Talk: Miguel Lorne

On Thursday, February 13, I attended a talk given by Miguel Lorne titled, "Garveism and the Rastafarian Movement in the Caribbean and their Implication on the Americas."

The setting was a medium–sized, dimly lit room, on the fourth floor of Memorial Union. I arrived five minutes before the talk was supposed to begin, about a third of the seats were filled and the speakers were not there yet. People kept filing in and at about five minutes after the supposed starting time, the speakers came in and started to prepare the podium. After about 7 minutes of activity, a woman from the Wisconsin Caribbean Association started to speak. She spoke much too long — 20 minutes — which mostly consisted of "thank yous" to various people and groups on campus. We were all relieved when she introduced the next speaker, but to our surprise, this next speaker was merely to introduce the main speaker! Luckily, he only spoke for about 7 minutes, at which point he introduced Miguel Lorne.

Being a white male, I am usually in the majority in a given group of people, but I was the minority in this audience consisting mostly of Afro–Americans, a portion with origins in the Caribbean. I felt out of place, but I felt no hostility. Miguel started by stating that where he comes from, it is

customary to begin a talk with a ritual consisting of drumming and chanting. With such a long and complicated sounding title, I expected the talk to be technical, but instead I was totally surprised by the strange turn of events. This was no ordinary talk!

Further, his talk had no topical organization. Instead of a comprehensive account of events and influences that took place throughout history, he recounted stories of his experience, and the struggles of himself and others for the equality of the Rastafarian religion in the Caribbean. He was a very emotional and engaging speaker; when he got to very emotional parts in his stories, his counterpart would bang on the drum.

Miguel had a few problems. A few times it was hard to understand what he was saying: the microphone did not sound very good when he raised his voice; during certain parts, he talked fast and his accent made it hard to understand; and he used some specific vocabulary which I was unfamiliar with. Before the talk, they put a map of the Caribbean on the wall behind him, but strangely enough, no one mentioned it during the talk!

Once I got past the strangeness of the situation, I realized that Miguel was a good speaker, for the most part. This was not a technical talk, but a time to for him to tell stories about himself and the history of people in the Caribbean.