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Lectures Focus on Dispelling Myths

January 20, 2011

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – Race relations will be the focus of two lectures at Illinois Wesleyan University. Titled “Dispelling Myths,” the evening lectures will address affirmative action and racism toward people of Asian descent. The lectures are free and open to the public.

The first lecture, “Dispelling Myths: Affirmative Action,” will be at 7 p.m. on Thursday, Jan. 27, in the Hansen Student Center (300 Beecher St., Bloomington). Associate Professor of Psychology Kira Hudson Banks and Assistant Professor of Sociology Meghan Burke will explain the history and present-day state of affirmative action in America. The lecture is sponsored by the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs.

The second lecture, “Dispelling Myths: The Model Minority,” will be at 7 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 10 in the Hansen Student Center. Burke will speak about the stereotype that labels Asian-Americans as the “model minority.” The event will also feature a panel of Asian-Americans to offer first-hand experience. The lecture is co-sponsored by the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs, the Sociology Club and Engaging Diversity.

“Negativity toward those who differ from you is mostly born of a lack of knowledge,” said Director of the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs Roshaunda Ross. “This series will give people facts about controversial topics, so that they can form educated opinions. The sessions are not about swaying opinions, just giving people the information they need to form their own opinions.”

For the past decade, Banks has dedicated herself to the study of racial discrimination, and the psychology of race. A graduate of Mount Holyoke College, she possesses a master’s degree and a doctorate from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, where she participated in a number of programs to promote interethnic relations. She is active in the local community, spearheading the GO-GIRL mentoring (Gaining Options: Girls Investigate Real Life) program to foster math and science interest among adolescent girls in the Bloomington-Normal community. She has received the community’s Athena Award and the *Pantagraph’s* “20 Under 40” honor for her local leadership. She currently writes a column on race relations for the *St. Louis Beacon* and is a blogger for *Psychology Today*.

Burke graduated from Loyola University in Chicago with a master’s degree and doctorate in sociology. She teaches courses such as the History of Social Thought, Race & Ethnic Relations,

Community & Urban Sociology, as well as Intergroup Dialogue: Exploring Inequality in Self and Society with Banks. Burke and Banks also co-direct the Encountering Diversity pre-orientation program for first-year students at Illinois Wesleyan. Burke is active in the teaching and learning committees for the American Sociological Association and the Midwest Sociological Association, and is the IWU faculty advisor to the Sociology Club. She has been published in the *Journal of Race and Policy*, *Current Perspectives in Social Theory*, and will soon have her first book published with Lexington Books.

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