

'Everyone's history' celebration focuses on future

By Randy Townsend

As Rider celebrates Black History Month, members of the Black Student Union (BSU) are using the time to prepare for the future of African-Americans.

This year's theme, Black History, Everyone's History, was adapted to show that contributions African-Americans have made to the world have been beneficial to all people. The struggles for civil rights were struggles for all oppressed people, so our accomplishments don't just pertain to African-Americans but to everybody, said BSU President Reggie Walker.

"Our opening ceremony featured Keith Beauchamp, a documentary filmmaker who made 'The Untold Story of Emmett Louis Till' which prompted the United States Justice Department to reopen the Emmett Till case 50 years after his death," said Walker. "This case didn't just affect African-Americans, it affected everybody because it drew national outrage."

Two days following the opening ceremonies, Judy Shepard visited the University to discuss the murder of her son, Matthew. Walker said that the tragedies of Till and Shepard were similar.

"Those are two similar instances where somebody's life was taken just because they

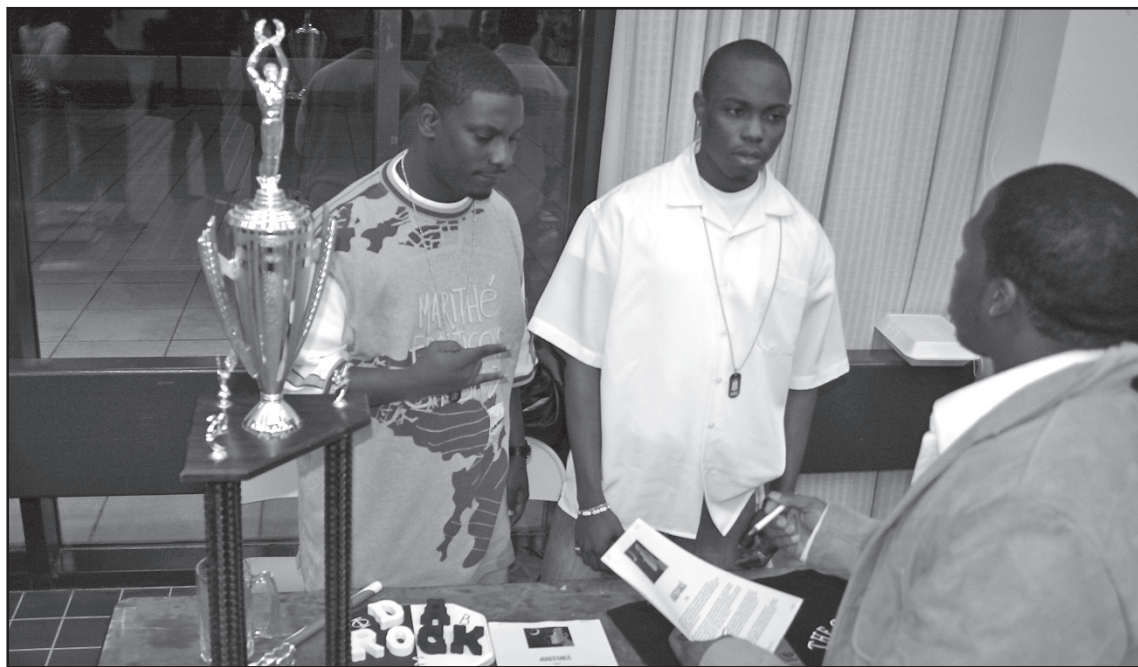


Photo by Allen Huang

Members of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc., Akwasi Yeboah, Quesi Lewis and Ike Anyanwu enjoy "Meet the Greek" night hosted by the Inter-Greek Council Thursday night.

were different from somebody else," said Walker. "I think the Black History Month opening ceremony and the Judy Shepard visit fed off of each other."

At January's Black Leadership Conference in Arlington, Virginia, students from across the country began to organize a united effort, in conjunction with James Madison University's Neo-Underground Railroad Conductors, to combat negative images of African-Americans and other minorities. BSU and the Inter-Greek Council will hold a letter-writing campaign in the Multi-Cultural Center directed at record companies and media outlets on Feb. 22. Some of

the companies include Disney, McGraw-Hill, Clear Channel Communications and Viacom International. According to Tynesha Jones, BSU vice-president, the letters will be written to grab the attention of the people who have control over the images of African-Americans and other minorities.

"We will be demanding that they start portraying minorities in a more accurate representation instead of the stereotypical roles we see on television," said Jones. "There are about 50 people from Rider, and nearly 50 schools taking part in this campaign that will all mail out letters on the same day."

Walker said that hip-hop artists with positive messages receive limited airplay and recognition when compared to those with violent or abusive images.

"We know all of the

fake-thug imagery that they put out there," said Walker. "Non-African-Americans who purchase hip-hop are led to believe that most black people from urban neighborhoods behave that way.

On Feb. 25, BSU will be hosting a Bronc Buffet, entitled "Music Through the Ages," that will include games and prizes. Two big events that will close out Black History Month are the annual Gospel Fest on Feb. 27 that invites church choirs from the surrounding area to come and perform, and the closing ceremonies on Feb. 28 entitled "The Color of Music."

"We're showing that the African-American contribution to United States music has shaped that music within itself," said Walker. "We'll go through jazz, hip-hop, blues, gospel and spirituals to show that these all played parts in what we listen to today."

Student relates the truth about the life of his father, a soldier stationed in Iraq

By Charlie Olsen

Many students wish that they only had to talk to their parents every couple of days, but junior Jeffrey Stout doesn't have that option.

Jeffrey can only correspond with his father every two or three days using e-mail. His father, 45-year-old Sgt. 1st Class Jeffrey L. Stout is stationed in Iraq. Jeffrey's father paints a dire image of the war in Iraq, an image that is dramatically different from what most Americans are used to seeing on the nightly news.

"At one point they didn't have enough bulletproof armor," said Jeffrey. "Supposedly it's getting better due to the fact that it's been brought to the light by Senator Kerry."

Sgt. Stout's unit doesn't live out of a barracks; they live out of tents. The latrine is a pot on the floor, and Iraqi soldiers prepare the food they eat. Despite the guerilla nature of the insurgency, they eat it anyway, not knowing whether the next bite could be poisoned. Everyone is losing weight, he said.

"I don't expect it to be completely comfortable," Jeffrey said. "But it should be better than that — it's not the fifties anymore."

The tents in which Sgt. Stout's unit sleep are one of the aspects of this war that is not seen on television, he said.

"There was a false belief that they slept in a barracks or something like that," Jeffrey said. "That was one of very few buildings shown on TV that they own over there."

Following the Iraqi election, the first in 50 years, President Bush declared them a success. For many Iraqis the blue ink-stained finger, denoting that they had already cast a ballot, was a badge of pride.

Jeffrey said that his father, stationed 30 miles outside of Baghdad and tasked with guarding a polling place, believes that the election was largely a success. But he said that his father, who has been in the Army for about 20 years, remains skeptical.

"Yes, they were pretty happy, at least for the time being," Jeffrey said. But "someone's

going to be unhappy and someone's going to be militant — it's basically "Us versus Them."

Jeffrey and his four brothers and sisters are coping as well as they can, he said.

At the end of the month "they're going to sack a town," he said. "They don't even know why they're taking it down, they're just taking it down — not much reason behind it."

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Anyone interested in running for the position of Executive Editor for The Rider News, contact Dave Maccar at x. 5337.

Correction

In the article entitled, "Fork It Over: Textbook costs rising," of the Feb. 11 issue, Thomson Learning was spelled incorrectly. Dr. Jeffrey Halpern is an associate professor in the Sociology Department, not Communication.

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