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Ambassador Brings Culture to Classroom

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In efforts to expand her historic survey of costume class, Professor Rosemary Reed Miller has called in Papua New Guinean ambassador Evan Paki.

"The book [she uses in class] tries to be multi-cultural," Reed Miller said.

However, a book that is written in English and geared towards an American audience and an American way of thinking can only reach so far.

Reed Miller has also had two Indian women, a Pakistani woman and a lady from the Washington National Opera come to her class to speak about clothing and customs.

"I was trying to reach out to different cultures and people," she said.

Reed Miller said that Paki is the neighbor of a friend and she is particularly excited to have him grace her learning sanctuary.

Aboriginals inhabited the land for over 80,000 years, and Reed Miller said that they must have had some mixture with Africans.

"They look even more like Afro-Americans," Miller said. "I thought students would be interested or even intrigued to see someone standing before them who looks like their uncles or father."

Paki holds a Master of Laws (LLM) degree from Harvard Law School where he was a Fulbright Scholar.

Some of his embassy's achievements and priorities included enhancing his country's relations with the United States and Canada, across a variety of areas and persuading former President Bill Clinton to visit Papua New Guinea in December 2006.

Here, he launched the a program with the William Jefferson Clinton Foundation to partner with the Papua New Guinea government in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

He has also developed partnerships with several North American foundations, universities, museums, public service entities and other non-profit organizations in connection with various development programs and initiatives in Papua New Guinea.

Paki is also the founding chairman of the Pacific Islands Ambassadors Group in Washington D.C., a diplomatic group that seeks to highlight the unique interests and concerns of the 14 Pacific Island nations.

Although Paki's traveling schedule is hectic, Reed Miller said that he isn't out of touch with the trends and styles of his native land, for he goes there quite often.

While many Aboriginals wear jeans now, Reed Miller says that others still opt for the traditional clothing that we may call costumes and sport the body designs that most Americans call tattoos.

In Papua New Guinea, Reed Miller says that the international language is known as Pigeon but several languages with over 600 dialects have been identified.

"Whatever he says will be different, interesting and even illuminating for students," Reed Miller said. "It stretches you. This is a little different thing."

She said all of the speakers are "amplifying the lecture."

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