

# All Eyes On: Sal Costa

BY BETHANY COURY  
Staff Reporter

In a semi-lit room full of students, he told junior Dustin Howard to abandon all tension and stress, starting from his toes all the way to his scalp, leading him to dive into a pool of clouds. Psychology professor Sal Costa was hypnotizing Howard.

Costa is trained in hypnotism and has been practicing it for 18 years. He teaches an interim class about hypnosis every year, leads research teams on it and takes advantage of its therapeutic uses for those who need it.

Howard, who was hypnotized at the psychology club meeting Sept. 28, said the session left him the most relaxed he's ever been.

"Relax" was the word of the night: Costa said it 73 times during his 14-minute hypnosis session. He said he reiterates the idea of no stress, no tension and relaxation when he hypnotizes so the person will not feel uncomfortable with the process.

Howard said he wasn't worried. Sitting in front of the students, hands resting on his legs, Howard closed his eyes as Costa walked him through the process.

"Relax the muscles in your toes ... relax the muscles in your back ... feel the relaxation in your eyelids. Relax, relax, relax," Costa said until

Howard's head was perpendicular to his body. He led Howard into a post-hypnotic hallucination, where Howard forgot the number six exists upon instruction.

Costa said he's done many of these demonstrations for interested students, including one in which he told the student he would see the face of Sylvester Stallone on everyone. The student went into the hallway and laughed when he saw everyone's faces, including then University President Jack Magruder.

Although these sessions of post-hypnotic hallucination can be amusing, hypnosis isn't a form of entertainment as many TV hypnotics suggest, he said. The American Medical Association deemed it a medical tool in 1958, and Costa stressed the importance of treating it as such.

Costa said besides academic demonstrations, he uses hypnosis strictly as hypnotherapy, whether for stress management, memory recall or anxiety. He said he scrutinizes the situations to ensure the issues aren't medical.

"I try to use [hypnosis] as much as I can," Costa said. "When people want it, I try to help them out."

Costa is known by students and faculty for helping people, and hypnosis is just one way in which he does it, said registrar secretary Melissa Rodham. An adviser to eight student organizations and a full-



Bethany Coury/Index

Psychology professor Sal Costa has been practicing hypnotism for 18 years and often hypnotizes his students by coaxing them into a state of relaxation.

time professor, Costa comes in to work at about 7 a.m. most days and leaves sometimes leaves as late as 10 p.m., he said. He drinks at least 10 cups of coffee a day, but that's not really what keeps him going, he said — it is helping students progress

and succeed.

Rodham said Costa actively is invested in his students. She said he always is coming in to the Registrar to check on their academic progress, ensuring they're on track. He also re-

quests students' addresses to send thank you letters, or sympathy letters when there's a death in the family, she said.

"Sal is very passionate about his work, very passionate," Rodham said. "He goes above and beyond."

## Speaker entertains while avoiding offending

BY EMILY BATTMER  
Staff Reporter

Aasif Mandvi, "The Daily Show" actor, comedian and university speaker, appeared at 7 p.m. Oct. 1 in Baldwin Auditorium to discuss his role on the fake news show — a role based largely on his Middle Eastern background. His performance proved his comedy centers around his race, and though his jokes often were less than politically correct, the crowd did not seem to take offense.

During his presentation, Mandvi said he began his career on "The Daily Show" in 2006. Since then, he said, he's been known as the show's representative not only for Middle Eastern culture, but also any culture that isn't Caucasian.

Mandvi's performance Saturday night represented many minority groups, espe-

cially the Muslim population. He opened his set with a string of jokes about Islamic culture — satirizing everything from traditional Muslim dress to terrorism.

While his ability to laugh at himself and his culture comprised a large part of his set, Islam was not the only butt of his jokes. His political jokes and clips of "The Daily Show" poked fun at everyone, including Native Americans, African Americans, Hispanics and Bon Jovi fans. He left no cultural or political barriers uncrossed.

The jokes were mostly based on strong racial stereotypes, but eruptive laughter and applause indicated it was all said for humor, even from members of those minorities.

Senior Samah Hassan, a fan of "The Daily Show," is Muslim and said she was not offended by Mandvi's comedy. She said she thought she could relate to the comedian.

"It's not offensive," Hassan said. "It's comedy. There's always room for comedy, for humor, especially when it's something that's sensitive. We can try to understand each other through humor."

While being a minority has its challenges, it also gives Mandvi inspiration for his acting roles and his comedy routine, Mandvi said. He said has become a face and a voice for Middle Eastern culture in show business.

"I think it probably adds more ideas to his skits," Hassan said. "He can bring it to light and share the humor."

Although presented in a comedic form, the event highlighted some serious issues Muslims face in the United States. Mandvi acknowledged the fear that exists, citing examples of Quran burning and mosque protests — then lightening the mood


with a joke. Even these more sensitive topics elicited laughter and applause.

"I didn't find anything particularly offensive," freshman Brian Cary said. "There are people who could be offended by anything. It's comedy."


Besides race-based comedy, Mandvi's performance included personal anecdotes from his experiences on the show and a question and answer session with fans afterward.

The Student Activities Board invited the comedian to campus after reviewing the results of a student survey last year, and they have not received any complaints from offended students, SAB member Diana Dietl said.

"I was expecting it to go well," Dietl said. "There are a lot of 'Daily Show' fans on campus. I think it was well received."



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