Speaker tells history of gospel

By Erin Gibson Senior Reporter

Sacred gospel music chronicled the struggles of American blacks against whites and between factions of their own culture, a distinguished professor and musician said Sunday night.

Bernice Johnson Reagon, an American University history professor, author and professional musician, opened the third annual Abraham Lincoln Lecture Series in Kimball Hall accompanied by the Lincoln Community Gospel Choir.

Reagon traced the beginnings of the gospel movement, now visible in any American church that sings praises through a gospel choir.

Although most Christian churches today use a gospel choir in joyous celebration, the roots of gospel were not always joyous, she said.

In the beginning, blacks would "use the tradition at strategic times to help the people survive," Reagon said. The gospel movement began when black Americans escaped slavery, she said, and later were emancipated and

moved into the cities seeking greater were not always accepted, she said. freedom.

"The fresh air of the South was it was first introduced. stagnant, choking and binding," she

The gospel tradition soon would said. help an uprooted four million blacks deal with a new city environment, to introduce blues and jazz singing where they often were not accepted even by other blacks.

The new urban blacks walked between Western rules and black culture, ing Howard University. adding their own style to traditional black hymns. Innovative black songwriters brought gospel out of the church and into mainstream black culture today, Reagon said. culture, Reagon said.

righted gospel tunes, including "Stand through Wednesday this week and By Me" in 1902. The song later Thursday at 4 p.m. formed the base for Benny King's popular, secular tune by the same title the Clyde Malone Community Cenin the 1950s.

Tenley also introduced "I Will Overcome Someday," which later and Wednesday she will travel to St. evolved into the song popular in the Paul Methodist Church, 1144 M St. 1960s civil rights movement.

Black gospel composers' songs the public.

Not even the organ was accepted when

"Inside the culture there was a dialogue over what people needed," she

Songwriters after Tenley struggled into the black gospel tradition. They met opposition, she said, even at traditional, all-black institutions, includ-

The music resulting from these internal struggles continues to change and document the happenings in black

Reagon will continue her walk For instance, Philadelphia through the roots of the American preacher Charles Albert Tenley copy-gospel tradition at 7:30 p.m. Monday

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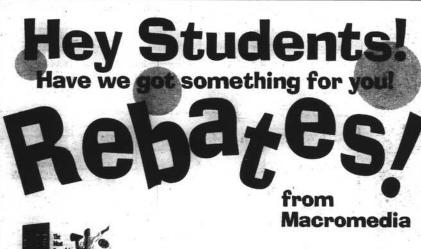
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