UC SANTA BARBARA

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Shelly Leachman

Race to Justice Continues

As the country remains at an inflection point on race and racism, UC Santa Barbara's Race to Justice series, which is taking a season-long look at issues of systemic racism and its impact on society, this month presents special virtual events featuring acclaimed authors Ta-Nehisi Coates and Isabel Wilkerson.

The series engages leading activists, creatives and thinkers in expanding our collective understanding of racism and inspiring an expansive approach to advancing racial equality. It is the result of a collaboration across campus between Arts & Lectures, the Division of Social Sciences, the Department of Black Studies and others.

"Race to Justice has been a profound series of events, and it has been gratifying to see it resonate with so many in our campus community, our Santa Barbara community, and beyond," said Celesta Billeci, the executive director of Arts & Lectures. "Ta-Nehisi Coates and Isabel Wilkerson are true forces, and we know these will be powerful events to close the first leg of the series."

Coates, whose nonfiction work "Between the World and Me" won the National Book Award in 2015, will give a talk at 5 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 12, followed by a Q&A moderated by Terrance Wooten, an assistant professor of Black studies at UC Santa Barbara. Tickets are $10 for non-UC Santa Barbara students and may be purchased here.

Hailed as one of the most vital public intellectuals of our time, Coates also is the author of the bestsellers “Beautiful Struggle” and “We Were Eight Years in Power.” His debut novel, “The Water Dancer,” was released in September 2019.

“Ta-Nehisi Coates has, throughout his career, offered incisive and sharp analysis of how race structures and informs our everyday lives,” said Wooten. “Whether through his essays, his comics, his new novel or his public speaking, he invites his audience to face the many hard truths about what it means to exist while Black in the United States of America. One would be hard-pressed to walk away from his work thinking there isn’t work to be done in the U.S. to repair the wounds that white supremacy has inflicted on the Black body and the Black community.

“Coates insists that we must remember; or, more pointedly, that we cannot forget. Must not forget,” Wooten continued. “It has only been through a kind of cyclical racial amnesia that we are able to say, ‘this is not who we are as a nation’ when responding to incidents of anti-Black violence. Coates urges to understand that in order to move toward justice — indeed, to race toward it — we must first and foremost start at the place of remembering our Black history, centering the voices of the marginalized and investing in structural solutions as a form of healing.”

Wilkerson, the Pulitzer Prize-winning author and recipient of the National Humanities Medal, will speak about her new book, “Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents,” at 5 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 26. Her talk will be followed by a Q&A moderated by Ingrid Banks, professor and chair of Black studies. Tickets are $10 for non-UC Santa Barbara students and may be purchased here.

Wilkerson’s debut work, “The Warmth of Other Suns,” won the National Book Critics Circle Award, among other honors. Her most recent work examines the unspoken caste system that has shaped America and shows how our lives continue to be defined by a hierarchy of human divisions.

“Both Ta-Nehisi Coates’ and Isabel Wilkerson’s work illustrate that despite what some have been commenting about the recent riot at the U.S. Capitol, the brazen act by Trump supporters is absolutely who we are as a nation,” said Banks. “It is not how we want to be perceived, but white supremacy and privilege are a part of our past and present. The Race to Justice series winter programming will continue to shed light on the good, bad and ugly in our quest to not merely speak about democratic ideals, but make those ideals a reality for all citizens.”

Arts & Lectures presents Race to Justice in association with the following UC Santa Barbara campus partners: Department of Black Studies; Center for Black Studies Research; Division of Social Sciences; Division of Humanities and Fine Arts; Division of Mathematical, Life, and Physical Sciences; Division of Student Affairs; Gevirtz Graduate School of Education; Graduate Division; College of Creative Studies; College of Engineering; MultiCultural Center; The Carsey-Wolf Center; UCSB Reads; Office of the Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; and Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor.

Lead sponsors for the Race to Justice series include Marcy Carsey, Connie Frank & Evan Thompson, Patty & John MacFarlane, Sara Miller McCune, Santa Barbara Foundation, Lynda Weinman & Bruce Heavin, Dick Wolf, and Zegar Family Foundation.

More information about series events, including tickets and registration, can be found at UCSB Arts & Lectures.

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.