

# Sanibonai Open Mic Night

By Adjoa Aikins

In celebration of Black History Month, students, poets, musicians and artists alike, gathered in the Ellipse Gallery on the second floor of the Henry Madden Library Feb. 22, for the Sanibonai Open Mic Night.

The open-mic event gave students and the artists the space and opportunity to express their thoughts, emotions, frustrations, anger, trauma and joy.

Professor, program coordinator for the Africana Studies Program, Dr. Meta Schettler, also the event coordinator, wanted attendants to recognize the importance of discussing not only mental health within the Black community, but more specifically, understanding the meaning of Sanibonai or the plural form, "Sawubona."

Sawubona is a Zulu African greeting that translates into "I see you." Sawubona is used to appreciate, honor and value a person's worth and dignity. "Every open mic is really about that spirit of community, and of welcome, and of openness, and of nurturing creativity, and uplifting voices for everyone and to support," Dr. Schettler said.

She added, "I'm excited that we're starting it again cause I think that an open mic hasn't been hosted at Fresno State since about 2018. We used to have them every first Wednesday of the month during the semester, so being able to bring it back, I'm excited that we're going to keep going with the open mic."

In preparation for the event, students were given the option to reg-

ister through a QR code shared via social media, and on the event flyers posted around social media and on campus.

During the event, participants arriving were welcomed at the front of the room by Dr. Schettler, at a table with Black History Month bracelets and stickers. On the side of the room was an assortment of snacks and refreshments for the attendants.

With about 20 students conversing and laughing, the event started around 7 p.m. While some choose to recite poems and written pieces created for the event, others opted to share their own poems.

"Me and my family came, and it brought us together, and my brother went up today so I like the feeling that I had here. I would come back to the next event," said Kylie Christine Mathews, fifth year student, who attended the event with her family. Mathews performed several times during the event about her struggle with body image, race and her battle with Vitiligo, a skin condition which causes loss of melanin in large spots around the body.

When it comes to the impact this event will have on students and the Fresno community, Mathews believes that a lot of people could learn from hearing diverse voices within the community.

"Different races coming together to talk about their lives and you get to feel what other people go through. So I believe that this is a positive thing for Fresno State students and the community," Mathews said.