

University museum helps professor teach that racism still exists in U.S.

by Kelley L. Carter
Knight-Ridder Newspapers

Come listen all you galls and boys,
I'm going to sing a little song,
My name is Jim Crow.
Weel about and turn about and do jis so,
Eb'ry time I weel about I jump Jim Crow.
-- Thomas Rice, "Jim Crow"

BIG RAPIDS, Mich. -- For the first few minutes of the two-hour session, the group of professors walks around the small, intimate museum. Some stop and stare, their eyes fixed on some of the more provocative pieces on display.

The showcase is housed in a building at Ferris State University and is a little bigger than a classroom.

A portrait of nine naked black babies is propped on a shelf with the words "Alligator Bait" written below. Two professors stare at the image. One closes her hand over her mouth.

This is the Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia, a display of racist material, where signs that proclaim "No Dogs Negroes Mexicans" are on display.

This is a part of the United States' story that professor David Pilgrim doesn't want people to forget.

This is the place where Pilgrim teaches that racism is still alive.

Just before Black History Month, Pilgrim, who specializes in U.S. minorities, walks over to a ceiling-to-floor glass-encased display. He pulls out a bright green, plastic, talking cookie jar in the shape of an alligator. The object usually baffles visitors, so he uses it as an entry point for discussion.

"When you bring students in here," Pilgrim says to the seven professors, "they may ask about things like this. Here's why this cookie jar, that another colleague bought for me, is in here."

Pilgrim opens the alligator's mouth. "Hmm, Hmm, dese sho is some tasty cookies."

The professors gasp. Just steps away is a display that shows the correlation between black babies and black men once being marketed as food for alligators and crocodiles.

One licorice candy ad reads, "Little African: A dainty morsel," with an open-mouthed alligator approaching a black baby.

This cookie jar -- manufactured this year -- is reminiscent of another item Pil-

grim has in the museum, a 1930s advertisement for Uncle Remus Syrup. A white-bearded black man on the label exclaims "Dis Sho' Am Good!"

It's racist, Pilgrim says. And that's why he has it on display.

Pilgrim, a sociologist, began teaching sessions for university professors in the museum this semester. This year Pilgrim, along with Ferris State Web master Ted Halm, launched the museum's Internet site, which is attracting educators from as far as Norway. He also teaches two undergraduate courses and spends the rest of his time surfing the Web for more material for his museum and writing essays for the museum's Web site, www.ferris.edu/news/jimcrow.

The Jim Crow period started when segregation laws, rules and customs surfaced after Reconstruction ended in the 1870s, and it existed until the mid-1960s when the struggle for civil rights hit its peak.

In the 1830s, though, Thomas Rice, a white actor, helped popularize the belief that blacks were lazy, stupid and less than human. Rice painted his face black with burnt cork and performed his song "Jim Crow." Minstrel shows flourished in the United States and abroad after that, mocking black people by depicting them as comical, uneducated and irrational. The shows became wildly popular in the 1850s, and enthusiasm for the shows tapered off in the 1870s, just as Jim Crow laws were surfacing.

Those damaging images of black people carried over into motion pictures and radio shows. In films, white actors dressed in blackface, pretending to be black, and on radio, white men played black ones on shows like "Amos 'n' Andy."

Pilgrim has many items that reflect that time period, and he shows how those images are manifested into today's popular culture.

Pilgrim, the curator and founder of the museum, which he describes as a teaching laboratory, began collecting the pieces 30 years ago. They include depictions of overweight mummies dressed in plantation wear, caricatures of black men eating watermelon and chicken, Little Black Sambo with bright red lips and clocks from a restaurant called Coon Chicken Inn. The museum has been on campus since 1995.

He would buy the items -- mummies on washing powder boxes; carnival post-



KIRTHMON F. DOZIER/Detroit Free Press

Dr. David Pilgrim created and runs this Jim Crow museum at Ferris State University in Big Rapids, Michigan.

ers and comic books depicting savage-looking black people; and postcards with lynching scenes -- at flea markets, and smash or rip them apart right in front of the person he bought them from. He was an 11-year-old living in Alabama at the time and was angry when he saw these images commonly on display.

For years Pilgrim, who declines to give his age, bought and disposed of racist items.

But as he approached college age, he realized the historical value and significance of the pieces.

He began to collect and save these materials -- children's song lyrics, dolls, cookie jars and T-shirts -- so that when someone denied that racism existed in the United States, Pilgrim could present the evidence.

He studied that evidence as well. Pilgrim received an undergraduate degree in sociology from Jarvis Christian College in Hawkins, Texas. In 1981 he began work on a master's degree and later went on to earn a doctorate at Ohio State University, specializing in the patterns of racism and the cruelty bestowed upon American minorities.

As an academic, he often was invited to talk to various groups and would take individual pieces to the classes or churches where he lectured.

"It got to the point where I was looking for specific pieces based on whatever I was talking about," he says. "The fact that I was giving speeches is what motivated me into doing this. I'd always be a little

nervous because some of these people were these genteel, middle-class urbane groups, and then I'd pull out this ugly thing and use it as a visual aid."

After that, the objects went back to his basement, where no one else could see them -- where they could disturb no one else.

It wasn't until he did a lecture program for Black History Month 10 years ago at Ferris State that he started rethinking that. He was new on campus and was asked to do a program on some of his pieces.

"I brought like 100 pieces ... and I just remember people being dumbfounded," Pilgrim says. "And that was the first time that I had a lot of pieces in one room. It wasn't even like this picture I bought today, this here is a nasty picture. It's a postcard that has a black guy stripped to his waist being beaten with people in the background laughing at him."

The display caught the attention of university administrators.

And this year, in January, the museum was awarded an Eisenhower grant from the Michigan Department of Education, which helps promote creative teaching and learning in humanities, social sciences and literature in the state. The grant, which the museum received with the help of the Detroit Institute of Arts, will help Pilgrim train high school teachers and DIA tour guides to use the Jim Crow Museum. Teachers from two schools in metro Detroit -- Southfield-Lathrup Senior High School and Bloomfield Hills Middle School -- will participate.

U. of Georgia settles with two white students who were denied enrollment

by Billy O'Keefe
TMS Campus
February 7, 2001

School of Law.

Holmar has also been granted the right to transfer to the University of Georgia this fall, pending permission from USC.

Noble and Homlar argued that their academic records were superior to those of students chosen ahead of them to attend the school.

The university had previously settled two other reverse discrimination cases, both involving undergraduate admissions, to the tune of \$178,000 and the acceptance of 12 students previously denied enrollment.

A fourth reverse discrimination case, which the university fought and lost, is currently on appeal. A district court ruled against the university in July, declaring it unconstitutional to use race as a factor in granting admission to students.

University President Michael F. Adams said that the fourth case is the university's primary focus, and that such focus is part of the reason it forged a settlement with Noble and Homlar.

"This is consistent with our pattern in settling the other extraneous admissions cases in order to keep our focus on the main, major case," Adams said. "Everybody agreed that the law school does not have to change its current admissions process, so this settlement keeps the status quo while we press forward with our appeal in the 11th Circuit."

The University of Georgia agreed this week to pay \$55,000 and settle a lawsuit filed by two law school applicants whom the university did not admit. The two students claimed that the university rejected them because they are white.

The university subsequently announced that despite settling the case outside of court, it has done nothing wrong and will not alter its admissions policy in lieu of the suit, filed in May 2000 by students Virginia Noble and Robert Homlar.

"This is a good settlement for the law school," said law school Dean David Shipley. "It enables us to continue our efforts to recruit outstanding students without making any changes in our admissions policy."

The university agreed to pay Noble and Homlar, who applied in 1999 and have since attended other schools, respective amounts of \$20,000 and \$15,000. The amounts were determined as the difference between the cost of tuition at Georgia and the price of tuition at pricier schools the two students have since attended.

Noble currently attends the Mercy University School of Law, while Homlar is enrolled at the University of South Carolina

University of Pittsburgh student arrested for posting child pornography

by William Lee
TMS Campus Correspondent
February 8, 2001

stated that he allowed other students using the Pitt's Johnstown campus server to have access to these pictures.

Two unidentified students found the pictures and reported it to school officials, who were able to trace the photos back to Winfield's university computer. It is not yet known if federal charges will be filed. Possessing and trafficking child pornography is a federal offense. Winfield also may face other charges for possessing and trafficking on state property.

"I think you have a 20-year-old college student who had no sense of the federal laws on this sort of thing, not that that excuses it," said Kevin Grady, director of Pitt's public safety office.

JOHNSTOWN, Pa. (TMS) -- Cambria County's district attorney recently charged a University of Pittsburgh student with posting child pornography on a university server.

Nathaniel Winfield, 20, of Westmoreland County, was charged with three felony counts of sexual abuse of children, Feb. 6, but was freed on a \$10,000 bond the next day.

Winfield allegedly posted 800 pornographic photos on a university server, including 50 that showed children as young as four, according to the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, engaging in sex acts. Winfield's arrest affidavit

U. of Washington student puts soul up for sale on eBay

by Billy O'Keefe
February 12, 2001
TMS Campus

Some people might think that selling their soul is a long and complicated process which requires lots of postage. Not Adam Burtle, whose soul has apparently gone digital.

The 20-year-old University of Washington student offered his soul

for sale last week on eBay, and stood to collect \$400 until officials at eBay canceled the auction.

Instead of receiving a check for his merchandise, Burtle received a suspension from the online auction house.

Burtle included in his listing a picture of himself sporting an "I'm with stupid" t-shirt, as well as a disclaimer about the difficulties of selling one's soul.

"Please realize, I make no warranties as to the condition of the soul. As of now, it is near mint condition, with only minor scratches," read the disclaimer. "Due to difficulties involved with removing my soul, the winning bidder will either have to settle for a night of yummy Thai food and cool indie flicks, or wait until my natural death."

The bidding began at five cents, and

for the most part held steady after Burtle's former girlfriend placed a \$6.66 bid. In the auction's final hour, a woman raised the stakes by bidding \$400. The woman's eBay rating was zero, which means that she had no previous track record—positive or negative—with other eBay users.

Burtle said that the sale was largely a prank, and that he did it because he was bored.

Join the Beacon

CALL 898-6488

TOYOTA

CALL IT START UP MONEY.

TOYOTA'S COLLEGE GRADUATE FINANCE PLAN INCLUDES \$500 TO GET YOU GOING!

There's sure to be a Toyota that's just right for you....

And now there's a Toyota College Graduate Finance Program that's just right, too. Here are some of the advantages:

- No Down Payment
- No Payment for 90 days
- Finance up to 72 months
- Get \$500 Cash Back From Toyota... in addition to any other current Toyota customer incentives!

So if you're within 4 months of graduation — or if you graduated within the past 2 years — Ask your Toyota dealer for all the details.

www.gettoyota.com

Toyota College Graduate Finance Program available to qualified applicants thru Toyota Financial Services. Not all applicants will qualify. Some restrictions and limitations apply. Cash back offer subject to geographic limitations and offer expires 6/30/01. See dealer for details.