

**BEFORE YOU CAN FOLLOW YOUR DREAMS, YOU'VE GOT TO FOLLOW THE RULES.**

# Mind, motivation urged at seminar

## Black students aren't 'ordinary,' author says

By Kim Spurlock  
Staff Reporter

Black students need to speak up for what they believe in and be representatives of the African American culture, nationally renowned author and speaker Na'im Akbar said.

"Don't let anybody tell you that you are ordinary students: Ordinary is one thing you're not. Because to endure an environment where you're constantly being reminded of your smallness rather than your greatness is more than a little to deal with," Akbar told a crowd of more than 600 Saturday night at a banquet topping off the Big Eight Conference on Black Student Government.

Black student leaders represent an important piece of African Americans' futures, said Akbar, a teacher in the Department of Psychology at Florida State University who has appeared on "Tony Brown's Journal," "Donahue" and the "Oprah Winfrey Show."

"It is very critical that you understand something about the nature of your responsibility as well as the nature

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**Don't let anybody tell you that you are ordinary students.**

Akbar  
author and speaker

of the process that brought you where you are," Akbar said.

He said black people don't appreciate the value of what they represent to themselves because their origins have been hidden from them. It is the foundation of being who blacks are as a people that determines what it is they will do, he said.

"The foundation of our ability to operate collectively is in our understanding of where we came from," he said.

Akbar said that for much of the 30 generations of slavery, it was illegal for blacks to engage in learning. Slave holders feared they might find something out about themselves, he said.

The information about who blacks were was systematically distorted, he

said, so they would not have any sense of connection with Africa.

Akbar said it wasn't accidental that Africa was called the "Dark Continent," that the images of the African continent were negative and that blacks have had to find out the positive things they know about Africa on their own.

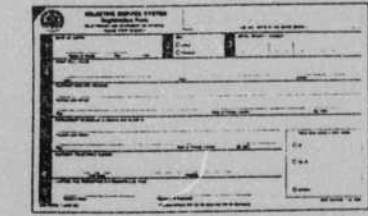
Because information about Africa was hidden away or degraded, he said, blacks began to lose sight of themselves — a loss that has not yet been regained.

Black children have dreams of working for big companies instead of owning them, he said, and the black leaders of tomorrow have no aspirations of owning their own national newspaper to tell the world their view-



Akbar

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points. Akbar said society's attempts to destroy blacks intellectually, culturally and psychologically have not kept them from fighting, and that they are special.

"Our only leadership is within ourselves," he said. "We are the future planners. What we do will determine our future."

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## Black self-respect urged

By Tabitha Hiner  
Senior Reporter

Sen. Ernie Chambers of Omaha was supposed to discuss "Blacks in the Political Process" on Saturday, but he said talking about politicians would make the audience of 400 "either fall asleep or leave."

Instead, Chambers reminded participants at the 14th Annual Big Eight Conference on Black Student Government to strive for self-respect and respect for each other.

Respecting each other is important for keeping the black community going, Chambers said.

"No group has been completely destroyed by their enemies, but we can destroy ourselves," he said.

Chambers warned that "every repressed group has always turned on their own kind."

Black people turn on themselves when they join gangs and shoot at each other, Chambers said.

Chambers said that if he were to meet a Crips gang member, he might be shot simply because he liked to wear blue.

He quipped that all he would have to do to save himself would be to put a white piece of paper in front of him, because gang members have "a gun that will shoot black people only."

Black people shouldn't allow the internal fighting to continue, Chambers said. Instead, they should practice more self-respect and learn to trust and believe in each other more.

Calling black women "the best thing about us," Chambers urged the men in the audience to respect them.

There is a double standard when it comes to the stereotypes placed on women, Chambers said.

While men who are involved with many women are called names such as "lovers" and "Valentinos," he said, derogatory terms are applied to women who are involved with many men.

He ended his speech by saying that geneticists have traced the origin of all human life to a black woman in Africa — a finding which shows all people are equal.

"If white people say to us, 'Your mama,'" Chambers said, "you tell them 'My mama is your mama.'"

Telling about his own confrontations at the State Capitol and ways he dealt with them, Chambers said black people should stop being complacent when they face unfair treatment.

Earlier in his speech, Chambers said unfair treatment could come in the forms of racism, verbal harassment or physical confrontations.

For instance, Chambers said, an upset man once approached him and pointed a finger in his face.

Chambers said he stood up for himself by easing the man's hand down.

Then the man called for security — an example of how white people are "brave when they think they've got everything going their way," Chambers said.

## Speaker blames problems on lack of self-esteem

By Dionne Searcey  
Staff Reporter

"Self-esteem is the key to black liberation," a speaker told more than 450 students and faculty members attending the Big Eight Conference on Black Student Government on Friday night.

Juwansa Kunjufu, executive director of African-American Images in Chicago, said drugs, pregnancy, crime, lack of education and unemployment are all symptoms of a larger issue — low self-esteem.

"You don't use drugs when you feel good about yourself," he said. "America doesn't have a drug problem. It has a self-discipline problem."

He said the slogan "Just Say No!" is the "most asinine thing I have ever heard. The real issue is what you say 'yes' to."

Kunjufu said one key to crime reduction is brotherly love.

"When we love ourselves we turn toward each other, not on each other," he said.

He said blacks need to take a look at their lives and develop self-esteem

in their careers and in relationships with their peers, parents and spouses.

Another problem, he said, is that statistics compare blacks to other minorities, such as Asians. Results of the Scholastic Aptitude Test often find that blacks score lower than Asians.

"The problem is, we don't compare immigrants to slaves," he said.

"When many brothers do good in school, they're teased. 'You're on the honor roll. Hmmm, you're acting white,'" Kunjufu said. "Have you ever heard another white teasing another white (saying), 'You're on the honor roll. You're acting black.'"

He said modern society has taken the chains off blacks' wrists and ankles and put them on their minds by making sure blacks don't know the roots of their culture.

Most history instructors teach black history starting in 1619 when African Americans were brought to America on slave boats, he said, but the first black civilizations were in Egypt.

"Where you start determines where you end up," Kunjufu said. "If you start in 1619, you start on plantations and end up in the ghetto."

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