

BY RACHEL MORTON

What Are You?

Kip Fulbeck knows firsthand what it's like to deal with issues of identity. His ancestry is Chinese and American, and he has experienced what it means to be someone of mixed race, someone who can't find an appropriate box to check on a census form, someone who gets asked, often by complete strangers, "What are you?"

Fulbeck came to campus as the first speaker in this year's Serving and Shaping Her World Speakers Series. His presentation, part stand-up comedy, part serious social commentary, delighted the audience. The artist, slam poet, and author is also a professor at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and he speaks around the country at colleges and other venues, educating and entertaining people on the topic of identity and race.

In his latest project, the Hapa Project ("Hapa" is a derogatory label derived from the Hawaiian word for "half"), Fulbeck went around the country photographing people of mixed race and having them write, in their own hand, a response to the question "What are you?" The result was a series of striking images amplified by the handwritten statements. Those images have been exhibited widely and are gathered together in a book, *Part Asian, 100% Hapa*. Excerpts of this book and others written by Fulbeck can be viewed on his Web site, www.thehapaproject.com.

After the assembly, there was a crowded book signing event and his book sold out within minutes. Fulbeck also participated in English classes, visited the school's literary magazine group, *Triangle*, and came to the swim team's practice (he is a world-ranked master's swimmer). He stayed for lunch, and then dinner, and his day at Emma gave students a new perspective on identity.

An excerpt from Fulbeck's remarks:

I was born in a time where it was illegal for my parents to be married. I tell people that, especially high school kids, they're like, WHAT?! I was born in 1965.

A lot has changed since I was a kid. We didn't have the Internet. Didn't have ATMs. I said this at a high school recently and a kid asked me, "Did you have money?" YES, we had money, it wasn't the barter system! We had money!

You're young enough that you'll be able to tell your kids you lived in a time when gays and lesbians couldn't be married. Your kids will be like, "What? That's stupid!"

That will change in your lifetime.

I photographed people around the country, people who didn't fit into one race.

Identity isn't something I get to tell you, or anyone else gets to tell you. Only you get to decide.

We love to put a label on people. Like, you come from California. Oh, you go to Emma Willard. I do it all the time. Oh, a banker guy. Oh, a soccer mom.

In the census you are allowed to check more than one box. But it's still their boxes. They have a box that says, Non-Hispanic White. You can't check Jewish. Why? It's not really a race.

You know what everyone in this room is? African. That's it. There is no genetic basis to human race. There is no biological difference. e

