Baraka’s appearance divides the University

By Laura Sass
Executive Editor

Confusion and controversy are running rampant on campus about the next participant in the annual “Distinguished Writer” series, Amiri Baraka, who is speaking at Rider on Friday, Dec. 6.

Tickets are currently available at the ticket booth in the Student Center with a Rider ID.

“We do this every year,” said Rubin Joyner, director of the Educational Enhancement Program (EOP). “We’ve had three other authors for the past three years. Baraka is no different.”

Many on campus, however, do not feel the same way about the current poet laureate of New Jersey, who also happened to be a former member of the Black Panthers. He has recently received notoriety due to his Sept. 11 poem, which many consider anti-Semitic.

Even with all of the discussion on whether or not Baraka should be allowed to speak on campus, the idea of canceling his appearance was never really considered.

“It was never the position of the University to censor Baraka,” explained Assistant Dean of Students Anthony Campbell. “It was just a matter of finding funds to provide ample security.”

Joyner agreed that Baraka’s appearance at Rider this year was relatively certain.

“It’s a great opportunity for the EOP students,” he added. EOP is a state program that helps low-income New Jersey residents attend college. It is designed to give academic opportunities to those who might normally be denied an education due to academic resources, financial resources or environmental circumstances, according to the Rider website. It is an academic support program with financial aid assistance.

The “Distinguished Writer” series is designed to fulfill one of the requirements that EOP students have.

According to Joyner, the students study the work of one author throughout the semester, starting in July. They then must write a critical paper on the writer. The series gives the students a chance to present their thoughts to the writer, face to face. This year, that writer was Baraka.

“It is a teaching moment,” added Joyner. “You have to grab those when you can, because they are rare. But this is definitely one of them.”

According to Campbell, the first session of Baraka’s appearance will take place in the Fireside Lounge, where Baraka and those involved in the EOP program will meet. Students will then present their literary criticism directly to Baraka, and hear his thoughts.

“This session is generally closed to the public,” said Joyner. “It is just a forum for the EOP students to meet the writer, face to face. This year, that writer is Baraka.”

The next segment of the program will be held in the Student Center Theater, where Baraka will give a reading, followed by an “open dialogue,” according to Campbell.

“We are following the same format as we have every year,” he added. “Students, and all who attend, will have an opportunity to ask Baraka questions. I and another faculty member will ask the first two, but after that, the floor is open.”

Despite the discussion that Baraka’s visit to campus has engendered, Joyner and those involved in the EOP program are excited.

“What more can you get than by having the author there, right in front of you, and asking questions directly to him?” he asked.

Rider Commemorates World AIDS Day 2002

Monday, Dec 2 — Cavalla Room — 9 a.m. – 7 p.m.
Presented by the Center of Multicultural Affairs and Community Service & World AIDS Day Committee

National AIDS Memorial Quilt Display
Alpha Psi Omega Performance
Candle Ceremony and Quote/Poem Reciting
Interpretive Dance to Amazing Grace
Rider Quilt Signing
Preparing candy bags and cards for HIV positive children
Distribution of condoms and AIDS literature
Collection of donations for a local AIDS foundation

“Inflicting 40 million people worldwide, HIV/AIDS should not only be acknowledged by us just for today, but for all 365 days.”
— Wayne Saldanha, SGA President

May all the victims rest in peace and God be with those that are suffering.”
— Nereida Montijo, Senior

“Invincible”
Are we invincible?
Let us go through the mind of one
Affected…
The moment slithers into your life…
Disbelief
Terror
Denial
And like a whisper that fades in the wind…
Acceptance sets in.
Either you lay down and the roses
Cover you…
Or you rise above the rest and give
Hope across the world
Now ask yourself this…
Are you Invincible?
— Jacqueline Silver, Sophomore