

Cultural Event Number Two

Event TWO: Highway Cleanup

Location: Boulder Canyon

Why did you choose this event? This is not a typical ‘cultural’ event, I understand. However, I’ve been to symphonies, plays, IFS films, and other performances recently (within the year) and did not want to simply repeat them for the sake of the assignment. I wanted this event to be a new experience. Loosely, I suppose that this can be called a cultural event because the state of nature is an issue that attracts major concern and attention throughout our society. Performing a highway cleanup, in my mind, is the same as going to a GreenPeace protest, which would be very cultural, except that by cleaning I actually did some good for the world. There was, granted, less symbolism to interpret and less fashion to admire than a play would offer, and less great music to appreciate than a philharmonic symphony could produce. However, in the process of doing the cleanup, I was able to take part in something that I have always thought highly of, and that has always inspired me towards refreshing my outlook toward the human race. Whenever I drive by herds of people carrying those orange plastic bags on the side of the road, I think to myself: “Oh yeah, I guess humans aren’t always as bad as I think.”

What aspect of this event did you enjoy the most? Why? More than anything, I enjoyed the experience of the moment. I was doing something that I had always wanted to do that was benefiting the environment. About one in ten cars that drove by honked in appreciation of what we were doing. That was very cool. I wondered how many of them that honked had actually held an orange trash bag. More, I wondered why more people didn’t honk. Why had more people not done what I was doing? Why were there people that could live with throwing all this trash out their window into the beautiful canyon? The existence of people with standards that low caused a need for a job like this. I didn’t especially enjoy picking up hundreds of cigarette butts, or old Coke cups, or diapers or socks or hubcaps or plastic bags. I enjoyed the sensation of benefiting in a way that I had never done before.

Write a brief summary of this event. I went up with a local non-Greek fraternity called Alpha Phi Omega, who actually has adopted a stretch of highway in Boulder Canyon. We parked, got our orange trash bags and orange vests, and split up between sides of the road. We hiked around a mile up the canyon, and made a round trip in about

two hours. On the way we picked up about fifteen orange bags worth of trash. This was amazing, since from a car, the canyon looked very clean. I can't imagine how bad a very busy road would be. There wasn't much more going on. We talked, picked up trash, and waved to people that honked as they drove by.

What do you think was the main point of the performance? In other words, what did the performance communicate?

Hmm.... Well, the point was to clean up the natural environment immediately adjacent to the highway where all the litter falls from passing motorists. In a sense, the fraternity and I were putting on a performance for the passing motorists. Like I said above, many people honked, and many didn't. But, *everyone* saw us. We were impossible to miss. By virtue of being there picking up trash, we communicated several things to everyone:

- Even if it doesn't look like it, there's plenty of trash next to the roads
- If students have time to do a highway cleanup, then so does everyone
- If young people care, then shouldn't non-young (haha) people care?
- There are people that actually do things to clean up after other people free of charge. Maybe, just maybe, a smoker that drove by seeing the hundreds of cigarette butts being picked up might have decided to put them in the ash tray instead of the side of the road.