

November 26, 2007

VIRGINIA TECH CONDUCTOR

A GUIDE FOR OUR JOURNEY TOWARD EXCELLENCE, EQUITY, AND EFFECTIVENESS

Celebration: A Poem

Why are you here?
Is it to learn more of other cultures?
Is it for a class project?
A grant you received where you need points
to meet requirements
Or do you want to discredit stereotypes,
or become more cultured?
Take a second and
Look at your skin
You shouldn't be here
You may only be represented by four
percent of your race
Or maybe less than two
Or questioning why more people don't
embrace you
Or you could be in the majority
Yet tired of having people think you're
here based on privilege
When you're living the struggle too
Working forty hours a week just to
pay for school
Wishing people could look past your color.
Tonight, no matter why you are here
Put away irrationalities and fears because
It's a celebration.
Aren't we all here for the same thing.

For the same love of education
For the same want of peace, and freedom,
and the ability to have our voices heard.
We've got to come together to embrace
diversity and the meaning in every sense of
the word
No quotas, guessin' games, or Webster's
dictionary to determine what it truly means
Because it's here tonight, us together, a
reason to celebrate
Push away preconceived notions
of things taught
Clear your table for a celebration
Where the food for thought comes from
countries across the world, nourishing
your open mind
Which has been famished for so long.
We'll start with an appetizer of stereotypes
served with an entrée of diversity well
done, with truth and understanding
the final dessert
We can't desert the idea of truth
and equality
In this celebratory world our vision would
be more than twenty twenty to see past
stereotypical traps we are placed in

By Juanisha Brooks



2007 Celebration of Diversity photo by Kim Petersen.

Oh she got here based off of
affirmative action
English is his second language he has no
place in our world
His family is illegal immigrants who take our
jobs and kill our economy and citizens
They are all greedy and can't be trusted
Jail is the only place for him, why is he

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Betances Opens Diversity Luncheon with Passionate Address

by Jean Elliott



Samuel Betances

The third annual Multicultural Faculty and Staff Luncheon opened the 2007-08 academic year with a cheerful crowd that filled the Graduate Life Center multipurpose room. About 180 new and familiar faces cheerfully

greeted one another, with words of welcome offered from the leaders of the Black Caucus, the Hispanic Caucus, and the LGBT Caucus. Kevin McDonald, who was warmly applauded as the university's new leader of the Office of Multicultural Affairs, introduced the keynote speaker, the captivating and thought-provoking Samuel Betances.

Dynamic in voice and message, Betances spoke about his own struggles as a biracial, bilingual, bicultural boy born to Puerto Rican parents. He spent his early life in New York City's South Bronx and Chicago's West Side, dropping out of school at 16 to

join the Air Force. After failing the entrance exam, Betances worked in a suburban hospital. A local librarian encouraged him to go back to school. Eventually, he did return to complete his scholastic experience at Broadview Academy, a religious high school near Chicago. After earning an undergraduate degree in 1966, he worked in Chicago's anti-poverty program and helped quell riots that broke out that summer in the Puerto Rican community. In 1968, he found himself at Harvard, where he earned a master's degree in urban education and a doctorate in educational administration.

Betances reflected on the importance of literacy and the power of words, advocating reading as the stepping stone to negotiate society. In addition, he underscored the importance of empathy and how Virginia Tech must encourage mutual understanding, especially following April 16th.

"One of his most powerful insights was that as members of under-represented communities, we need to show the majority

population a sense of gratitude before we begin to talk about grievances," said Ray Plaza, director of diversity initiatives.

Betances concluded his presentation with two short films produced by his son, David. Both films ("9:45" and "My Father's Son") are now available through the Office of Multicultural Affairs. The luncheon was sponsored by the Office of Multicultural Affairs, Office for Equal Opportunity, Human Resources, Staff and Faculty Senates and the Office of the Provost.

Betances has worked in all 50 states, all six U.S. territories, and in various countries, including Japan, Korea, Germany, and Mexico. Following decades of university teaching and consultants with private and public organizations, he recently released an educational book/tape series entitled, "Ten Steps to the Head of the Class." In it, he advocates that learners aim high, reject rejection, and embrace themselves and each other as powerful team members working toward a more prosperous future.

DIVERSITY

SPOTLIGHT STORY

Journey toward Excellence, Equity, and Effectiveness

LGBT Caucus Sponsors Award-Winning Film and PBS Director

The LGBT Faculty-Staff Caucus at Virginia Tech will host the award-winning PBS film director Daniel Karlslake and an educational screening of "For the Bible Tells Me So" at The Lyric Theatre on November 29 at 7 p.m. The film, which is free and open to the public, will be followed by a discussion with the filmmaker and an open reception.

"For the Bible Tells Me So," a First Run Production, has won three audience awards at film festivals across the country and was nominated for the Sundance Grand Jury Award in 2007.

Some people feel very conflicted when it comes to homosexuality and the Bible. People of great faith who have a gay friend or relative may experience profound spiritual turmoil. Healing and transformative, Dan Karlslake's provocative, entertaining documentary brilliantly reconciles homosexuality and Biblical scripture.

Through the experiences of five very normal, very Christian, very American families – including those of former House Majority Leader Richard Gephardt and Episcopal Bishop Gene Robinson – the film shows how insightful people of faith handle the realization of having a gay child. Informed by such respected voices as Bishop Desmond Tutu, Harvard's Peter Gomes, Orthodox Rabbi Steve Greenberg, and Reverend Jimmy Creech, "For the Bible Tells Me So" offers healing, clarity and understanding to anyone caught in the crosshairs of scripture and sexual identity.

For six years, Karlslake has been an award-winning producer for the highly acclaimed newsmagazine "In the Life," which airs nationally on PBS in over 120 markets. Recognition for his outstanding work for the show, which has centered primarily on issues regarding religion and homosexuality, includes an Emmy nomination from the Academy of Television

Arts and Sciences, as well as praise from GLAAD and the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association.

This is the caucus's second annual "Artist-in-Residence" package. Karlslake will also be meeting with classes, professors, and participating in a moderated discussion with local clergy. At the end of last year's "Revelations," a theatrical presentation about resiliency, discussion centered around religion and the difficulties encountered by the LGBT community in Appalachia.



Former House Majority Leader Richard Gephardt and family.

"This non-fiction film makes for a very nice progression in the conversation," said Jean Elliott, co-chair of the caucus. "Our university is in great need of healing, in great need of anything that spreads the message of tolerance, understanding, and inclusiveness. Karlslake's film speaks directly to a mainstream audience. The film includes gay men and lesbians, young and old, and a family of color. It is very inclusive. Most importantly, the topic is a conversation that needs to happen in the New River Valley."

"I am so pleased that our organization, along with our co-sponsors and supporters, can bring this caliber of programming to the area," said Ken

Belcher, co-chair of the LGBT caucus at Virginia Tech. "This program, targeted to both the university and greater NRV communities, is in direct support of our mission of outreach and education. Last year's program, "Revelations," drew well over 200 people and stimulated a significant discussion afterwards. My goal is to far surpass that number of attendees this year!"

This residency and screening has received campus-wide support, including sponsorship from the Office of Multicultural Affairs; the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences; the Office of Student Affairs; the Office of the Provost; the Office of Equal Opportunity; the Women's Center; the Departments of Communication; Interdisciplinary Studies; and Human Development, and the School of the Arts. It has also been awarded a Women and Minority Artists and Scholars Lecture Series grant.

For more information, visit www.forthetbibletellsmeso.org

The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Caucus at Virginia Tech formed in 1992 as an affiliate of the Women's Network. The LGBT Caucus is open to all Virginia Tech faculty, staff, graduate students, and individuals who support the objectives of the caucus.

The LGBT Caucus at Virginia Tech (www.vtlgbtcaucus.org) is committed to advancing equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people and their families. The caucus seeks to improve the lives of LGBT individuals both at the university and in the New River Valley community through educational programming, social activities, public service, and outreach. Together with its allies, it strives to share information, and initiate progressive community change as it visibly works for social justice and human rights.

Narrative Mediation Model Best for University Community



Dale B. Robinson

More than 30 members of the university community have completed mediation training and are available to provide mediation services on campus, at other Virginia Tech locations, or at other sites to those who help in resolving a university-related issue. The mediators come from diverse roles and cultural backgrounds.

There are a variety of different "models" or formats for mediation. Virginia Tech determined that narrative mediation is the model best suited

to help members of the university community engage each other to create their future relationship. Also, it was determined that "co-mediation," two mediators working collaboratively with the people, was preferable to using a "solo mediator" format. The narrative mediation model incorporates the perspective that conflict can be shaped by our previous and present social and cultural experiences. This model is sensitive to the real or perceived power differences that may be present in the relationship between the people. The mediators have been trained to recognize that people have different life experiences and different cultural and personal styles of describing those life experiences, including those experiences involving conflict.

In this model of mediation a role for the mediator is to be "multi-partial" vs. impartial in their interactions with the people so that person can more fully participate in the process and so that each party can develop a broader base on which to develop a future relationship with the other person. This may mean that the mediators may find it helpful to the process to spend more time with one person than the other as one person may need more time to share his/her narrative. The mediators do not "problem solve" the conflict for the people. The people are in control of developing as many options as possible and individually and together evaluate the options that best meet their needs and interests in regard to their future relationship. If an agreement is reached, it may or

may not be in writing. Any agreement reached is between the people and not between the university and the people. Each person is responsible for his/her own accountability as far as fulfilling commitments made to the other person. If an agreement is not reached, the people are free to pursue other processes that they may determine is most helpful in resolving their concerns.

Any members of the Virginia Tech community who wants to learn more about process or pursue mediation needs should contact Dale B. Robinson, conflict resolution program manager in the Office for Equal Opportunity. More information can also be found online at www.oeo.vt.edu.

in class.
 Oh he's a drug dealer, and his family is a part
 of the mafia
 Your lips are too full, your hair is too coarse
 Your skin is too dark,
 You skin is too light
 Oh he must be on the football or basketball team,
 because that's the only way he can get here
 Can't you just change your accent already
 He's a redneck who lives on the farm
 She's from the South and dumb, I'm smarter.
 There is no cause for celebration with stereotypes
 that cut through any appetite for diversity.
 In our celebration stereotypes wouldn't be blasting
 through our stereotypes
 Beautiful language from different countries would
 provide the music
 Laughter love and a deep understanding would
 drown out any false truths that tried to make it
 through the airwaves
 Our world of celebration would include men women
 children of every race and creed.
 Backgrounds inheritance
 All at the same table to gain knowledge of one
 another, and make a toast to coming together
 despite the odds of doing so.
 Love is the food for the spirit
 Hatred is silenced by the cackles of the fireworks,
 lighting up the sky in different colors...
 Celebrating coming together
 For a second we could forget who had good
 or bad hair
 Skin tones aren't the center of focus,
 Because in our tapestry of life, every color fills
 the canvas.
 There would be no black and white pictures or TVs.
 Only color with the Anatomy of Diversity starring
 on primetime.
 On the news more faces of color would be apparent
 and not transparent

The Jena 6 wouldn't make the news
 Because this injustice wouldn't, couldn't happen, in
 our world
 If you don't know what the Jena 6 is, diversity hasn't
 reached all of us yet
 In our world we wouldn't have to google these issues
 to find out what they are
 Or make groups to stop these things from happening
 We would know the names of the missing who don't
 fit the description of being white, wealthy, or female,
 on those same news channels.
 Our women wouldn't be nappy
 headed hoes
 Because the concept of good or
 bad hair, light or dark skin, being
 better than the other
 wouldn't exist
 Color or race wouldn't determine
 whether a group of college
 educated women could even fit
 into the title
 Don Imus would still have a job,
 because he
 would have known there is a thin line, between
 jokes and hate
 Embracing your heritage would happen more than
 once a month
 And everyday people would realize it without needing
 a calendar, an instant message, or sudden ring on
 the blackberry
 Because everyday would be a celebration.
 With Diversity well done, served up on a platter
 of equality
 Our voices won't be silenced
 Classes would be a place of true learning and an
 education beyond books and power point slides
 could take place
 It wouldn't be a "Where's Waldo" game of trying to
 find someone like you
 Or feeling like you had no voice in a place

of thousands
 You won't have to be a representative of your race
 At all times on guard
 You can let that down, and stand proud
 of who you are
 And where you came from
 Whether that be the ghetto or the suburb, a house
 with a big lawn, or one filled with the struggle
 Whether you're from a house of plenty, or a single
 parent home where a father figure was only an
 abstract idea.
 Or a mansion up on the hills, and you
 had no chance to feel what diversity
 is truly about
 Even if no celebrations occurred from
 where you were from
 This is for everyone, because we've
 all been impacted somehow and
 someway by stereotypes, a lack of
 diversity, questioning those things
 around us.
 We've all held our heads down
 ashamed of something at one time
 Images on TV and false representations of diversity
 and equality don't make it better
 It's time to desert those ideologies and indulge in a
 new way of thinking
 A time to light up the candles on our dessert of
 equality, as our celebration comes to ending, yet a
 beginning to new truths.
 Truthfully if this world existed, we wouldn't need to be
 here, because everyday would be a celebration.
 Tonight lets' light up the room filled with darkness,
 and make a wish that someday this world will come
 true, a celebration of diversity and culture
 This world may seem out of reach, but right now it
 is here for all of you, if you let it in.
 So tonight now matter why you are here
 It is your time to put on your party hats, open your
 eyes, and let the celebration truly begin.



2007 Celebration of Diversity photo by Kim Petersen.

ABOUT THE CONDUCTOR

The Conductor is produced three times a year by Virginia Tech's Multicultural Fellows and is published by the Office of Multicultural Affairs.

All members of the university community are invited to contribute. Please submit articles to the editorial board at multicultural@vt.edu. Back issues are available online at www.multicultural.vt.edu/conductor

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Advancing Diversity at Virginia Tech

Advancing Diversity at Virginia Tech is a day conference scheduled for Tuesday, January 8, 2008, at the Inn at Virginia Tech and Skelton Conference Center.

The conference will feature two speakers, Damon Williams and Cathy Trower.



Damon Williams

Damon Williams is the assistant vice provost for multicultural and international affairs at the University of Connecticut, where he works with the vice provost to provide leadership to multicultural and international affairs and the university broadly regarding matters of diversity, multiculturalism, and equity. His scholarly interests are in the areas of organizational change and management, diversity in higher education, and ethnic and racial identity. He is also a leader in the American Association of Colleges and Universities' initiative on Making Excellence Inclusive: Diversity, Inclusion, and Institutional Renewal and co-author of

Toward a Model of Inclusive Excellence and Change in Postsecondary Institutions.

Trower is co-principal investigator of the Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE) at Harvard, a joint initiative to improve the quality of faculty work life. She has published numerous articles and several book chapters about faculty work life and edited a book entitled *Policies on Faculty Appointment: Standard Practice and Unusual Arrangements* (2000).



Cathy Trower

Highlights of Conference:

Continental Breakfast; Keynote by Cathy Trower; Lunch; Plenary Session by Damon Williams; Workshops on Recruiting a Diverse Faculty, Inclusive Excellence, and Creating a Positive Departmental Climate; Reception; and Poster Session.

Registration is FREE and available online at www.advance.vt.edu.

Featured Speakers for Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration



Maya Angelou will be the keynote speaker for Martin Luther King Jr. Day on January 21, 2008. She will be speaking at 7:00 p.m. in Burruss Auditorium. Tickets are available at the UUSA Ticket Office in Squires.

Angelou is hailed as one of the great voices of contemporary literature and as a remarkable Renaissance woman. Being a poet, educator, historian, best-selling author, actress, playwright, civil-rights activist, producer, and director, she continues to travel the world making appearances and spreading her legendary

wisdom. Virginia Tech is truly fortunate to have her on campus as part of this special event.

The third annual Community Breakfast as part of the MLK Celebration at Virginia Tech will take place on Monday, January 21 at 8:00 a.m. in Commonwealth Ballroom, Squires Student Center. The keynote speaker this year is Linda Edmonds Turner, one of the first six African-American women students at Virginia Tech. She graduated in 1970 and went on to receive a master's degree from Michigan State University. She then returned to Virginia Tech, where she earned her MBA and Ph.D. in business administration.



Turner is currently the president of Urban College of Boston, a role she has held since 2003. The Urban College of Boston is a fully accredited, independent, two-year college that serves students through associate degree programs in early childhood education, human services administration and general studies, as well as certificate and continuing education programs.

Presidential Campus Enrichment Grant Equips Students for the Future

by Kelly Shannon

Today it is more important than ever before to be aware of and sensitive to others around us. As we go about our daily lives, we are involved in situations of diversity. Are you prepared to excel in a diverse community? The Presidential Campus Enrichment Grant program (PCEG) offers recipients the opportunity to broaden their horizons as they participate in various diversity events and activities on campus during the academic year.



PCEG students gather before the 2007 Celebration of Diversity. Photo by John McCormick.

According to Alicia Cohen, assistant to the vice president of the Office of Multicultural Affairs, "PCEG was established in June 2001 in collaboration with the Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid as a cross-college effort at enhancing diversity at Virginia Tech. The PCEG program provides

support to students who were engaged in diversity activities prior to coming to Virginia Tech."

Students recipients must attend diversity programs and/or enroll in classes that deal with diversity. PCEG students are encouraged to attend such events as the heritage month celebrations at Virginia Tech, which include Hispanic Heritage Month, American Indian Heritage Month, Black History Month, and Women's Month. PCEG students receive merits for reflecting on their thoughts and feelings about the experiences in their required journal.

The PCEG program prepares students to enter the next phase of their lives, whether they are entering graduate school or moving on to a professional role, by giving them the opportunity to gain confidence in dealing with diverse situations. "The PCEG program offers students the opportunity to interact with different people, cultures, and perspectives," said Cohen. "The experience gained by participating in PCEG develops competencies in diversity that make the students very marketable in professional situations."

Former Virginia Tech PCEG recipient Lauren Dowdy wrote in her journal, "I just want to add how much

I've appreciated and cherished what I've had the opportunity to learn through this program. I'm not sure I would have heard about or seen all the different perspectives, speeches, and performances without this grant. I've learned more than I could've imagined, and my eyes have been opened to so many different great things."

"The PCEG application process is open to all incoming freshmen, with recipients receiving \$2,100 per semester," said Cohen.

The grant is automatically renewed as long as the student continues to meet the specified requirements, which include maintaining a 2.5 overall GPA, participating in diversity activities to accumulate 12 merits per academic year, and submitting 14 journal entries that reflect on events and activities that they attend.

Currently 90 students are in the PCEG program. In past years, 27 students were selected as scholarship recipients, but this year 30 students were chosen, with each college being represented. For more information concerning the PCEG program, visit www.multicultural.vt.edu/pceg or contact Alicia Cohen at 540/231-1820.