



Summer 2001

The Network Voice Summer

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The Network Voice

Summer Edition • 2001 Volume 1 • Issue 2

A Songbird of Freedom

Monique "Joy" Meadows, '93

"I am an endangered species, but I sing no victim's song. I am a woman. I am an artist. And I know where my voice belongs."

Sung by Dianne Reeves, an afro-world jazz musician, these words pulled me in and cradled me in my own truth. In that moment, I had clarity, purpose and community. What my spirit had felt since before I could mark time was mirrored back to me. I was born black, female and lesbian in a world that hates all of those characteristics openly and proudly. Throughout my life, I have known that if I were to live authentically, I would have to be a social activist.

Social activism is my fuel and my fire. It's the source of my greatest joy and deepest frustration. I would like to say that I chose to be an activist solely out of a selfless desire for justice for all. But that would be only partially true. I do this because I am hungry for freedom for myself. And I believe freedom is possible. I have no choice. To believe otherwise would be to acquiesce and give consent to the mental, spiritual, and physical enslavement of my ancestors and family.

Social activism has taken me down many paths. The seeds of which were solidly planted at IWU. Angered by the unac-

knowledge privilege and blatant racism of my white peers, I became active in the Black Student Union (BSU). BSU became home to me. I learned incredible lessons about leadership, responsibility, and humility. I also came face to face with sexism. That experience helped to shape my understanding about what it meant to be a woman. Consequently, I began to critique all that I had been taught about race, gender, and sexuality. As my awareness about gender increased, so did my willingness to acknowledge that I was not heterosexual. In graduate school at Howard University, I came out as a lesbian. I recall an entry from my journal during that time. I wrote, "Will I wear my lesbianism as proudly as my blackness?" I knew the answer had to be yes. I then began to volunteer in the gay and lesbian community in Washington, DC. I co-founded a group for young lesbians of color. We struggled with decisions about how to balance and nurture our multiple identities. We did not necessarily find the answers, but we did comfort and solace. Similar to my experience with BSU, the space provided me with the opportunity for incredible growth and empowerment.



My progressive political beliefs have now led me to an anti-death penalty organization. I work with a staff of dedicated individuals who share my belief that the government should not have the right to execute its own citizens. At times, I question my decision to do this work. It challenges me emotionally, spiritually, and financially, but I cannot imagine my life any other way. My life is rich. With each day, my self-awareness grows, my commitment to my community and myself strengthens, and my capacity for peace and joy increases. So while, I may be part of an "endangered species", I know my voice and my spirit is moving toward freedom.

Edelbert Rodgers '33, Oldest Alum Passes Away

Travis Pearson, '94

Edelbert G. Rodgers Ph.D. ('33) died on June 5, 2001. He graduated from IWU in 1933 where he was one of four African American Students. His life is a reflection of the American dream--with hard work, dedication and a soul that cares deeply, one can accomplish great things. We lost a great man on June 5th, but his legacy will live on forever.

Dr. Rodgers was a lifetime member of the NAACP and was proud to have marched with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in Washington D.C. and Detroit. The Mayor of Flint, MI declared July 16, 1993 "Dr. Edelbert G. Rodgers Day". He was also the recipient of the Outstanding Citizen's Award from the Business and Professional Women's



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On Campus... From the Office of Multi-Cultural Affairs

By Monica Taylor, '88

2001

Greetings from the Office of Multicultural Affairs! On May 6, 2001, 14 African-American and 9 Latino students graduated from Illinois Wesleyan University. These students were honored to be part of the Sesquicentennial Graduation. Several students have plans to attend graduate school or start their professional careers. Many have already indicated they will be back for the 10th Anniversary of the Minority Alumni Network this Homecoming. The last four years were enlightening and challenging for the students. Because of their IWU education, these alumni are on their way to very successful careers. The Office of Multicultural Affairs applauds the Minority Alumni Network for working with these students and always being there for them. This partnership will only grow stronger with the addition of the Central Illinois Chapter of the Minority Alumni Network. Students and their parents support this addition and welcome the connections the local alumni will provide.

The 2001 Graduates are listed below with their hometowns and majors:

African-American - 14

Rodney Arnett, jr. Music/Vocal Performance, Indianapolis, Indiana	Michael McPherson Political Science, Maywood, Illinois
Nevin Harris Business Administration, Chicago, Illinois	Tamika Oliver Psychology, Country Club Hills, Illinois
Jason King Economics, Decatur, Illinois	Haneef Omar International Business, Rockford, Illinois
Kendra King English-Literature, Aledo, Illinois	Rhonda Pettaway Nursing, Carol Stream, Illinois
Stephen Llorens English-Literature, River Forest, Illinois	Samantha Robinson Sociology, Chicago, Illinois

Michael Rogers
Business Administration,
Chicago, Illinois

Kimberly Turner
Business Administration and
Anthropology,
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Patrick Washington
International Business,
Lockport, Illinois

Syreeta Williams
Mathematics and
International Business,
Decatur, Illinois

Latino/a - 9

Gary Bleck Computer Science, Warren, Illinois	Robert Garza Business Administration, Lockport, Illinois
Lesley Boeckman Theatre Arts, Bloomington, Illinois	Elisa Vanessa Puma Nursing, Chicago, Illinois
Lizette Cano Mathematics, Franklin Park, Illinois	Marta Siaba Business Administration, Chicago, Illinois
Joel Castillo Business Administration, Elgin, Illinois	Megan White Psychology, Pacifica, CA
Stephen Magana, History Wheeling, Illinois	

2005

The Class of 2005 (yes, 2005!!!) will start their IWU career in August. There are 10 African-American and 12 Latino students in the entering class. These students have been invited to ALANA (African-American, Latino, Asian-American and Native American) Orientation, August 18-20. This orientation occurs prior to Fall Festival. Students will network with upper-class students, prepare for the cultural and social differences they may encounter, explore academic expectations and become familiar with the Bloomington-Normal community, which will become their home away from home. This year, the Central Illinois Chapter of the Minority Alumni Network will present to parents and students during ALANA Orientation.

The Office of Multicultural is committed to connecting you with students. Please contact us at 309 556-3412 or by e-mail, mtaylor@titan.iwu.edu. We are very open to your suggestions.

— CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

Association and Liberty Bell Award from the Genesee Bar Association. In February 2001, he received an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from Illinois Wesleyan University.

Yvonne Jones, IWU supporter, adds, "...the way Minor, [President Minor Myers, jr.] IWU, the Minority Alumni Network and students reached out to Dr. Rodgers in his final years meant more than mere words could express. I remember his wife saying, when they attended IWU's homecoming a few years back, 'that if Edelbert dies tomorrow, he would die happy, after everything the University has done to embrace him after all of these years.' Yvonne concludes, "Please let Minor and the Network know that they made the most senior living minority IWU alum a very happy man!"

He is survived by his wife of 53 years, Virginia, his daughter Denise and granddaughter, Zoraida. Four sisters, Iola, Josephine, Florence and Bernell and numerous cousins, nieces and nephews, also survive him. A memorial service was held in his honor at Noon on Saturday, June 16, 2001 at Austin A. Layne Mortuary, 7239 W. Florissant Ave., St. Louis, MO.

The family asks that in Lieu of flowers, please send donations to: **The Edelbert G. Rodgers, Ph.D. Scholarship Fund** at Illinois Wesleyan University, c/o Ben Rhodes, P.O. Box 2900, Bloomington, IL 60172.

From the Editor...

CORRECTION from the Spring Issue

The *On Campus* section of the Spring 2001 newsletter indicates that the Office of Multi-Cultural Affairs organized the "Free Your Mind" workshop. The Black Student Union Campus Relations Committee organized the workshop. The Office of Multicultural Affairs, Dean of Students and President's Office provided support for the workshop.

**We want to hear from you. Let us know how we're doing.
Any news to share, shoot us a line at
lonnie.smith.gl3x@statefarm.com.**

M.A.N. 10th Anniversary Homecoming Weekend

by Debbie R. Burt-Frazier, '74, Minority Alumni Network co-chair

"Bringin' it Back Home," is the theme for the Minority Alumni Network's 10th Anniversary Homecoming 2001 Celebration, October 5th-7th. The vision of the Network is to have **the largest number** ever of minority alums return to IWU's campus. The plans are in the works now to make this occasion a spectacular one.

Friday, October 5th

Friday evening will kick off the festivities with an informal set in the Memorial Student Center Lounge "Pit". Those alums as old as me will remember that area in the "Dugout" where the pool tables were. The get-together will feature an alumnus deejay, bid whist, and happy hour hors d'oeuvres. Hey, it's gonna be a party y'all!

Saturday, October 6th

Saturday at 10 am on McPherson Beach (in front of the drama building) will begin the Minority Alumni/Student Games. Flag football, volleyball, and a double-dutch tournament will stimulate good healthy competition between alums and the "younger" student body. Be prepared to "Bring it" alums because I hear that the competition will be fierce!

At 4 pm after the Titan Homecoming football game, there will be a career/profession roundtable in the Davidson Room. A half-dozen alums from various fields: medical, legal, business, computer technology, entrepreneurial and graduate studies will conduct meaningful discussions for students, while answering any questions they may have.

That evening at 6:30 should prove to be the highlight of the weekend with an after-five gala, dinner dance to be held at the Radisson Hotel. A smooth jazz minority alum ensemble will entertain and the program will include a tribute to IWU's recently deceased oldest minority alum, Dr. Edelbert Rodgers, '33. A special 10th Anniversary slide presentation entitled "Celebrating a Trailblazing Past, Charging Into a Triumphant Future" will also be presented for everyone's enjoyment.

Sunday, October 7th

The weekend's culminating event will be the trademark M.A.N. "Do it Yourself Gospel fest recognition ceremony in Evelyn Chapel. Traditionally, alums, professors, or students are recognized while we all get our "praise on" through song. This year, at 11 am Sunday morning it will replace the 10 am worship service, with the M.A.N. worship service with minority alum, Rev. James Fother ('86) officiating. Plans to include a student/alumni choir to perform at the service are in the works. If you would like to lend your voice, please contact Monica Taylor ('88), 309-555-3967.

As you can see we're planning big things for your return to IWU's campus! Please say that you'll join us. Put October 5-7th on your calendar. Plan to be a part of M.A.N. history...why don't you "Bring it Back Home?"

Please respond by **September 10th** and return to Mary Bible (IWU, PO Box 2900, Bloomington, IL 61702-2900) or contact 1-800-IWU-ALUM:

Name _____ Address _____

Phone # _____ E-mail _____ Class _____

How many in your family will be attending? _____ When will you arrive? _____

The host hotel will be the Radisson Hotel, (309-664-6446).

I plan to participate in the following activities:

Saturday: ☐ flag football ☐ double dutch ☐ volleyball

Sunday: ☐ the choir led by Dr. Barrington Coleman, ('80)

"Celebrating a Trailblazing Past, Charging Into a Triumphant Future"

Kristin Gregory, '03 is creating a slideshow of alumni throughout the decades to be featured at the dinner Saturday evening. To be included in this production, **please send photos to the Office of Multicultural Affairs, c/o Kristin Gregory, ('03), PO BOX 2900, Bloomington, IL. 61702-2900** by September 1st. Please make sure all photos are labeled with name, class and address.

Kristin is also interested in alums answering the following questions:

- 1.) As a minority alum of IWU, what are some strides you're proud of that have been made for students of diverse cultural backgrounds on campus before, during or after your time at IWU?
- 2.) What might you hope for IWU alums and their involvement with each other, the university and current students?
- 3.) What did you like about IWU while you were here, or what weren't you able to appreciate until after graduation?

Also, please return the questions to Kristin at the above address by **September 1st**.

Board of Trustees Discusses Diversity

By Kristin Gregory, '03 and Rina Bhanot, '03

On Tuesday, May 7th 2001 the Board of Trustees met in the Turfler Room, Illinois Wesleyan University for a roundtable discussion on ethnic and racial diversity on the IWU campus. Board Trustee member, Thomas C. McKinney Jr., MD ('76) led discussion where students, faculty, trustees, and staff joined members of the board for candid, constructive conversation on multiculturalism at IWU.

The discussion centered on recruitment of underrepresented minorities in the student body and amongst members of the faculty and retention rates. Ideas were brainstormed on ways to build relationships with perspective students and IWU students of color that might help alleviate the stresses of attending school in a place where students with their racial and cultural background are largely in the minority.

A great portion of the discussion included aspects of financial aid, and how the contents of that package heavily influence recruitment and retention rates of students, both positively and negatively. Dean of Admissions James Ruoti ('63) voiced concerns on recruiting students that are so desired by competitive schools who have the means to offer more financial aid. While this is a fact that cannot be overlooked, students like Rina Bhanot ('03), Kristin Gregory, ('03) and Danny Sherrod ('03) voiced that finances alone do not always seal a student's decision about the university, there are a bevy of factors. Some of these include: classes offered, extracurricular activities, and how approachable faculty members are in and out of class.

Students were not the only topic of discussion regarding recruitment. Provost Janet McNew spoke of the complexity of acquiring diverse faculty, admitting that often times the location of the campus makes IWU a hard sale for young professors that are sought after at other universities in larger regions that can offer higher salaries. However, there is hope, and such dilemmas call for the exploration of more creative ways to get diversity at IWU.

Other issues included academic environment, student to student and student to faculty relationships, the role of athletics in a student's educational career, and academic promise. Many suggestions were made, but it was discovered that there are already existing structures in place to make attending IWU a smooth transition, and a better implementation of such safety nets could make a world of difference. Some of these structures included: Ambassador's Club, Student Senate, the Black Student Union, and department heads. Student Senate President Greg Adamo ('02) echoed these sentiments and the aspiration of working together more in a way that's beneficial to all.

After two hours of ideas and remarks, a list of potential changes was formed that might be used as markers in the future as to how to move forward. These items included financial aid, student involvement, personalized recruitment, staff support, multicultural programs, and alumni participation.

Others in attendance showing support and adding to the conversation included Monica Taylor, Director of Multicultural Affairs, ('88), Travis Pearson, Associate Director of Development, ('94), President Minor Myers, jr., Dean of Students Jim Matthews and Board Trustee member, Dr. Rebie R. Kingston. After many exchanges, the end result was a constructive, meaningful debate. All present learned and contributed with hopes that ideas might soon come into fruition and adjustments can be made to make Illinois Wesleyan a campus that best fits the needs of all who make up this environment.

Missing In Action, Lost Alumni...

If you know the whereabouts of the following alums, please tell them we want to hear from them.

Kristin Gregory, ('03) is creating a minority alumni directory and wants to add them to the directory.

Please contact Kristin with their information or have them contact Kristin at kristey_kris@yahoo.com or at 309-556-3412.



Mr. Roderick D. Adams	1995
Mr. Daniel W. Ball	1983
Ms. Floris L. Barnett	1962
Ms. Beverly Beasley	1978
Mr. Frederic Y. Brown	1999
Mr. Malcom D. Brown	1986
Ms. Shawn A. Brown	1987
Dr. Edward E. Cain	1982
Mrs. Rozette C. Cary	1973
Mr. Merrill R. Chandler	1988
Ms. Ramona L. Cheek	1981
Ms. Denise A. Collins	1986
Mr. James G. Copeland	1985
Mr. Robert L. Dixon	1950
Mr. Harold O. Eley	1973
Mr. John H. Flowers	1975
Miss Sadaria A. Frierson	1985
Ms. Michelle D. Hutchins	1983
Mr. Armand Jackson	1988
Ms. Janel E. Jones	1987
Dr. Robin L. Jones	1985
Mr. Ernest W. Kachingwe	1974
Ms. Allison J. Keyes	1985
Ms. Dana Lewis	1980
Ms. Karen V. Marion	1976
Ms. Darlene Mayes	1986
Mrs. Beverly P. Mayes-Hawkins	1977
Mr. Gordon E. McClure	1974
Ms. Yvonne D. McIntire	1981
Ms. Jacquelyn McKinzie	1978
Mr. Michael A. McNeal	1979
Miss Kimberly A. Mims	2000
Mr. Samuel L. Moon	1972
Ms. Karen D. Morgan	1977
Mrs. Eugenia R. Napoleon	1984
Mr. Willard A. Owens	1986
Ms. Robin Patton	1997
Mrs. Cheryl L. Portwood-Peden	1974
Mr. Ray Rodriguez	1976
Mrs. Shirley M. Smith	1975
Mrs. Cheryl Strong	1980
Ms. Heather L. Thomas	1991
Ms. Stefani M. Walton	1985
Mr. Justin M. Williams	1997
Mr. Keith J. Wilson	1980



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Next Issue...

- Special Homecoming ISSUE with up to date info regarding Homecoming, plus BSU T-shirt order form.

Upcoming Fall Issue...

- ALMUERZO
- On Campus...
- More News and Notes...
- Photos and coverage on Homecoming

