

Up Close: Black Student Union President

Photo by Sharon Olmstead



By Sharon Olmstead

"By March I'll be dead, but I hope everyone will say 'We had a nice time,'" says Carena McIlwain, the petite, vivacious president of the Black Student Union.

McIlwain and the 25 Black students in the BSU have worked hard to make Black History Month in February a huge success this year. "They like to see progress, and they're motivated to work for the organization," she says.

"This year the group decided what they wanted to do," she says. Last year the focus was on education, but there was a lack of enthusiasm, she says. This year the members decided for themselves what they wanted as a theme for Black History Month--Blacks in entertainment. McIlwain says they are really excited about that decision. "I think we can educate the public and have fun too," she says.

Nikki Giovanni, the famous Black writer and poet will highlight the month's activities. She lectured in the CUB on February 24.

Other BSU events for February were a Valentine's dance, an art exhibit by PSU student Lee Coffey, a jazz concert, a lecture by Westinghouse Corporation executive William Hart, a United States Air Force Stage Band concert on February 25, and a gospel music concert by The Scott White Singers from Harrisburg on February. All events were open to everyone.

"I'd be in a real mess if it weren't for Janet Widoff," she says. Widoff, the student activities coordinator has been a tremendous help, according to McIlwain.

Widoff says, "Carena really goes that extra mile. She has energy, enthusiasm--exhaustion! 'The three E's,' she says. 'She's fun to work with.'"

Besides being president of BSU, McIlwain is carrying 18 credits to graduate in May with a

degree in public policy with a concentration in law and justice.

She also has two part-time jobs. During the week, she works 16 hours in the library in the periodical division, and on weekends she works in a beauty salon in Philadelphia where her boyfriend and her mother live.

"My dream was to be a supreme court judge," says McIlwain. She will attend Duke, Wake Forest, or University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, she says. "With an MBA and a JD in corporate law, I expect to advance pretty quickly," she says.

She says she moved to Philadelphia from Charlotte, N.C., with her mother and two sisters when she was in high school. Her mother felt that her daughters would have better opportunities for college by moving to Pennsylvania. "Education is very important to her," McIlwain says.

During the week, her mother works as an executive secretary to the president of ConRail, and on weekends, she works as a radiology technician, according to McIlwain. "She works seven days a week," she added.

McIlwain's older sister, who attends LaSalle, is going to be a surgeon, she says. "My younger sister goes to (PSU) main campus and has 2,000 friends," she laughs. "She's going to be a computer analyst."

"My mother told us we could do whatever we wanted with our lives--after we get our college education. We could be a bum, but have your college education, she said," remembers McIlwain. "I think it's really her motivation to give us an opportunity to achieve," says McIlwain.

McIlwain's father and brother live in North Carolina.

McIlwain is excited to go to school in the South where people are friendlier. "It was a rude shock to come to Philadelphia," she says. One of the reasons she likes Capital

College so much is that it is more personal, with one on one relationships with professors.

In the South everyone is "really tight," she says. "In order to get that warmth that you experience from people down South, you have to be in a close-knit community in the North.

"I have to go back home," she explains. She wants to get married after finishing law school and is established in her career. Then, she wants to have a "trainload-full of kids," she says. "I'm a true Southerner to my heart."

McIlwain talks about her favorite Black hero, Rosie Wallace Brown, pastor of her church in Philadelphia. She says Brown has made gospel music albums that have become gold records. "She's great. She expresses so much love to anybody she talks to," she says. Brown doesn't mind hugging anyone, no matter how poor or dirty they are. McIlwain says she (Brown) says she can always wash her clothes and take a bath. "She never turns anyone away. I want to pattern my life after her. She's my hero," says McIlwain.

McIlwain describes herself. She talks about all the silly stages teens go through. "I skipped 'em. I've always been very determined. I hate depending on people," she says. "I like doing everything myself."

"In order to get anything, I had to get a job. I've always been working at least one job ever since I was 16. During the summer--two jobs.

"That's one thing my mother really instilled in us--be independent! she says. You can only depend on yourself--and God, of course," she adds, "but don't depend on any man to do anything for you."

McIlwain admits that she usually takes on a little more than she should, especially with the BSU, which demands at least three meetings a week.

"It's a headache at times," she says. "It's stressful!" She took a community psychology class last semester, and the instructor asked "What is stress?"

"I was like...I know! I know!" McIlwain remembers, as she holds up her hand and waves it.

"It's (stress) a very important part of my life, but I'm managing," she says calmly.

"It makes it a lot easier when you enjoy what you're doing. But I enjoy working with the BSU, so that makes it easy. And I love money...so that makes my jobs easy," she says.

Dating Game Gets Good Turnout



Photo By Sylvia Johnson

By Denise Reinas

"The Dating Game," which was held in the CUB building on Valentine's Day, was definitely a success. Approximately sixty-five eager students showed up to join in the fun.

The night began with resident assistant, Greg Rzeplinski, opening up the show by introducing the contestants. Four consecutive games were played. Each consisted of one female, who asked the questions, and three males, who answered the questions.

An example of one of the more humorous questions was asked by Patty Abramcheck:

"Describe your body in four words or less." Marty Shevlin answered, "Well oiled sex machine."

The happily coupled winners of the games were Florence Tranguch and Jeff Tondt, Jennifer Masevick and Udo Koehler, Patty Abramcheck and Marty Shevlin, and last was Jennette Moss and Dan Moore. Each couple won certificates for dinner at various restaurants in the area.

Other door prizes were issued to eight individuals in the audience. The game was a success and everyone had fun, and on this Valentine's Day, few of Cupid's arrows missed.

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