

What It Means to Be “American”: A Dialogue
Temple University
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Wednesday, March 29th, 2006
Gladfelter Hall, 10th Floor Conference Room at 3p.m.

Guest Facilitator: Elvinet S. Wilson, M.A.
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Background and Rationale for Dialogue

The quest to explain the current paradox of globalization has made debates on immigration and border crossing exceedingly complex. This complexity exists in both the nature and significance of citizenship discourse and the impact of those who challenge that discourse, making it increasingly difficult to predict the future of local and international relations. Such overall complexity has caused nations and individuals alike to act out of fear at the same time as it improves the possibilities for cross-cultural communication, peaceful accords and information exchange. The primary motivation of my research is to critique the hegemonic discourses of colonization and imperialism within the dynamic and complex cultural context of the current historical moment. At the same time, my work seeks to locate effective empirical and practical approaches to the study of immigrant discourse that advance our understandings of processes of globalization toward a sustainable future.

My research agenda, more specifically, seeks to address issues of intercultural contact and cultural practices within global and historical perspectives. My goal is often to interrogate intercultural sites of hybridity produced by migration, nomadism, transnationalism and diaspora. I want to engage the broad spaces of liminality where cultures tend to blend or clash; where individuals find agency in the resistance, rejection and parody of dominant discourses.

A passion for traveling, understanding different cultures and histories, and my own experience of becoming a permanent resident of the United States are what continue to motivate my interests in Intercultural Communication as a program of study and an area of specialty.

In November, 2004, my research paper, “Big Wheels Keep on Turnin’: The Persistence of Anti-Racist-White-Hero Films and the Negative Depiction of Black

Women's Sexuality" received Top Paper honors at the National Communication Association Convention in Chicago, Illinois. In April, 2005 I was one of many guest scholars nominated and invited to participate in the Occupied Spaces Research Symposium at Ithaca College in New York. I am currently working on a project I call, "Taking Voices of Discovery to the Community College," which seeks to effectively transfer an established 6-week dialogue program from Arizona State University, a research intensive university with a large, diverse student population and offer the same opportunities for dialogue to students at a smaller community college in Mesa, Arizona. "What it Means to Be American" is part of my larger project to continually allow students more opportunities to engage in public dialogues on issues of identity and diversity on a variety of campuses.