



*The School of Journalism and Mass Communications Premieres*  
***'The Barbershop Diaries'***

**February 8, 2015, 3 pm – 5 pm      Morris Dailey Auditorium**

**Honoring South Bay Area African-American Barbers and Beauty Salon Owners  
A Special Black History Month Celebration**

*The barbershop "is the place where the black man means something, the cornerstone of the neighborhood, the black man's country club." – Barbershop, the motion picture.*

As part of Black History Month celebrations in February 2015, the School of Journalism and Mass Communications at San Jose State University will launch the world premiere of the documentary report *"The Barbershop Diaries,"* and unveil portraits saluting South Bay Area African American barbers and beauty salon owners on Sunday, February 8, from 3 pm to 5 pm, at Morris Dailey Auditorium.

Barbershops have historically been grooming places where commerce, culture, masculinity and politics intersect. Often the barber's chair is where the customer unloads his woes while getting a cut and a shave. This project flips the script and explores the eclectic lives of ten barbers who work at Barbers Inc., a neighborhood barbershop in downtown San Jose.

Two are former inmates, now seeking salvation, redemption and "a chance to make things right." Others are a budding actor and screenwriter; a lesbian barber who juggles a domestic relationship and her mother's stage four breast cancer; a promising model and singer; a tattooed, man-child who was headed for "jail or the graveyard"; a "my faith comes first" Muslim, who struggles to find a quiet place to pray during work hours; an unassuming Ethiopian immigrant, who lost his security guard job, and used his jobless benefits to pay for barber college; and a young apprentice barber, still studying for his license, with two toddlers in tow.

The shop is owned by Dave Diggs, an enterprising, former San Jose State engineering student, who dropped out of college his sophomore year, and into crime, drugs, stolen property and credit card fraud. Facing 42-years, Diggs was released in 2009, after serving five years in prison. In 2011, he earned his barbers license, and turned to the only friend he said that stood by him. Omar Benson Miller, a 2001 SJSU theater graduate, helped Diggs raise the financing to open Barbers Inc. Omar, an accomplished actor – CSI Miami – among other roles, was also interviewed for the project.

Along with premiering *The Barbershop Diaries*, the School of Journalism and Mass Communications will unveil a portrait gallery showcasing photographs taken by photojournalism students of South Bay Area African-American barbershop and beauty salon owners, honoring these business pioneers for their contributions to their communities.

Two years in production, *The Barbershop Diaries*, is a community journalism, civic engagement project produced by SJSU multimedia students, and directed by their professor, award winning documentary filmmaker and photojournalist, Dr. D. Michael Cheers. The project is comprised of digital documentary storytelling, audiovisual slide shows and text. The presentation and the portrait gallery will be hosted exclusively online.

“This is the last in a series of trilogy projects that examines how engaging and compelling visual storytelling impacts community,” Cheers said. “In 2010, we premiered *Soul Sanctuary*, an in-depth look at the challenges facing the aging congregation and leadership at Antioch Baptist Church, the oldest African American Baptist Church in San Jose.

“In 2013, *Dream Fulfilled, Dream Deferred*, was a sobering and emotional look at urban violence through the eyes of two San Jose families affected by gun and gang violence. *The Barbershop Diaries* afforded me the opportunity to spend time inside the shop’s hallowed public space, peer into the diverse lives of these barbers, and share with the public their personal stories of triumph over adversity, naysayers, personal demons and the stumbling blocks and hurdles of life.”

Cheers said his next documentary, already in production, takes him to San Francisco’s North Bay. “In a few years, we will debut, ‘*And Live Rejoicing Everyday - Oh Happy Day.*’ In 1967, Edwin Hawkins, a 24-year-old self-taught keyboard player from Oakland, rearranged the refrain of a mid-18<sup>th</sup> century English hymn. Hawkins’s funk-style, ultra-hip “*Oh Happy Day*” song became a global anthem transcending religious denominations and world cultures. 2019 marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the release of the song that became the first contemporary gospel crossover hit on the pop charts.”

All of these efforts support the goals of the SJSU School of Journalism and Mass Communications diversity mission statement. It states, in part, “As an integral part of our overall educational mission, we recognize and value public understanding of all expressions of cultural diversity. Through our academic degree programs and public service efforts, we prepare future media professionals in all forms of global communications with a commitment to responsible outreach and inclusion of all people. We do this best by respectfully identifying and addressing, in a timely, fair and truthful way, issues of race and ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religious cultures and disability in our nation and global community.”

For more information, contact Dr. D. Michael Cheers through the JMC School Office at 408-924-3240.

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