

Voices Bridging Cultures





SYMBOL OF PEACE AND HARMONY

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25th Annual W.E.B. DuBois Distinguished Lecture Series

By Erika Jennings & Chanelle Schnieder

On Wednesday, November 12, students, staff, and faculty alike, along with other interested people packed into the UC Ballroom for the 25th Annual W.E.B. DuBois Distinguished Lecture Series. This yearly event, hosted by UMBC's Africana Studies Department, is a means of acknowledging the achievements of W.E.B. DuBois, America's first African-American scholar. These achievements include being a founder of the NAACP and being one of the first African-American males to earn a Ph.D. This year also marks the centennial anniversary of DuBois' publication "The Souls of Black Folk". The keynote speaker this year was Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum, president of Spelman College in Atlanta, GA. Tatum is the author of the book Why Do All the Black Kids Sit Together at the Lunch Table?, a discussion of race and how it is manifested in today's society. Tatum opened up her discussion with asking the audience a simple question: What was your first race memory? She then asked the audience to comment on their age at the time of the experience. The average age was about 10 years old. When asked what their emotions were during their experience, most people said they felt sadness, anger, pain, confusion, shock, or guilt. Some people said they chose not to talk about the particular experience with their family members because at times it was a family member who caused the emotion. Dr. Tatum introduced "the notion that you're not supposed to talk about it" - the way that many of our families taught us to react to situations such as these. In order to overcome racism, though, we must "push past the discomfort" because it "can be fun to engage in conversation." A conversation can lead to change, and the best way to impact change is to talk about it.

Although the event was a huge success, with the ballroom almost filled to capacity, it did not get the recognition that an event of this caliber deserves. Students' reactions to an article posted in the Retriever Weekly, UMBC's student run newspaper follow:

"Subconsciously biased" –Alvin Lowe

"Ridiculous; but [we] could not expect any less from our infamous Retriever. God bless UMBC – our oh so diverse campus." – Jay Nwachu

"Yet another disappointment from our so well funded school newspaper." – Gilbert Jose

"How scrabble, the fitness Guru, and handicapped door abuse encompass a combined 3 pages in the Retriever, but a three hour event with over four hundred guests get[s] less than a 5 x 6 space with a 3 x 3 picture? This signifies black students' significance here at UMBC." – Jakana Thomas (NY)

"I think it is a shame that such an important event honoring a prominent African American gets so little attention, but it is not surprising." – Andrea Clark

"The pinnacle of the Social Science Forum summed up in a mere photo and a 150 word blurb. We boast about our diversity and then hide the very thing we pretend to be so proud of. Are we truly diverse or just putting on "blackface", masquerading our pride in our supposed diversity?" – Durell Callier

"[It] contained no information. The only purpose of the article was to tell us the purpose of the lecture." – Israel Cross

"I cannot say that this blatant disrespect from the Retriever Weekly is surprising or uncommon. My true issue or disappointment comes from knowing that there are people of color with high positions on the staff and nothing more is being said about a successful black leader who has worked to pave the way and open doors for not only people of her race but people of other backgrounds, as well." – Stevy Bradley





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identity crisis

my first name is scottish,
my middle, indian,
my last, german.
i was born in calcutta, india
but raised on the streets of
baltimore, maryland
which is the city i know,
the city i love,
it is where i am from.

my mother is scottish,
my father is german and irish,
my older sister wears a kilt and plays
the bagpipes
even though she is half black
and
half jewish,
my younger sister has my
grandmother's nose
and looks like my mom
when my mom was a teenager,
my younger brother looks sometimes
like my
dad's brother's son
and others like my mom's father
when he was much younger
to me.
so what exactly does that make me?

i've been called everything from
peruvian to
argentinean to
puerto rican to
mixed to
light-skinned to
punjabi to
chilean to
panamanian to
egyptian to
middle eastern
and the list goes on.
in more recent times

i've been called
muslim
in a hateful way
even though i was raised
presbyterian
and want to study buddhism
at some point in my life.
so what exactly do i look like to you?

i've been told that i don't
act or
talk or
dress indian,
but if i really wanted to identify as
indian
wouldn't that mean that i do
indeed
dress and
talk and
act like an indian?

during my most formative years
during high school
the majority of my peers were black
and,
by default,
i assumed that identity.
it was the first time
i was able to associate
with an identity other than white
because before high school my
identity had been so closely linked
with that of my family.
but that
clearly
was not me.

i remember laying in bed
awake
at night, wishing my skin was either
all the way black
or
all the way white
because i felt like i did not have a
group to which i automatically

belonged;
a community.

the truth is
that race shouldn't matter,
but it really does.
i wouldn't have struggled with the
concept
so greatly
if it did not matter.

but now
i have decided
i am
multi-ethnic and
multi-racial and
multi-cultural
and that is the truth
because
parts of me are white and
parts of me are black and
parts of me are indian, too.

i am free to
define myself
and can be
puerto rican or
mixed or
white with a really good tan if i am
bored one day.

i am
everything
and at the same time, i am
nothing,
and, for once,
i like it that way.

ryan artes





Let Me Be Free

It amazes me how women walk around with a false-perception of themselves that says nothing about who they really are. And how they react when a man compliments them or speaks kindly of them simply because he was lucky enough to get close enough to get a glimpse of essence. Women have this look on their face one of question or disbelief, wondering if he really means it or if he is just trying to get something from them. The thought never crosses their mind that the guy could be genuine and that they are worthy of nice treatment.

My Question to these women is, "When is it Okay?"

When it is okay for a guy to look at a woman, dig deep inside, tell her what he thinks, and it not be about getting in her pants. When is it okay for a man to tell a girl he is clearly interested in that she's beautiful while looking straight into her eyes and not get the reaction of her looking away, laughing, and saying, "Oh Stop it." Let me know when its okay and I'll unlock the floodgates of expression that experience and circumstance have held closed for so long.

"Let Me Be Free..."

... to communicate to you beautiful the simple little things that you do and say that seem to make you more and more attractive. Let me be free to bring to reality through my words and actions the fact that your beauty is more precious than silver and your character more precious than gold. If you would only let us be free my sisters. I think you would walk with more purpose, talk with more confidence, keep your head high in any situation, look injustice in the eye and call it by its rightful name, be able to get that job because you know your qualified, be able to eliminate all insecurities, and be able to love a whole lot more freely. But that's only if you let us know when men like me can be free.

- ENAGEE

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Precious Memories

By Philip J. Merrill

People often tell me that they wished their family had been more aggressive in documenting their family history. I usually reply that it's never too late to start. With technology developing so rapidly, it's easier now than at any other time to capture all kinds of precious memories. For example, we now have disposable digital cameras, cell phones with cameras, affordable mini-DVD cameras, scanners, and a host of other gadgets that are readily available and increasingly affordable.

Currently in the bookstores I've found at least seven new magazines that focus entirely on the A-B-C's of preserving memories. Amazingly, there are scrapbook clubs all across the country, as well as new scrapbook supply stores opening. A brand new industry has been created around the preservation of memories, and it does not appear to be just another short-term fad.

I challenge UMBC students to start preserving their personal histories today, if you haven't already. Seniors still have time to search through their belongings to save some important mementoes from their early college years. I encourage everyone to snap more pictures, clip some newspaper articles, get some autographs, keep a few ticket stubs from memorable events, save a few important cancelled checks, and hold onto report cards, term papers, tests (especially those with high marks!), and even some emails. One day many years from now you will be able to pull out this treasure trove of memories and share them with family and friends, both old and new. Just think how amazed your children and grandchildren will be to learn that you were once young – and smart! And you'll bowl them over with the low cost of college today!

Another important way to preserve precious memories is to keep a journal. As an example, the following is an entry that I made in my journal in 1975, when I was in the 6th grade:

Today Was A Special Day

Today April second is my great-grandmother's birthday. She is 84 today and still acting like she is in her seventies. Mom is going to take her out shopping so she can buy anything she wants to make her happy, and her daughter also bought her a nice pair of black shoes. Grandmother likes Aunt Florence's pocketbook so much that she bought it from her. We as the family took her out to dinner at Meushaw's, an elegant, charming, beautiful, superb dining place. I hope she really enjoyed her birthday because we did. We all love her so much we don't know what we would do without her.

As I read this journal entry over and over again, it makes me feel warm inside and brings a smile to my face. Your memories will do the same for you one day. Start saving them now!

Know History, Know Self.

