



Tuesday, February 17, 2004

Closing ceremonies cap African-American Celebration

By **Jeff Samoray**, OU Web Writer

Oakland University students, faculty and staff filled the Oakland Center Fireside Lounge Feb. 17 to take part in closing ceremonies for OU's African-American Celebration. Attendees reflected not just on the events of the past month but also how much remains to achieve regarding racial equality.

"Even though we're celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Brown vs. The Board of Education decision, many of our schools still operate with a separate but equal system," said Robert Johnson, vice provost for enrollment management, in his opening remarks. "We can celebrate, but we still have a long road to travel. It's a marathon, not a 50-yard dash. As we continue to celebrate, we must remember to continue the race ... Diversity adds to the intellectual development of all students. We must continue to march forward and move upward."

In addition to the beautiful a cappella rendition of "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen" delivered by sophomore vocal performance major Erin Waddell, winners of the seventh annual All-Campus Contest in Commemoration of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. were announced. Entrants were asked to submit an original campus programming idea that would facilitate the integration of OU students and allow them to foster a sense of community and learn to respect individual differences.

Senior African and African-American studies and performing arts major Rodney Brown took first place and earned \$300 for his proposed program, titled "**Walk in My Shoes: An Experience on Stereotypes and Diversity.**" Sophomore Janise Larkins and junior Sumeera Younis tied for second place with their proposals. Each earned a \$100 prize.

"I'm really excited about winning," Brown said. "I put a lot of time and effort into my idea. I wanted to create a program that would have a lot of impact on campus. We have a lot of quick one-day events, but in order to open up more dialogue, I designed my program to take place over two days. It's designed to show that it's not okay to judge someone before you really get to know them."

Jean Ann Miller, director of the Center for Student Activities, said it's possible that all three programming proposals may be adopted during the next academic year.

Students, faculty and staff can continue to celebrate the rich heritage of African-Americans at several upcoming events. Five OU students will be recognized for their strong citizenship, scholarship and leadership in promoting interracial understanding at the 12th annual **Keeper of the Dream Scholarship Awards Banquet** Thursday, Feb. 19, at 6:30 p.m. in the Shotwell-Gustafson Pavilion. And on March 18, **The Honors College** will present a colloquium on "The Art of Slavery" at noon in the Oakland Center Oakland Room.

SUMMARY

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Created by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Tuesday, February 17, 2004
Modified by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Tuesday, February 17, 2004
Article Start Date: Tuesday, February 17, 2004