among the membership. What a delight it was to read

About California's Poet Laureate Position

From Mr. Young's Official Website: www.alyoung.org (published with permission)

The role of the California Poet Laureate is to spread the art of poetry from classrooms to boardrooms across the state, to inspire an emerging generation of literary artists and to educate all Californians about the many poets and authors who have influenced our great state through creative literary expression. The position of Poet Laureate was established in 2001 with the passage of AB 113 authored by Assemblymember Fran Pavley. Through that bill, the California Arts Council is designated to recommend individuals to the Governor for the position of Poet Laureate. The Governor chooses the Poet Laureate, and Senate approves the appointment.

Over the course of a two-year term, the Poet Laureate provides six public readings in urban and rural locations across the state, educates civic and state leaders about the value of poetry and creative expression, and undertakes a significant cultural project. One of the goals of the project must be to bring the poetic arts to students who might otherwise have little opportunity to be exposed to poetry.

History

The concept of a Poet Laureate originated in England in the 1600s. The laureate description refers to the ancient Greek tradition of placing a laurel wreath or crown as recognition for significant achievements, from military accomplishments to literary triumphs.

Early lawmakers in California recognized the importance of a statewide Poet Laureate at the beginning of the twentieth

century. Ina Donna Coolbrith was appointed the first honorary California Poet Laureate by Governor Hiram Warren Johnson on June 30, 1915. Ms. Coolbrith was later recognized by the California State Senate as the "Loved Laurel-Crowned Poet of California" by a resolution in 1919, and she retained the title until her death in 1928. More details on Ms. Coolbrith can be found from the California Association of Teachers of English, and the University of California has an extensive online archive of her work.

The state Senate honored another California poet, English professor Dr. Henry Meade Bland, with the Laureate title in 1929, and he served for two years until his death in 1931. In 1933 lawmakers recognized through resolution another California literary artist: John Steven McGroarty, a poet, playwright, historian, *Los Angeles Times* writer, presidential candidate, and member of Congress from southern California between 1935 and 1939. More information is available from the *Journal of San Diego History* article on McGroarty.

The next writer to be honored officially by the state was Gordon W. Norris, appointed by the Legislature in 1953. He served until his death on December 18, 1961. Norris was followed by Charles Garrigus, a member of the California legislature and recognized by his colleagues in 1966, who served until the year 2000. Both of these appointments were made from the state Legislature through resolutions. An informative article on the history of the honorary Poets Laureate of California

can be found from *Metro Active*, a Silicon Valley weekly.

After Garrigus' death, lawmakers opted to change the state's approach to the role of California Poet Laureate and make it an official appointed position rather than an honorary title. On September 1, 2001, Governor Gray Davis signed AB 113 by Assemblywoman Fran Pavley, establishing the position of "California Poet Laureate" as a permanent part of the California Government Code. Under this new law, the Poet Laureate would no longer hold the title for life, but would instead serve a two-year term (time determined from the date of confirmation by the Senate) and would be limited to two terms.

On June 11, 2002, Governor Gray Davis appointed Quincy T. Troupe as California's first official Poet Laureate. Mr. Troupe briefly served without Senate confirmation. In 2005, Al Young was appointed by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and confirmed by the senate in March of 2006. He will leave office in August of 2008.

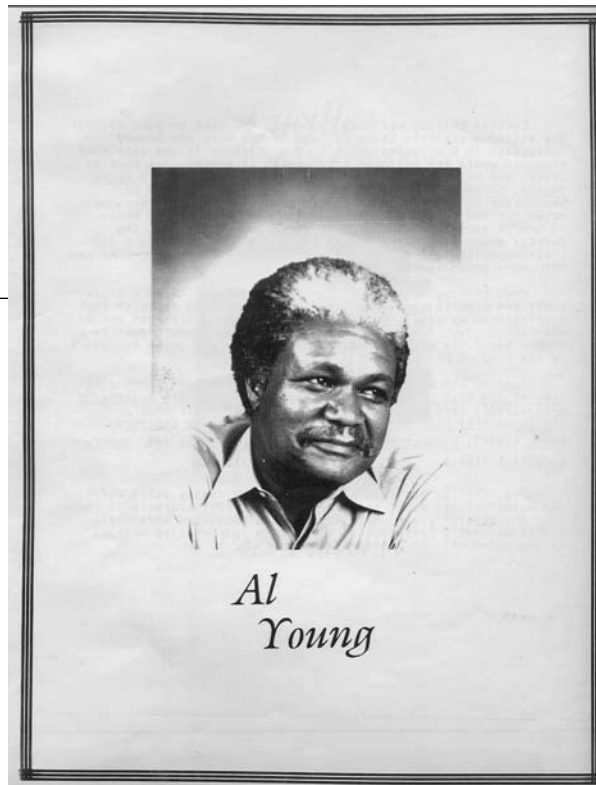
California's poets are among the most prestigious in the nation. They have received numerous significant awards including the Nobel Prize, Pulitzer Prize, National Book Award and some have served as United States' Poets Laureate, like Robert Haas, a San Francisco native, and Robert Pinsky who attended Stanford University. California's poets also come from every ethnic, religious, and geographic region of the state, and have provided a great source of inspiration to their communities, students, and the people of California.

a book and recognize streets that you drive or walk daily. Everyone in the group could identify a landmark – what a good feeling! A few members were already acquainted with Mr. Young as a friend or instructor, though this writer was not.

In the spring of 1984, Peninsula Book Club held its first writer's forum. Paule Marshall was that year's featured speaker. When the time came to choose the artist for the 1985 forum, Al Young's name was at the top of the list.

From a booklet, "Black Writers' Forum '86" (an event co-sponsored by the Peninsula Book Club, Santa Clara University's Ethnic Studies Program and Student Resource Center) comes the following statement regarding the history of PBC:

The highlight of 1985 was the club's second writers' forum that was held at Vinson and Jewel Hudson's home in Atherton. Palo Alto novelist, poet, and screenwriter, Al Young, enraptured an audience of fifty people by reading from some of his novels, essays, and poetry. Al's singing pleased PBC guests, too.



From a biographical sketch printed in the "Black Writers' Forum '86"

Mr. Young says of himself, "I am a storyteller, and my goal is to tell the story, in prose or poetry as honestly and as deeply as I can."

The "Black Writers' Forum" of 1986, which took place at Santa Clara University's Louis B Mayer Theatre on a rainy March 15, was a big day for the Peninsula Book Club. A lot of work had gone into setting things up to run smoothly. De Anza College instructor Omonike Weusi-Puryear and this writer had the responsibility of preparing the booklet which included PBC's history, a reading list from the last 3 years, and a biography and photo of Al Young, featured speaker. It was to be a day on which interested individuals could listen to the noted storyteller and perhaps have a chance to read their own works for the renowned writer. Mr. Young and a large audience of amateur writers from ages 7 to 70 arrived and took their seats in spite of the downpour. Most of the attendees clutched notebooks or tucked into their pockets sheets of paper containing personal writings. Al Young listened carefully and addressed their issues.

The evening session of the 1986 "Forum" featured Al Young and Lucille Clifton. This time it was an all-adult audience. Clifton, whose work centered on children's poetry, was a visiting poet at UC Santa Cruz at the time and, along with Young, enthralled those in attendance.

At the end of the evening assembly, Young autographed many books for his audience. One book club member, short of money to purchase a book she now desperately wanted, was observed by him searching her pockets. Mr. Young offered her the book as a gift and included an enchanting message with his autograph as he signed *Who is Angelina?* to her, on a very memorable occasion for all.

BLACK WRITERS' FORUM '86

CO-SPONSORED BY THE PENINSULA BOOK CLUB,
SANTA CLARA UNIVERSITY'S ETHNIC STUDIES PROGRAM
and
STUDENT RESOURCE CENTER

**LOUIS B. MAYER THEATRE
SANTA CLARA UNIVERSITY
SAT., MARCH 15, 1986**

Oral History Program

continued from page 3

The project goals for the De Anza College History Department and CHC Oral History Project as outlined by Howard-Pitney and Izu are:

1. To integrate oral history-related assignments into De Anza College courses where appropriate. This includes having students learn to do basic research and interview work with family members and members of the local community. Classes in U.S. and California history, as well as some special courses, related to leadership training, retention, and special needs groups, have already begun to integrate oral history work into their curricula.

2. To work with various community organizations and clubs to create community history projects that utilize oral history-related

research and interviews. This includes projects that may focus on particular ethnic or neighborhood groups, particular time periods, occupations, or other social or cultural issues.

3. To explore new technologies that allow for creative ways to utilize oral history materials, preserve these materials, and to make them accessible to students and the community. There is much interest in using various multi-media technologies to record and create documents that capture individual and group histories. Also, digital technology offers innovative ways of both storing and disseminating complete projects.

To find out more information about the project, please contact Tom Izu at (408) 864-8986 or by e-mail, izutom@deanza.edu.

Oral History Tips

While oral histories can be completed by most anyone with some practice, and can range from family histories to academic research, it is in general, a serious business involving people, their individual feelings and rights, and the community they are from. Care needs to be taken to conduct oral history interviews with consideration and reflection on both one's role as an interviewer and the impact on the person being interviewed.

More information is available about oral histories and how to do them. Below are some basic pointers Anne Hickling recommends for those interested in doing oral histories. In addition, CHC's Stockmeir Library and Archives has a number of books on the subject, and websites such as the UC Berkeley Regional Oral History Office (<http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/ROHO/>) have links to various references and a bibliography. Anne Hickling has her own site entitled, "Oral History and History Collected in Santa Clara County: A Journal from Silicon Valley" (<http://home.earthlink.net/~ahickling/ochronicles.htmls>).

Top Ten Steps in an Oral History Project

1. choose person you are interested in and get her/his permission
2. do background research for the interview
3. write questions for the interview
4. practice with equipment
5. interview
6. index tape/ digital file of interview
7. create your final version of your project
 - written/ audio/video version
8. have narrator review interviewer's work
9. have narrator sign release form
10. archive work
 - document
 - make available to public

Writing Good Questions

- keep questions simple
- don't suggest an answer in a question
- ask open ended questions that can't easily be answered "yes" or "no" – or if you do, ask for "a little more about that" or say "could you elaborate?"
- ask who? what? when? where? how? why?
- ask different kinds of questions including those which ask for facts, for descriptions, for stories, about values and ideas, and for interpretations/ meanings of events (see reverse side)
- ask for examples
- think through an indirect question ahead of time for asking delicate, personal questions (respect any request not to include certain information)
- decide the best order for your questions – taking an extra fifteen minutes to do this is essential for a good interview

"There are some essential qualities an interviewer must possess: an interest and respect for people as individuals, and flexibility in response to them; an ability to show understanding and sympathy for their point of view; and, above all, a willingness to sit quietly and listen."

–from Paul Thompson, The Voice of the Past: Oral History (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978)

FOUNDATION NOTES

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June Ladd, Robert Levy, Margaret Liberatos, Don McDonald, Ron Olmstead, Letizia Picchetti, Joseph Rosenbaum, Karen Skahill, Maryann Skitarelic, Margaret Smith, Marie Smith, Rosemary Stevens, Edward Swift, Paul Trimble, Bev Walz, Beth Wyman, Don Yeager.

Foothill-De Anza Community College District Employee Payroll Deduction

The following employees of the college district have generously given through the college's payroll deduction plan:

Diana E. Argabrite, Gregory Anderson, Thomas Beggs, Mary Browning, Susan Bruch, Cindy Castillo, Karen Chow, Tracy Chung-Tabangcura, Judy C. Coleman, Gregory Druehl, Linda Elvin, Joyce Feldman, Denis Gates, Richard Hansen, Jeanine Hawk, David Howard-Pitney, Judy Miner, Judith Mowrey, Hieu Nguyen, Francisco Nunez, Robert Pierce, George Robles, Paul Setziol, Tomas Strand, John Swensson, Renato Tuazon, Pauline E. Waathiq, Rhoda Wang, Pauline Yeckley

New Board Member for CHCF

Vicki Atherton is CHCF's newest board member, having joined in February. Atherton recently retired as Director of Evergreen Valley College's library where she oversaw the planning, design and construction of the campus's new library facility. She is especially proud of the work she did to create the Evergreen Heritage Room housed in the library and providing space for local history collections and for research work by students.

She has many years of experience as a librarian, including service with California State University Fullerton, Downey Public Library, Los Angeles County

Library, Mountain View Public Library, and San Jose Public Library.

"Working with the well established California History Center will be a privilege and will give me an opportunity to develop my interest and knowledge in the wider area of Silicon Valley history. I am especially interested in outreach to the community in oral history: gathering, storing and making the stories of the valley's diverse people easily available for personal interest and research," Atherton explained regarding her decision to join CHCF's Board of Trustees.

She currently resides in Campbell with her husband Alan.

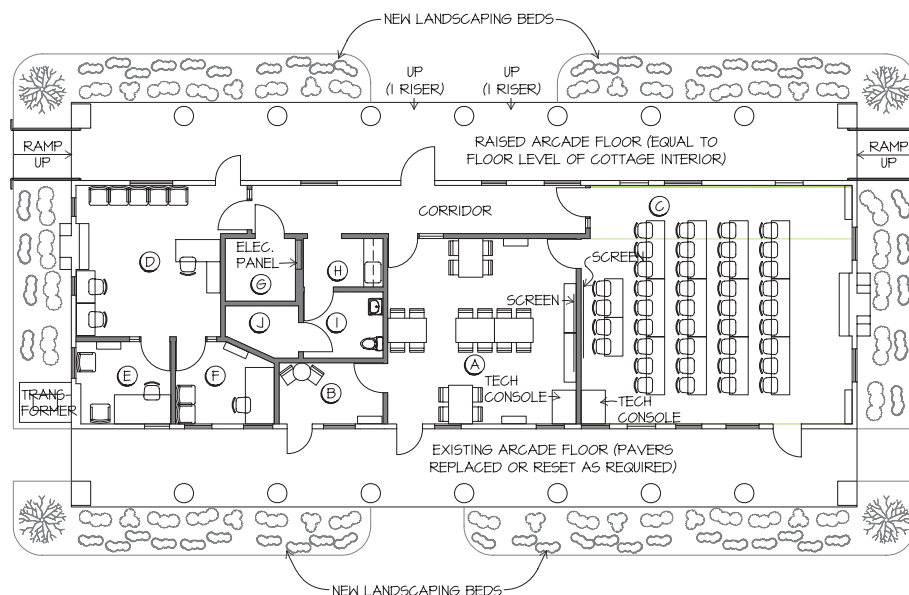


Vicki Atherton, new CHCF Board Member

FOUNDATION NOTES

After Long Wait, Cottage Rehabilitation on the Way!

by Tom Izu



AREAS

- (A) Resource Room: 314 (seating for 20)
- (B) Interview Room: 68 (seating for 2)
- (C) Classroom: 684 (seating for 40)
- (D) ICCE Reception: 246
- (E) ICCE Office: 81
- (F) ICCE Office: 81
- (G) Technology Closet: 47
- (H) Kitchenette: 41
- (I) Toilet Room: 56
- (J) Janitor Closet: 35

Architectural Resources Group's proposed floor plan for the cottage.

De Anza College is in the process of completing preliminary plans for the rehabilitation of the remaining cottage next to the California History Center. The cottage will house the Institute for Community and Civic Engagement (an innovative program that connects students and classes directly with community groups) and a Social Sciences and Humanities Research and Resource Laboratory.

The cottage is one of two original structures accompanying the CHC's main building designed by San Francisco architect, Willis Polk, as part of the Baldwin estate in the late 1800s. Both cottages were used as quarters for the estate's workers and guests, and were significant examples of Polk's "Mission Revival Style." In the summer of 2007, one of the cottages was demolished to make way for a perimeter road extension project. The remaining cottage was slated for rehabilitation using Measure C funding. Under the leadership of Dean Carolyn Wilkins-Greene of the Social Sciences and Humanities Division and Vice President of Finance, Jeanine Hawk, a planning committee worked with architects hired by the college district - The

Architectural Resources Group - to create a proposed floor plan and program use plan for the cottage. Cost estimates and further planning are now underway for the project.

The project calls for retaining the cottage's original exterior look to the extent possible, but also requires extensive corrective work to the cottage's interior which has suffered water damage and accompanying mold and mildew problems. Fortunately, the architects believe that the cottage is structurally sound.

The Social Sciences and Humanities Resource and Research Laboratory will include a resource room, an oral history interview room and a seminar style classroom space; all to be used by campus faculty and students to create community based research projects which will enhance classroom instruction. Projects envisioned include geographic and historic studies of the local area, and oral history projects focusing on specific communities, locations, and significant historical events. The California History Center, as a member of the division, features prominently in the cottage's new use. The CHC will be involved in promoting community history and research work by providing classes

with research materials from its library/archives and by supporting community-based research projects with various other groups. The lab will become the home of its nascent oral history program as well.

This project will give CHC a chance to further the promotion of its unique "hands on history" approach developed by CHC founders years ago. In its new "life", the cottage will become a link between our campus and the community, creating a focal point for community-based research that brings together campus researchers and community organizations interested in documenting and understanding our valley better. It will be an inviting, innovative, and very creative place for the entire region.

Plans for the revitalized cottage call for an entrance hall with wall space for exhibits. Since it is a unique structure that really stands out, it will attract attention from students and community guests as they enter the campus from the north end. It can be used to showcase the work that CHC and other campus and community groups are doing, while also demonstrating the benefits of historic preservation.

The California History Center Foundation invites you to two receptions at the California History Center, De Anza College

Al Young

California's Poet Laureate

Tuesday, May 6
4:00 – 6:00 p.m.

Meet poet, author, and screenwriter Al Young and enjoy refreshments and good company at the California History Center! Winner of numerous awards for his work in a variety of literary formats, Young has also taught and lectured throughout the nation and the world. He was appointed Poet Laureate of California in 2005.

Al Young will be on campus for the De Anza College LitFest: A Multicultural Literary Arts Festival with funding provided by De Anza College Strategic Planning Community Collaborations Initiative and DASB. Funding for the reception provided by the California History Center Foundation. Additional sponsors include: APAX (Asian Pacific American eXpressions), Institute for Community and Civic Engagement, Language Arts Division, ¡LEAD! (Latino/a empowerment at De Anza), Writing and Reading Center, and Red Wheelbarrow (De Anza's literary magazine).

Francisco Jimenez

Award Winning Author

Thursday, May 8
1:45 – 3:45 p.m.

Talk with author and Santa Clara University Professor Dr. Francisco Jimenez at an informal reception. Dr. Jimenez's award winning works include, *The Circuit: Stories from the Life of a Migrant Child (Cajas de cartón)*, *Breaking Through (Senderos fronterizos)*, *La Mariposa*, and *The Christmas Gift/El regalo de Navidad*.

Dr. Jimenez will be on campus for the De Anza College LitFest: A Multicultural Literary Arts Festival with funding provided by De Anza College Strategic Planning Community Collaborations Initiative and DASB. Funding for the reception provided by the California History Center Foundation. Additional sponsors include: APAX (Asian Pacific American eXpressions), Institute for Community and Civic Engagement, Language Arts Division, ¡LEAD! (Latino/a empowerment at De Anza), Writing and Reading Center, and Red Wheelbarrow (De Anza's literary magazine).

Both events are wheel chair accessible and open to the public. Parking available in the Flint Center parking structure for \$2.00. To RSVP and for more information, please call Tom Izu at (408) 864-8986.



California History Center & Foundation

A Center for the Study of State and Regional History
De Anza College

21250 Stevens Creek Blvd., Cupertino, CA 95014 (408) 864-8712
Fax: (408) 864-5486 Web: www.calhistory.org

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or call for an appointment.

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Your contribution is tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. The value of goods received as a benefit of membership must be deducted from the amount of all contributions claimed as a deduction. CHCF members receive issues of *The Californian* magazine and members who contribute at the \$50 level and above also receive a yearly Local History Studies publication.

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