

Monday, February 4, 2008

Dysons to debate Bill Cosby's position on black America

Oakland University is pleased to bring Michael Eric Dyson and his wife, Reverend Marcia Dyson, to campus to debate "The State of Black America: Is Bill Cosby Right?" on Monday, Feb. 18 at 7 p.m. in the Oakland Center Banquet Rooms. The Dysons are two of the most influential black leaders in the nation. Jude Nixon, director of OU's Honors College and professor of English, will serve as moderator. The event is free and open to the public.

In 2004, Bill Cosby began a series of call-outs in communities across the United States, challenging black parents to take a more active role in raising children and strengthening families. He called for black children to take more responsibility for their education, and to improve their speech and dress. He also questioned the influence of rap and other entertainment outlets on black youth. As Cosby speaks around the country, many see him as giving "tough love" to concerned parents and regard his position as a wake-up call and a vision of how to improve the black community.

Many leaders within the African American community, including Marcia Dyson, have embraced Bill Cosby's message as necessary to improve the state of black America. An ordained and practicing minister, Marcia Dyson also serves as research associate in the University of Pennsylvania's Africana Studies Program. She is also a regular cultural and political radio commentator, and a contributing writer for "Essence" magazine.

Others, however, criticize Bill Cosby's position. One of the most vocal of Cosby's opponents is Marcia Dyson's husband, Michael Eric Dyson, known as a "hip-hop intellectual" for his academic and cultural explorations of rap music and cited by "Ebony" magazine as one of the nation's 100 most influential black Americans. In the preface to his book "Is Bill Cosby Right? (Or Has the Black Middle Calls Lost Its Mind?)," Michael Eric Dyson frames Cosby's position as a matter of class difference, calling it "The Aristocracy versus the Ghettoocracy." Michael Eric Dyson has authored fourteen books and is a professor of theology, English and African American studies at Georgetown University.

No tickets are required for the debate and seating is on a first come, first served basis. Overflow seating will be available in the Pioneer Food Court with live video projection. The debate is presented by OU's Student Life Lecture Board and Student Program Board. For more information about this program or to arrange for special assistance to attend the lecture, call the Center for Student Activities at (248) 370-2400.



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SUMMARY

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