

THE NATION SKATE:

Diplomacy, Diversity, and Global Engagement through Skateboarding

Monday, October 23, 2017, from 4 to 7:30 p.m.
Wallis Annenberg Hall

ABOUT THE PANELISTS

- ◉ **Trina Bolton** is a program officer in the U.S. State Department's Sports Diplomacy Division. She works with U.S. embassies to increase dialogue and cultural connectivity among people around the world through sports, with the goal of promoting U.S. foreign policies and positive social change.
- ◉ **K.C. Cole (moderator)** is a professor at the USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism. She is the author of nine books, most recently *Something Incredibly Wonderful Happens: Frank Oppenheimer and His Astonishing Exploratorium*. Cole's work engages her life-long interest in the connections between science and diplomacy.
- ◉ **Chris "Dune" Pastras** is an established artist, broadcast host, and skateboarding legend whose career has spanned three decades. He gained worldwide notoriety and turned professional with the breakthrough brand World Industries. Pastras then went on to co-found Stereo Skateboards with actor and skateboarding legend Jason Lee. As a broadcast personality and skateboard analyst, Pastras has appeared on Fox Sports 1, ESPN, CBS, and NBC. He is currently the brand director at Prime Wood.
- ◉ **Rodney Mullen** is one of the most influential skateboarders of all time. Most of the tricks done in the modern era—the street ollie, kickflip, 360-flip, impossible, and countless others—evolved from his techniques. He has won 35 world titles and is a co-founder of the original World Industries, Almost Skateboards, and Dwindle Distribution.
- ◉ **Garth Ross** is vice president of community engagement at The Kennedy Center, where he has produced over 7,000 performances. Among his many notable projects is *Finding a Line: Skateboarding, Music, and Media*.
- ◉ **Johnny Schillereff** is a founder of the international skateboarding brand Element, home to skateboarding legends Ray Barbee and Nyjah Houston, with alumni including Stevie Williams and MTV's Bam Margera.
- ◉ **Renata Simril** is president and CEO of LA84, a foundation that supports youth sports organizations in Southern California.
- ◉ Female skaters around the world refer to **Vanessa Torres** as "the reason I started skating." Torres was the first female skateboarder to win a gold medal at X Games (in 2003) and one of the first to have a pro-model board. She is still dominating the pro contest scene, with podium finishes at X Games and Street League in 2015 and 2016.
- ◉ **Neftalie Williams (moderator)** is the first lecturer of skateboarding business, media, and culture in the United States, and the first academic and skateboarding envoy for the U.S. Department of State in the Netherlands and Cambodia. Williams is a research fellow for the LA84 Foundation and USC AISMS and a USC Black Alumni Award recipient. He is an adjunct professor in the USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism and a PhD candidate at the University of Waikato in New Zealand.



A BRIEF HISTORY OF SKATEBOARDING

1940s and '50s: The origin of the skateboard has never been definitively proven, but at some point in the 1940s, probably in multiple parts of the world around the same time, people attached roller skates to boards, and voila, the first skateboards were born. When surfers wanted something to do on dry land, they invented “sidewalk surfing.” In 1959, the first mass-produced skateboard was released; it had metal wheels.

1960s: As skateboarding got more popular, surfboard companies started making better-quality skateboards with clay wheels and trucks. The first skateboarding contest was held in Hermosa Beach, CA, in 1963, and skateboarding found its way into popular culture, with appearances on TV and even in the first skate magazine, *Skateboarder*, which lasted for only four issues.

1970s: Innovations like urethane wheels and decks made of all manner of materials, from wood to fiberglass to aluminum, allowed for smoother rides and better grip. When the California drought of 1976–78 prompted many homeowners to drain their pools, around the same time the first skate parks were built, skaters claimed all the territory they could and invented new tricks at a rapid pace. The first pro skaters emerged.

1980s: Street skating took hold, and for some people, a handrail and wall would never look the same again. The invention of VHS also meant the start of skate videos.

1990s: Skateboarding went mainstream—skateboarding and skate styles were suddenly everywhere, from the new X-Games to commercials to fashion.

21st Century: There are more than 11 million skaters in the world, and the skateboarding market approaches \$5 billion. Skateboarding will be an event in the 2020 Olympic Games.

SPORTS DIPLOMACY IN CONTEXT

The idea of sports diplomacy dates back to at least ancient Greece, when the ancient Olympics created a space for dialogue and competition among otherwise warring city-states. Today, the Olympic Games remain the most well-known example of using sports for diplomatic purposes. They provide a stage for international cooperation, but also highlight international conflict and confrontation.

Consider the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin, when Hitler attempted to use the Olympic stage to promote his ideology of Aryan racial superiority—a strategy that was dealt a blow by African American Jesse Owens’ multiple gold-medal wins. In 1964, South Africa was barred from the Olympic Games for its refusal to condemn apartheid; a sports boycott of the nation ultimately played a significant role in bringing down the apartheid regime.

Sports diplomacy is not limited to the Olympics. In 1972, a world-championship chess match between American Bobby Fischer and Boris Spassky of the Soviet Union became a battle of the Cold War. During the same year, efforts to improve relations between countries used sport in subtle ways, with global ramifications. China invited U.S. ping-pong (table tennis) players to visit China for the first time as a way to create a new, softer dialogue between the countries by emphasizing their shared sporting interests. This “ping-pong diplomacy” effort jump-started President Nixon’s ability to engage with China as a partner to the United States. In the twentieth century, sports diplomacy was formalized as an official means of promoting peace and development.

DIPLOMACY TAKES ALL FORMS

Diplomacy happens not only across international borders but also across all manner of different fields and disciplines. Science diplomacy involves the sharing of knowledge across borders, which can be crucial in preventing the spread of epidemics or mitigating the damage of climate change. Even at the height of the Cold War, U.S. and Soviet scientists exchanged scientific data and jointly mapped Earth’s geomagnetic field. The arts are also used to advance diplomatic agendas, for instance when nations pay to support artists to travel and present their work around the world, sharing their national culture with international audiences to promote cross-cultural understanding or national agendas.



An Early skateboard



A downhill skateboard run in Central Park, New York



The first skate magazine, *Skateboarder*



Marcelo Bastos practices during X Games Los Angeles, 2013

VOCABULARY CORNER

Diplomacy: The art and practice of conducting negotiations between nations for the attainment of mutually satisfactory terms

Diversity: The condition of having differences; in contemporary discourse, often used to refer to social, ethnic, racial, and cultural differences

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- The field of science has promoted cross-collaboration across nations even during the worst of times. How do you think skateboarding and other youth cultures might use this as a model in the future?
- Where do you see opportunities, and where do you see challenges, in using skateboarding for diplomatic purposes?
- Proponents argue that hosting international sporting events offers development benefits to the host city, with significant investments of infrastructure, new jobs, and a boost in tourism. Critics question whether these things truly benefit local populations, especially in developing nations, when there has been a pattern of displacement and other negative impacts on the poorest residents of Olympic host cities. What do you make of these competing arguments?
- Does skateboarding have attributes that align with academia?
- How has the media portrayed a “stereotypical skateboarder” or a “stereotypical scientist”? How do you think this impacts women, people of color, and LGBTQIA people in science and skateboarding?
- How does skateboarding culture reflect a global community?

TO LEARN MORE, EXPLORE THESE RESOURCES:

- American Association for the Advancement of Science
www.aaas.org/program/center-science-diplomacy
- “The U.S. Sports Envoy Is Bridging Communities with Skateboarding”
www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/u-s-sports-envoy-bridging-communities-skateboarding-n791271
- “Meet the Diplomat-Skateboarders of Havana”
www.theatlantic.com/video/index/413209/cuba-skate/
- “Meet the USC Professor Who Wants to Solve the World’s Problems with Skateboarding”
sports.vice.com/en_ca/article/wmmnmw/meet-the-usc-professor-who-wants-to-solve-the-worlds-problems-with-skateboarding
- “Interest in Skateboarding as an Olympic Sport Ramps Up”
www.scpr.org/programs/take-two/2016/08/03/50993/interest-in-skateboarding-as-an-olympic-sport-ramp/
- “The Skate Girls: A Conversation with Vanessa Torres”
theberriess.com/skate-girls-the-conversation-vanessa-torres/
- “Female Skaters Who Defy the Status Quo”
www.nytimes.com/2016/07/31/nyregion/brujas-a-crew-of-female-skateboarders-in-the-bronx.html
- “Where Skateboarding and Jazz Intersect”
www.bbc.com/news/av/magazine-34214110/where-skateboarding-and-jazz-intersect
- K. C. Cole’s *Something Incredibly Wonderful Happens: Frank Oppenheimer and His Astonishing Exploratorium*
- Rodney Mullen’s *The Mutt: How to Skateboard and Not Kill Yourself*
- The LA84 Foundation
la84.org
- Johnny Schillereff on Instagram
www.instagram.com/johnnyschillereff/
- Sal Masekela’s Stoked Mentoring
www.stoked.org



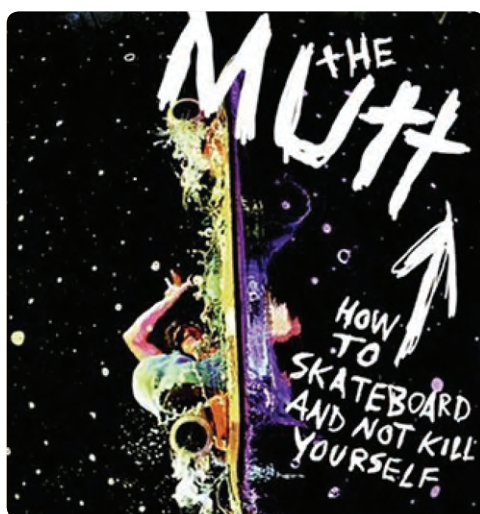
Neftalie Williams signing autographs in Cambodia.



“Skateboarding and Action Sports” class field trip to Element headquarters with founder Johnny Schillereff.



Vanessa Torres



The Mutt: How to Skateboard and Not Kill Yourself

DISCOVER MORE AT THE USC LIBRARIES

STACY WILLIAMS of the USC Libraries selected the following resources to help you learn more about skateboarding, diplomacy, and other themes raised by today's event. Except where a call number is given, these are electronic resources, which you can access through the search bar on the USC Libraries homepage at libraries.usc.edu.

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

- Carayol, Sebastien, and Carayol, Seb. *Agents Provocateurs : 100 Subversive Skateboard Graphics*. First ed., 2014.
ARCHITECTURE AND FINE ARTS LIBRARY: GV859.8 .C373 2014
- Friedel, Sophie., and SpringerLink Content Provider. *The Art of Living Sideways Skateboarding, Peace and Elicitive Conflict Transformation*. 2015.
- Gilligan, Richard, et al. *DIY/Underground Skateparks*. 2014.
ARCHITECTURE AND FINE ARTS LIBRARY: TR655 .G556 2014
- Noll, Rhyn. *Skateboarding : Past-Present-Future*. Atglen, PA, Schiffer Pub., 2003.
SPECIAL COLLECTIONS: GV859.8 .N32 2003
- Rowley, et al. *Fred Mortagne : Attraper Au Vol (Catch in the Air) : Photographs 2000-2015*. First ed., 2016.
ARCHITECTURE AND FINE ARTS LIBRARY: XX(5206999.1)
- Stecyk, Craig, and Glen E. Friedman. *Dogtown : the Legend of the Z-Boys*. 1st ed., New York City, Burning Flags Press, 2000.
ARCHITECTURE AND FINE ARTS LIBRARY: GV859.8 .S74 2000

RECOMMENDED DVDS

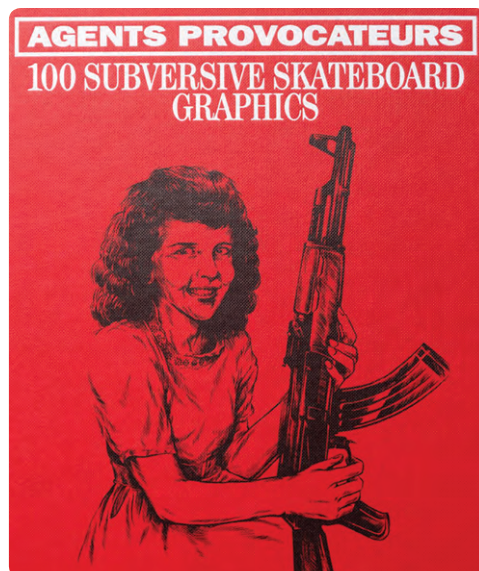
- Orsi, et al. *Dogtown and Z-Boys*. Special ed., Culver City, Calif., Columbia TriStar Home Entertainment, 2002.
- This DVD (call number LVYDVD 130) is available for check-out from the Leavey Library circulation desk.

RECOMMENDED ARTICLES

- Jared Jacang Maher. "Drop Boards Not Bombsbaghdad." *Westword* (Denver, Colo.), October 02, 2008.
- O'Connor, Paul. "Skateboarding, Helmets, and Control." *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*, vol. 40, no. 6, 2016, pp. 477-498.
- "Skateboard Diplomacy: US and Cuba Bettering Relations in the Streets." *University Wire* (Carlsbad), March 31, 2015.

RECOMMENDED DATABASES

- ProQuest - Multiple Databases
ProQuest Multiple Databases is a multi-disciplinary index suitable for both undergraduates and graduate students.
- SBRnet (Sports Business Research Network)
Sports Business Research Network provides market research and industry news for the sports industry.
- SPORTDiscus
SPORTDiscus with Full Text is the world's most comprehensive source of full text for sports & sports medicine journals, providing full text for more than 440 journals indexed in SPORTDiscus.



Fred Mortagne : *Attraper Au Vol (Catch in the Air)* : Photographs 2000-2015

