

Multicultural Council forum addresses campus racial issues

by Erin McCarty
news editor

Several students met in the Reed Lecture Hall Monday to participate in a forum concerning the Multicultural Council. The purpose of the meeting was to share opinions on the usefulness and effectiveness of the MCC and the Multicultural Resource Center, where the organization is housed.

"We want to accomplish something tonight," announced Kim Moses as she introduced the evening. Before the discussion began, Victoria Anderson shared her poetic musings on the history of oppression and prejudice in the world. This was followed by a slide show depicting images of slavery, the civil rights movement, and Sept. 11. Next, the positive and negative statements about the MCC that brought about the forum were read. The forum commenced with the three panelists, Abby Atkinson, Jackie Jackson, and Marvin Telp, sharing their views on the MCC.

"The Multi-Cultural Center is magical," said Atkinson. "It's one area for all kinds of different people to get together and be cool." She saw the club as a definite asset but felt that misrepresentation of what the MCC is about causes many students to have a negative impression of it.

"In an ideal world," said Jackson, "we would not need the MCC." She described the center as a place where people could come to

experience true multiculturalism and said that in order for the MCC to be truly effective, the rest of the campus must be willing to cooperate.

"No one is ready to break the comfort zone," said Telp, discussing the difficulty of drawing students into the MCC. In order to change, students must be willing to make themselves uncomfortable.

After the issue was opened up for discussion, most of the students gathered agreed that the MCC is necessary because it provides a place where students from all walks of life can feel comfortable and exchange ideas. However, others argued that many students view the MCC predominantly as a club for African-American students, thus discouraging them from participating if they do not share that heritage.

Several students also pointed out that people walking by the center, located in Reed, often hear loud bickering from either the students themselves or the television, which frequently is tuned in to "Jerry Springer." This presents a negative picture of the club's purpose and the students who participate.

"We can't help it if someone walks by at an inopportune time and doesn't get the connection we're feeling," said Jackson. Several others agreed that the important thing about the center is that it is a place for a free exchange of ideas, even if that sometimes leads to heated discussion. However, they also felt that it should be a place where students can peruse materials, such as books or computer programs, to help them learn more about other cultures.

As the forum drew to a close, few definitive conclusions had been reached, but there was a general agreement that everyone on campus, including faculty and staff, has to be willing to work with the MCC in order for its goals to be fully realized.

After nearly an hour and a half of discussion, Elder Hayes Moses stepped up to give some closing remarks. An Erie native and brother of Kim Moses, he now lives in Detroit but spends much of his time traveling to spread the message of unity.

"I'm from Erie," Moses said, "and I'm accustomed to being in the minority." That, he noted, could be an uncomfortable situation to be in. He recalled wondering as a youth whether white people were even aware of his



PHOTO BY JEFF HANKEY / BEHREND BEACON

Kim Moses introduced the Multicultural Council forum on Monday and added several comments throughout the evening. Her brother, Elder Hayes Moses, concluded the forum with a speech.

existence and pointed out that even today African-Americans are under-represented in television.

"We have to seize the day," he said. "We're in the best season of our lives." He encouraged everyone in attendance to work now towards effecting a positive change. It occurred to him this past month that he is the same age Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was when he led the bus boycott, and that led him to evaluate whether he was making effective use of his time.

"Don't waste your time getting caught up in negative energy," he advised. He maintained that the worst thing a person could do was to waste time. One way to waste time is to fume about the bad actions of others.

"The only person I have control over is myself," he said. Worrying too much about possibly offending someone should not prevent anyone from taking action. Moses noted that even respected poet Maya Angelou faces opposition at the college where she teaches in the form of a student movement focused on

forcing her to leave. He followed this observation with a quote from the Bible: "Don't throw your gift before the swine."

"You've gotta stay positive and stay focused," Moses said. Upon request, students listed several positive changes they have seen at Behrend, the strongest of which was the increased unity among members of Behrend's African-American population. This observation led Moses to ruminate about the trials and triumphs of living in a city like Erie where he was so much in the minority. "I figure, as long as I'm here, there's something good in the city," he quipped.

Moses proceeded to share his memories of growing up in Erie. He concluded the evening by belting out soulful versions of "Put On a Happy Face" and Mr. Rogers' "It's a Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood," much to the delight of the audience. The students departed at 9 p.m. with two hours' worth of fresh insights into multiculturalism at Behrend and a little entertainment, to boot.



PHOTO BY JEFF HANKEY / BEHREND BEACON
Victoria Anderson reads her poetic rendition of the plight of Africans throughout history. Her reading and a slide show preceded the multicultural forum.

Participants call Rainbow Path Labyrinth a spiritual experience

by Erinn Hansen
staff writer

The Rainbow Path Labyrinth experience, an original design created by Carol Posch Comstock, took place on Jan. 31 in the Smith Chapel. This is the fifth one that Comstock has done, since she walked on her first labyrinth six years ago.

"It was a great experience, and I just had to share it with other people," said Comstock. "It gives people time to come out of their daily routine, and balance the body's mind and spirit."

The Rainbow Path Labyrinth is one of the oldest transformative tools known to mankind, and is approximately 3,000 years old. It is a variation of a classical seven-circuit labyrinth, which is unicursal. That means it has one well-designed path that leads to the center and back out again.

"It is not a maze, which contains obstacles which tend to lose people," said Comstock. The Labyrinth's paths are lined with rainbow colors and a seed within the center, which symbolizes the divinity in all of us.

The rainbow is a symbol of hope and peace to many cultures, and is also a celebration of creativity and life. The Labyrinth is a walking meditation, or body prayer, and has been used for many centuries as a prayer, ritual, and initiation for personal and spiritual growth. People will use it to relax themselves and go deeper into their spirituality. It has also been used in hospitals, prisons, and even by people with Alzheimer's.

"It lowers a person's blood pressure, and allows them to become transcendent, or have a reality for the day," said Comstock. "It's like watching a sunset." Along with that, the Labyrinth can be used in math classes, such as geometry, and science classes, and can take the participant in all directions. The music being played matches the colors of the rainbow, and one can think of the music notes on each path.

As a person begins his journey through the Labyrinth, there are some simple guidelines to follow. He needs to center

himself so that he can take the time to quiet the mind; empty his mind of thoughts and distractions, and open his heart and soul; focus on breathing; pay attention to sounds and sensations; let go of expectations; remove shoes; and remain silent.

When he is ready to walk, he will go through four stages: The Threshold, The Journey in, The Stillness/Center, and The Journey out. While walking, one can ask a question and listen with the "ear of the heart," meditate on the seven chakras and/or colors of the rainbow, allow rhythm of walk to be guided by intuition, use scarves or other percussion instruments while walking/dancing. Actually, one does not necessarily have to walk it.

Finally, one can repeat the prayer and stay in the center for as long as he wants.

After one is finished with the walk, there are some last few tips to follow. Sit quietly and reflect on your experience; journal any insights, ideas, or reflections; express any art reflections (draw, color, movement); repeat walk with different or same focus as before; and then return to your day with refreshed energy, creativity, and peacefulness. The first showing on Jan. 31 attracted six people, and each person's reaction was pretty much the same.

"This walk is truly spiritual, and it gives you the time and opportunity to focus. It slows you down, calms you, and then stimulates and encourages you," said Kelly Shroat from Student Activities.

"It was very relaxing, and I felt like I was free from all distractions for the time I was walking," said Deane Spain, a sophomore at Behrend. There will be five more showings for the Labyrinth on Feb. 11, Feb. 25, March 11, March 25, and April 22 from 12:30 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.

"Anyone can come at any time during these hours, and I will be available at 12:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. for information sessions, for questions that people may have," said Comstock.

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CABARET

said Atkinson. "If you are really in love, you can have enough respect with each other to want to protect each other from anything that can happen.

"Pulling out is never safe sex. And safe sex is more than just knowing your partner because there could be something your partner does not know. It is a matter of respecting yourself."

Students seemed to enjoy the down-to-earth and fun approach to sex education.

"It's cool that they are so open," said Troy Shafer, junior. "It makes it easier to talk about."

Having an open mind is an important aspect of the event for the organizers.

"The event is not boring," said Atkinson. "It's not like sitting in health class again. It is put on by students so no one is preaching at you. We don't make it taboo or pass value judgments."

The evening ended with students parading in revealing outfits for a sexy fashion show. Safer-sex kits were passed out that contained condoms, lubrication, candles, and body glitter.

Atkinson summed up the evening "Tonight we said something, touched something, but no one contracted anything."



PHOTO BY BEN KUNDMAN / BEHREND BEACON

A transvestite models for the audience at the Safer Sex Cabaret. This annual pre-Valentine's Day event took place in the Reed Commons Thursday.

Students weigh the odds of getting an STD during the Safer Sex Cabaret. Now in its fifth year, the event is designed to encourage Behrend students to be responsible with their sexuality.

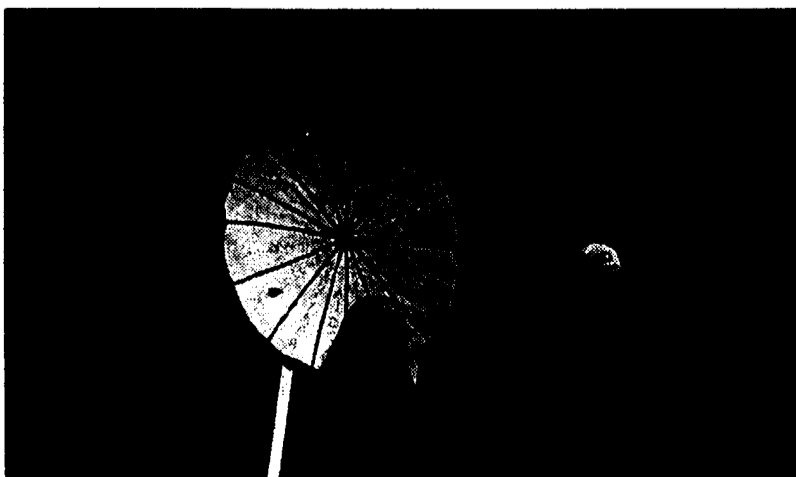


PHOTO BY BEN KUNDMAN / BEHREND BEACON

QUESTION OF THE WEEK

"What was your most memorable Valentine's Day?"

- asked by Kelly Walsh



"Last year because I didn't have to spend any money."

Scott Solis
Public Relations, 02



"I got my wisdom teeth out and my boyfriend didn't visit me. My boyfriend wanted me to watch porn with him."

Emily Linendoll; Jenny Kirkpatrick
Comm, 04; Advertising, 04



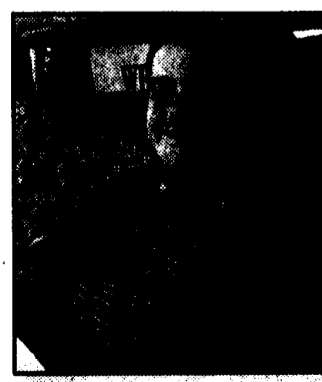
"Last year I took a bubble bath with a girl."

John Peterson
English, 06



"My boyfriend knew I didn't like cut flowers so he bought me potted flowers."

Angie Holcomb
Computer Science, 03



"I took my grandparents folk dancing and my friend's grandma hit on me - we've been together ever since."

Tyler Nelson
Engineering, 01