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THE VOICE

of Western Kentucky University

Vol. 2, No. 2

April 1991

by Anya Lockert

A hush fell over the crowd as members of African-American players strolled in the room dressed in solid black for their first performance in five years.

The play, Joan Morgan's "Sister Savvy," spotlighted historical black

women such as singer Bessie Smith, educator Mary Mcleod Bethune and Egyptian queen Cleopatra. About 48 students from the A.I.M.S. (Activating Interest in Minority Students) program attended the Feb. 9 performance in Downing University Center.

AAP is a resurrected version of Afro-American players, which disbanded about five years ago because of lack of participation, said Denise Johnson, one of the group's advisers.

It was restarted because Western needed an organization for students interested in performing arts.

"Black Student Fellowship is spiritual, United Black Greeks is for Greeks and

Black Student Alliance is political, but a play can be political or spiritual," she said.

Johnson said the purpose of the organization is to provide cultural entertainment for the Western community and the Bowling Green community through plays, monologues and any other performing arts.

Lisa Greenfield, vice president of AAP and sophomore from Nashville, Tennessee, said "We are in a culturally deprived area, and it seems we should do all we can to change this and AAP does this," she said.

Courtney Fullum, a sophomore from Nashville, Tenn., and member of AAP, said the organization "is about history and putting dreams into reality."

"Those writers who didn't get a chance to show their stuff now can," he said. He also said AAP helps children in the community to dream big.

"It's good to see little kids smile because you are showing there are other things to do other than hoopin (basketball) or smoking a joint with Bob," he said.



What's in a name?

Three-hundred year debate over what blacks should be called goes on

Colored, negro and Afro-American are just a few of the names black people have been called throughout history. Now, a new generation is opting to be classified as African American.



"In the '80s, many people in Eastern America called themselves African-Americans because they were a little more culturally aware," said Dr. Cheryl Keyes, assistant professor of folk studies.

It wasn't until the mid-1980s, when Rev. Jesse Jackson questioned what black people should call themselves, that the term African-American became popular elsewhere, Keyes said.

"We became Afro-Americans in the '80s, but that was not related to us," she said. "An afro is a hairstyle. Africa tells where we came from. You have to be proud of who you are. I am an African-American; that is my heritage, and I must be proud of that. That's not racist. That is culture."

Some Western students said it is important for black people to have a name that reflects pride in their culture.

"If I had to choose, I would want to be called African-American," Nashville junior Sharon Dennis said. "It expresses both of our cultures. We recognize our mother country while acknowledging that we are Americans."

Nashville junior Courtney Fullum agreed with Dennis.

"It (African-American) distinguishes that you still believe in your African heritage. If you denounce Africa, you

denounce that heritage," he said.

However, not all black students are pleased with the idea of being classified as African-Americans. Some felt that it was a form of regression, a sort of clinging to the past. Other believed it separated them from other Americans or was a denouncement of their cultural diversity.

"Our ancestors were African, but we are Americans," said Albert DuBose, a junior from Alexander, Va. "I know where I came from, but I'm here in America now, and I prefer being called a black American."

Shernette Hoosier, a freshman from Clarksville, Tenn., said being called an African-American reminds her of days when slaves worked in the fields, and "I just don't like it."

Brother and sister Morris and Morrietta Goggins, both freshman from Springfield, Mass. had differing opinions

on the issue. Morrietta said she considers herself "black but also American." Morris insists that he is an African and an American.

Nashville freshman Nicole Farrell said the word African-American sounds like progression, but "I'm just afraid people won't show this progression and pride, and if not, there's no point in even discussing what to be called."

The fact that people can choose what to be called shows how far the race has come, Keyes said.

In early history, black people were named after Spanish explorers and Europeans.

"We are no longer allowing whites to dictate our culture," she said. "We have been assimilated in the American mainstream on our terms."

by Rita Roberts

"I would want to be called African-American. It expresses both of our cultures. We recognize our mother country while acknowledging that we are Americans,"

Sharon Dennis of Nashville

An Interview with Livingston Alexander

A tall, thin dark-skinned man crosses a waiting room in Wetherby Administration Building and greets a visitor in a low, measured voice. Upon entering an office to the left, he avoids the large desk that dominates the room and opts for a chair in front of it instead.

The man is Livingston Alexander, an associate vice president for Academic Affairs, who was appointed as Western's top black administrator in July 1990.

In the following Voice interview, Alexander, 43, tells about his rise from professor to administrator and offers advice to other aspiring African-Americans.

Voice: What positions have you held during your years as a leader in higher education?

L. A.: "I came to Western in 1977, right out of graduate school at the University of Houston. I was appointed to associate professor, was granted tenure in '81 or '82 and became a full professor in '86. I left the university to become the educational psychology department head at Georgia Southern. I stayed at Georgia Southern for two years and enjoyed it there."

Voice: How did you learn about the job as an associate vice president?

L. A.: "I was invited to apply for a position...and here I am."



Livingston Alexander

Accolades

Voice: What's it like being an associate vice president for Academic Affairs?

L. A.: "First of all, everyday is different because...my responsibilities and duties are so broad. Very often, academic departments will perceive a need for a new departmental program, minor or new course. There are different levels... to receive approval. Part of my responsibility is to facilitate the process... by receiving part of the mounds of paperwork and following some of the discussion related to the approval or disapproval... It's a very elaborate process. It takes six months from conception to find approval and maybe much longer than that."

Voice: Tell us about the outcomes assessment program you're working on. Why is it important to survey students about various aspects of Western?

L. A.: "It's something called quality control. We're devising a system to make sure we're getting feedback about how good a job we're doing at the university. Lots of students take general education courses, but how do we know you're learning what your supposed to? Also, how do we know a student is able to move into a job? We assume those things but we don't know."

Voice: What is your involvement with the Center for Teaching and Learning?

L. A.: "I oversee the Center for Teaching and Learning. It's a center designed to support the teaching of full-time faculty (and others). It provides greater access to desktop publishing, MacIntosh computers, laser printers...and new ideas. It's very sorely needed."

Voice: Do you have any future goals?

L. A.: "I would like to tighten the relationship (between myself and black students) and reinforce the need as faculty members, staff and students to work together more closely."

Voice: What advice would you give to aspiring blacks?

L. A.: "I would say... do the thing you're doing now in the very best way you can do it. That alone will create opportunities."

by Darla Carter

Black Student Alliance president tries to spark student interest

Black Student Alliance President Sedrik Newbern displays a boyish grin as he calls the meeting to order.

Dressed casually in his red and white Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity jacket, the Nashville sophomore tells the group to give themselves a hand for the success of the BSA Black History Month Kick-off Rally on Feb. 4.

During his two years at Western, Newbern has been dedicated to getting black students more involved in campus activities.

"There are organizations on campus for black students, but there is a lack of participation, he said. It's amazing how organizations exist, but students are complaining about how things are being done.

They (students) don't participate, and I can't decide for anyone else what should be done."

Sam Watkins, BSA treasurer and a Nashville sophomore, said Newbern is very diligent and hard-working.

"Participation is sometimes lacking from the student body," said Watkins, "but Sedrik is very patient."

Newbern said his job is sometimes stressful because he has to make sure that things go as they should. But, he said he uses his wit and laughter to relieve the pressure.

"I joke around a lot to keep myself happy. I like people to feel they can come talk to me," he said.

Renee Sparks, BSA assistant vice

president and a Louisville junior, said Newbern has a good personality.

"I like Sedrik. He's learning from his office and it has changed him for the best," she said.

Newbern was born in Washington, D.C. He is a marketing major and Vice Polemarch in his fraternity.

"I don't feel like I'm a Martin Luther King, Jr., and people should follow me," he said. "But maybe other students should take the initiative that I've taken by getting involved and getting to know other people," Newbern said.

In the future, he would like to join Student Government and run for an office.

"I want to make a difference," he said.

by K. Dawn Rutledge

"Gift from the Ghetto" by Oni Woods

He closed his bedroom door to the sight of his mother, his father, his brother doing heroin in what once upon a time was the family room

Why couldn't he get his homework done?

He tried to keep to himself but the three delusionary monsters, the poor delusionary monsters with eyes of glass bumped around and knocked around trying to escape their images of lions and tigers and bears....Oh my, my, my

Why couldn't he get his homework done?

The teachers stay on him about punctuality and why he can't get to school on time. Too scared to tell the tale of how he runs the obstacle course through bullets of shame, knives of hurt, and the gangs, yes, o, yes the gangs

He pays \$100 so his run past enemy lines each morning is covered by your friendly neighborhood insurance man slash dope dealer
Why can't he get his homework done?

What started this all? Was it the flesh wound in his left shoulder or the fact that his cousin shot him in the left shoulder for \$10 dollars or maybe that no one supports him in his endeavors, no one supports his utter brilliancy

He has the mind of Einstein and the chance of snow in hell.

This is why he can't get his homework done? Too bad no one ever bothered to ask him, "why can't you".....

- Oni Woods, 16, attends Stratford High School in Nashville, Tenn.

DID YOU KNOW ?

Despite being denied educational opportunities, equal employment and voting privileges, many African-Americans have beaten the odds and achieved success.

- Lewis H. Latimer invented and patented the first incandescent light bulb in 1881. He also wrote the first textbook on the first lighting system.

- Madame Lillian Evanti was the first black woman to sing with a European opera company.

- The first African-American Baptist Church was founded in Savannah, Ga. in 1777.

- Dorothy Dandridge was the first black woman nominated for an Academy Award for "Carmen Jones."

- Madame C.J. Walker was the first black female millionaire. She developed the first hot comb used to straighten hair.

- During slavery, Sojourner Truth led over 300 African-American slaves to freedom.

This information was taken from *Ebony*, *Jet* and *Essence* magazines.

by Anya Lockert

THE VOICE

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The Voice is concerned with providing a bridge between minority concerns and the Western Kentucky University community-at-large and is a forum for discussion of issues of interest to both. The editors welcome contributions devoted to our purpose.



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