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1996

## Magnum Opus, Volume 2.1, March 1996

Black Faculty and Staff Association

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# MAGNUM OPUS



## TOPIC



TONY MAJOR



## Faculty in the Spotlight

**P**rofessor Anthony B. Major

is a new addition to UCF's theater department. His innovation, dedication to and the love of the arts is reflected in his work and comes through clearly when one listens to his goals and dreams for the theater at UCF.

**Anthony B. Major** (Director) an Assistant Professor at Theater UCF, was listed in the Black Directory of Performing Arts and has a BA in theater Arts from Hofstra University. He also has a MFA from New York University where he served on the Graduate and Undergraduate Film Faculties. He was the vice-president for Redd Foxx Corporation for six years, where he produced, "*Foxx and Friends*" on

Broadway. He also worked on other projects such as *the Royal Family*- a CBS Television Series, *Harlem Nights*, *Ghost of a chance*- CBS Television Movie of the Week with Dick Van Dyke and Geoffrey Holder, and *The Motown Christmas Special*. This Sarasota native returned to Florida to work as Stage Manager on Dolly Parton's television series *Heavens to Betsy* at Disney/MGM Studios. Mr. Major began his acting career with the New York Shakespeare Festival. He acted on Broadway in "*We Interrupt This Program...*" and toured with *Home*, which he directed for the United Negro College Fund. He also acted in the role of Sgt. Waters in The Negro Ensemble Company's award winning production's tour of Charlie Fuller's *Soldiers Play*. His career spans three decades of directing, acting, teaching, producing, and working with Academy Award winners Alan Pakula, Robert Mulligan, Robert DeNiro, Hal Ashby, Beau Bridges, Sidney Poitier, James Earl Jones, William Friedkin, Harry Bellafonte, and Della Reese. His television appearances includes spots on *Hill Street Blues*, and *The Jefferson's*. He wrote and directed the award winning film *Off Duty*, NBC-Television syndicated *The Teen Show and Super Spook*, a feature film parody on super-heroes. His music background led him to manage and record Grammy and Tony award winning million dollar recording artists. Mr. Major was recently appointed to the Florida Institute of Film Education (FIFE).

With over 30 years of experience in film, television and theater, Major recognizes that the Orlando area is brimming with potential when it comes to the entertainment industry. Last spring, while teaching film directing at UCF, Major stumbled across what he

calls "Orlando's best kept secret," the UCF theater department. "I was blown away with the quality of theater here. It was first class acting and very professional with a quality on the same level as an 'Off-Broadway' production".

Major began his first semester at UCF teaching two never-before-offered classes. The first course addresses President Hitt's agenda for diversity within the university, and involves the study of five plays originating from various cultural backgrounds. The goal of this course, which is open to all students, is to illustrate the commonalities shared by each of the works. His other course, entitled Acting for Film and Television, is designed to teach students the difference between acting on the stage and in front of the camera. "UCF is sitting in the third entertainment capital of the world, where Disney is the biggest employer and we'll be providing the industry with talented students. The students have an opportunity that was unavailable to me," noted Major, who realizes that most actors will end up working in film and television.

As impressed as he is with UCF's theater department, Major admitted he is disappointed with the media's reaction to the cultural opportunities in Orlando and especially here at UCF. "We sent press releases to all the radio and television stations in town, and we haven't received one response." Major believes that part of the problem lies at the top. "I've never seen the mayor here. Doesn't Glenda Hood like theater?" He noted that, "The biggest problem in getting TV shows to Orlando is that the city is lacking a cultural center that Californians can relate to."

The fact that a new theater is number 20 out of 21 on UCF's construction docket is another sore spot with Major, who commented that, "Broadway is

happening right here at UCF and UCF has an excellent opportunity to take advantage of being a leader in an industry where the money will be in the coming years. For UCF not to have an adequate facility is a sin." (The theater department is currently housed in the former chemistry building). The participation of the press, TV, and radio would help to promote local talent and would get the community involved.

Major noted that "the theater department hopes to expand to a Master's program which would provide tracks in theater or film. This unique opportunity would be one of kind. Most people in film trained in theater as their first discipline and the skills picked up there are easily transferable. You cannot earn a living just in theater and must be able to transfer those skills into technology. Even James Earl Jones had to do it. UCF has the unique opportunity to work with Valencia Community College who has the technological equipment which would then give their students the opportunity to work toward a four year degree at UCF." He would like to see the program expanded to include more minorities which would allow the community to see other cultures. He also feels that the theater department should become more involved with the Zora festival.

Major noted that, "he likes working with a faculty that is skilled and open and a chair that has the same vision of a connection between academia and the real world." As he tells his students "Learn who is sitting next to you on your right and your left, for you never know where or who that person may be in 10 or 20 years."

Major's first production, *I'm Not Rapport*, was based in Central Park, a place he lived near for several years. "It's exciting that my first show was about New York." The play focused on two seasoned gentlemen dealing with the realities of old age in a humorous manner. Major brought in two older gentlemen for the leads, observing that "We tend to take out wisdom and toss it away. These two gentlemen refuse to go away."

Since adding Majors to UCF's theater department, we now have a new and fresh artistic prospective that will prove to be rewarding play after play after play.....

**Welcome aboard Professor and "Break a Leg"!**

## "Writes of Passage"

Faculty members are encouraged to submit articles or information on any academic activity or research they are involved in, for publication in our newsletter.

## Notes

### **BFSA To Host State Conference.**

UCF's Black Faculty and Staff Assembly will be hosting the statewide spring conference for the State of Florida State University System's Black Faculty and Staff Associations on April 12 and 13 at the Student Activity Center-----Wild Pizza. The 1996 theme is "Progress through Professionalism". This conference will address issues relevant to black faculty and staff and work to maintain networking efforts that will establish the groundwork for an active permanent statewide association. Highlights of this years conference include seminars on: Community Interaction Forum; Tenure and Promotion; Sure Fire Approaches To Address Employer/Employee Conflicts; and Keynote Speaker, Dr. Ronald Walters of Howard University.

Everyone is welcome!

Registration will be held from 10:00am to 2:00pm with the general session starting at 1:30pm. The fee is \$35.00 and \$40.00 for participants from institutions not part of the SUS, and is due by Monday, April 1st. For information contact Dr. Gregg Hall at 823-2608 or Ms. Kathy King @ 823-2185.

## DUES

**Members are encouraged to pay dues as soon as possible. Contact Kathy King @ ext. 2185**

## **President Hitt Speaks To The Assembly**

BFSA's annual meeting with UCF's President Dr. John Hitt and Provost Gary Whitehouse was held on February 29, 1996. This meeting's agenda focused on issues and concerns significant to the overall success of African-American and other ethnic minority employees in positions of policy making and administrative authority. Although the President's general perception of the "state" of black faculty and senior level administrators was favorable, there is a concern that this impression is not reflective of the general feelings of many black faculty and staff.

During this meeting, the President and Provost responded to eight questions prepared by the Assembly (a copy of the responses can be provided by any member of the Steering Committee). Overall, faculty and staff expressed their concerns related to the following:

1) Many felt there are varying perceptions between black faculty/administrators and their white colleagues in regards to the treatment of blacks when it comes to promotions, tenure, hiring practices, academic and career opportunities, salaries, etc. at the university.

2) Many black faculty wanted to know more about the hiring procedure via "Minority Faculty Lines"; concern is that this practice, although it increases black representation on campus, may inadvertently be creating a stigma on faculty hired through this process. Also, the issue is whether or not this practice is a "prescription for failure" as it relates to opportunities for tenure and promotion.

3) Many feel black faculty are underrepresented in tenured positions and as full professors.

4) Many faculty/staff and the black community, are concerned about the change in reporting lines involving the Vice President of Student Affairs.

5) Many are concerned of the lack of overall opportunity to get promoted.

6) Many are concerned that there is only one program in place to provide support for hiring minorities.

7) Many feel there is a lack of mentoring of black faculty and staff at UCF.

The President responded as follows:

1) Ref Issue #1 - After polling college Deans, he believes that the "state" of African-American faculty and staff is better than it was before he arrived.

2) Ref Issue #2 - He believes that there is no stigma attached to being hired on the minority faculty lines and it is used solely as a tool to encourage departments to look for qualified candidates which apparently was not done in the past.

3) Ref Issue #3 - There are 25 black faculty at UCF (only 5 tenured and 15 others on the tenure track and another 5 faculty not on the tenure track).

4) Ref Issue#3 - One offer of a full professorship was made to an African-American in the Industrial Engineering Dept. but it was turned down.

5) Ref Issue#4 - This was an administrative decision for practical reasons to meet administrative needs.

6) Ref Issue#5 - When considering problems about promotions/tenure we have expressed our concern about the excessive burden of committee work and service involving minority representation at University events, activities, etc.

7) Ref Issue#6 - Minority Faculty Lines are the only program in place to hire black faculty and administrators.

8) Ref Issue#7- Colleges are encourage to support mentoring programs and some have followed through.

The general opinion of many members of the BFSA following this meeting was that having the President respond formally to questions of concern is a good way to address issues significant to black Americans at UCF; but more needs to be done. There should be some measurable results following each annual session. More than 30 faculty and staff were in attendance.



### Jones is All Business!

Student: T. Eric Jones

Major: Finance

Status: Sophomore

UCF GPA: 3.158

Last Book Read: "Alas Babylon"

**Clubs/Activities:** Ambassadors For Christ; former part-time employee for UPS and owner operator of Smooth Clean Mobile Car Wash

**Accomplishments:** Internships with Harris Corp (work with engineers on F22 DAU & tested RF Antenna Equipment); Suntrust (work as teller in corporate management training sessions); Work-Study Program at Lockheed Martin beginning n 1996.

**Future Ambitions:** To work with one of the Fortune 500 Companies in Finance and then start his own business venture.

**Biggest Challenge in 1996:** Raise his GPA from 3.2 to 3.5

**Most Recent Observation About UCF:** His experience thus far has been positive with black faculty especially in Minority Student Services and College of Business-Office of Student Support; however, he feels that having an opportunity to interact more with black faculty would be very rewarding (students need black role models). Thus far, he's only had one black professor and found the experience very rewarding (he earn a B in his class!); Unlike his high school, he's enjoyed having more black students to communicate with daily.

**Bit of Advice to Other Students:** "It's important to stay focus especially during the first semester unless you want to play catch-up. Make sure you communicate with faculty and try to find mentors. This has allowed me to make connections with the internship opportunities each summer. During the first semester get everything out of your system and then devote yourself to God and don't waste this opportunity because many students do not get a chance to go to college. I believe you must look to the future and plan your strategy in 5 year increments; that is, know where you want to be in five years and go for it a little bit at a time".

**Final words:** "I FEEL HONORED TO KNOW THAT MY PROGRESS IN COLLEGE IS WORTHY TO BE PRINTED."

### Minority Student Services Launches New Program

The UCF Knight Ambassadors Program is a student development program which was established under the auspices of Minority Student Services. The program promotes academic excellence, leadership skills, directed community services, and mentoring services. The Knight Ambassadors is a cadre of selected UCF students whose academic credentials and leadership skills have qualified them to serve as

liaisons between the UCF community, student body and the Central Florida community. To be eligible, the student must:

- 1) be classified as a UCF junior or higher level
- 2) have an overall GPA of 3.0 or higher
- 3) have demonstrated leadership skills
- 4) be enrolled full-time
- 5) participate in a summer training workshop
- 6) attend weekly scheduled meetings

The Ambassadors will receive a stipend award for their service. For more information call 823-2716 or visit Minority Student Services in the Administration Bld on the main campus in room 145. **The deadline for application is Friday, March 22, 1996.**

## BFSA Meetings!

March 27th meeting has been canceled.

Next scheduled meeting will be held April 17th in the President's Board Room in the Administration Building at 3:00pm.

## Dr. John T. Washington Humanitarian Service Awards To Be Presented

For several years, the University of Central Florida has sponsored the John T. Washington Awards Luncheon to recognize local citizens for exemplary humanitarian service and to award scholarships to worthy students. This year the award will be held on Thursday, March 21, 1996 in the UCF Student Center Auditorium. The Theme is "Continuing Partnerships Through Community Service". The keynote speaker is Ms. Carolina Fennell, Director, Community Relations, Greater Orlando Aviation Authority. For additional information, please contact

the Office of Diversity Initiatives @823-6479.

**Dr. John T. Washington**, one of the first African Americans to hold a faculty position at the University of Central Florida, was an Associate Professor of Sociology during the 1970's. At that time, there were few programs and services to assist students, particularly ethnic minority students, in making a successful transition to the University. Most notably, his pioneering efforts to sensitize individuals and organizations to the needs and aspirations of African Americans were instrumental in establishing the office of Affirmative Action & Equal Opportunity, the African American Student Union, and the Office of Minority Student Services at UCF. In addition to teaching classes, working for equal opportunity and social justice, mentoring students, and colleagues, he conducted the first comprehensive research on Orlando Black Leaders and their leadership styles. His interest in leadership and community involvement influenced several current community leaders to become active in the civic and political arena.

Dr. Washington was also a minister whose interest, sincerity and altruism had a profound impact on those with whom he had contact. His efforts to improve the plight of African Americans throughout Central Florida and his commitment and dedication to Meals on Wheels and other volunteer programs earned him the prestigious Jefferson Award for outstanding community service. Following his untimely death, the UCF Student Services Building was named in his honor. To keep his commitment to scholarship and community service alive, the University established a tradition of honoring adult and youth community individuals with the Dr. John T. Washington Community Service Awards. A scholarship fund was also established in his name to assist worthy students in completing their college education.

This years recipients of the awards will be presented to the following at the luncheon:

Adult Award - Ms. N.Y. Natheri, Executive Director, The Association to Preserve the Eatonville Community, Inc.

Youth Award - Mr. David Hardick, a Freshmen at Rollins College.

Scholarship Recipients - Ms. Chantel Williams and Mr. Altavis Hogg.

## Lady Knights - Making "Herstory" in the NCAA Tourney!

The Woman's Basketball program, under the direction of Coach Jerry Richardson, is "dancing" in the NCAA Tournament for the first time in the History of the Program. The Golden Knights won the TAAC Conference Championship and received the automatic bid to the NCAA tournament. A first for both the NCAA Tournament and the Conference Tournament. The Golden Knights also post their first Winning season in years with a 15-13 regular season record. The first round game will be played in Ruston, Louisiana against the #1 ranked team in the country.!

## "Rashomon" - Come See Broadway at UCF

Rashomon, set in Japanese culture, is a play about a rape/murder which is witnessed by four people. The perspectives of each witness is revealed during this search for the truth. Rashomon will open on April 11th at 7:30pm and will run through 14th and again on the 18th through 21st. This exciting play will feature our Faculty in the Spotlight **Tony Majors**. Please call Theater UCF @823-2861 for more information.

### The Magnum Crew

Chairman, Steering Committee: Dr. Gregg Hall, Political Science.

Editor-in-Chief: Phyllis Ledbetter, Student Affairs.

Graphics Artist/Co-Editor: Montague Watkins, Transition to Teaching.

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