

Poet John Espinoza to be Featured in Last Distinguished Writers Event of the Year

By **Saúl Galdamez Gonzalez**
Staff Writer

Poet John Olivares Espinoza will read from his first book of poetry, "The Date Fruit Elegies," at the Cal State East Bay Hayward campus May 20 as the next featured speaker in the university's Distinguished Writers Series.

The event is being sponsored by the College of Letters, Arts, and Social Sciences as well as the school's English Department and will be held in the Biella Room of the university library.

Espinoza is best described as a working class Mexican-American poet who writes a lot about his father, a first generation Mexican immigrant.

Espinoza will be reading selections from his book, many of which the audience will find touching.

"What can be expected are lots of stories and hopefully lots of laughs," said Espinoza.

His book, "The Date Fruit Elegies," was nominated by the Northern California Book Reviewers for a Northern California Book Award in Poetry.

Copies of his book will be available for \$10 and he will be doing book signings after his reading. Refreshments will be served.

Espinoza currently resides in San Jose and teaches English and Composition at The National Hispanic University.

Espinoza is originally from southern California and attended the University of California, Riverside where he studied creative writing under Christopher Buckley, who is also a poet.

Espinoza also studied at Arizona

State University where he was a part of the MEA program.

This is the fourth year of The California State University, East Bay Distinguished Writers Series and it is an increasingly important campus institution.

"The series is fostering to the illiterate community as well as reaching out to the wider community," said CSUEB's Steve Gutierrez, director of creative writing and an English professor.

The series was started by the former dean of the College of Letters, Arts, and Social Sciences and is currently being warmly embraced by English Department Chair James Murphy.

Each year three prominent writers—either two poets and a fiction writer or two fiction writers and a poet—are invited to take part in the series.

This year the program has had a very successful run with writers Dorothy Allison and Kirk Nisset participating in the series.

Espinoza will be the last speaker for the year.

"He is an excellent poet whose poems are about the working class people," said Gutierrez. "Some of his poems are touching on the immigrant experience and should appeal to all."

Espinoza looks forward to the May 20 event as this will be the very first time he will be speaking at the university.

"I hope to make it worth everyone's time," said Espinoza.

That same night three Bay Area residents will be recognized for placing first, second, and third in the DeClercq Student Poetry



John Olivares Espinoza: Poet to visit CSUEB.

Photo/Courtesy Diane Daniels, CLASS

Contest.

Melanie Roland, Natalie Garcia, and Alysa Machado will receive their awards at the event featuring Espinoza.

Two others will be recognized for their entries in the contest that night.

Lynette Jones-Lipscomb of Oakland and Diana Ramos Firestone

Want to Teach?

By **Jack Cheng**
Staff Writer

Individuals interested in teaching are invited to Cal State East Bay's Day of the Teacher Conference Saturday at the university's Concord Campus at 4700 Ygnacio Valley Road in Concord.

The annual conference is expected to have 80 to 100 participants with a gathering of workshops intended for prospecting teachers. The opportu-

nity will help teachers get tips from experienced teaching professionals, network with representatives of school districts and receive valuable teaching methods.

Mark Morello, Contra Costa County Teacher of the Year, will be addressing at this years conference.

The cost of attendance is \$10, which includes a continental breakfast and access to workshops.

Register online at www.concord.csueastbay.edu/teacherday.html.

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Theatre Dept. Stages Newbery Winner

By **Rhonda R. Featherson**
Staff Writer

Have you ever wondered what life would feel like without pain? Sorrow? Color?

Cal State East Bay's theatre department answers these questions in its production of "The Giver."

The play takes viewers on a journey into the life of a 12-year-old girl whose destiny is decided by the people of her community. When her life and the truth is more than she can handle, she sets off to solve her own problems and unveil the secrets within her community.

"The Giver" is a play adapted by Eric Coble based on a book by Lois Lowry. The book won the Newbery Award—given to the best

children's book—in 1994.

The CSUEB production is directed by A. Fajilan. The play features an inspiring cast of 12, which makes up for the minimalist approach that has been taken in set design and props.

The cast seemed well rehearsed and comfortable in their parts during the play's premiere last week. This is an accomplishment, since they were mostly adult performers playing children ages 12 and younger.

"We started rehearsing in January and worked on through the months; they went by quick," said Steven Ennis, who plays the character Finnian.

One standout was the character Lily, played by Phuong Hoang. Her character is the younger sister of

the protagonist, Jordan. Hoang sets no limits to what she will do to portray a naive little girl. She climbs under tables, jumps on stools and hops all around the stage to do her character justice.

Hoang's character seemed awkward, confused and trusting – just like a little girl. She provides an excellent contrast to the main character, Jordan. The two characters complement each other, making the plot relevant and perceivable.

This play is not like what one usually sees. From beginning to end it engages the audience in a circle of lies, deceit and naivety—all in a little less than an hour.

Audience member Shannon Ennis said, "I enjoyed the play. I have read the book and the play is very

similar to the book."

Ennis said the play does a good job of bringing to life Lowry's story and allows viewers to get a glimpse of what society would look like without the simple liberties of choice and expression.

"The Giver" will continue in the CSUEB Campus Theatre, with a showing on Friday, May 8 at 7 p.m. and showings on Saturday, May 9 at 3 p.m. and 7 p.m.

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