

ESSENCE

Event's theme encompasses

Year of planning pays off in end for organizers

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Assignment Reporter

In the basement of the Culture Center Monday night, about 50 students worked together to put the finishing touches on preparations for the Big 12 Conference on Black Student Government, which will be held today through Sunday.

The Interfraternity Council, students from Doane College, the Afrikan People's Union, and other volunteers worked to put together welcome bags for the anticipated 900 participants.

The groups came together to accomplish a goal — something that organizers said was the essence behind the theme of the conference.

"This is when we can make things happen," said Kenny Bailey, a member of APU.

"Black Love: Restoring the Essence of the Black Family," was chosen as the conference theme by organizers and will be represented in workshops, speakers and events.

APU members have been planning the conference for the past year.

According to the registration booklet, "students who attend predominantly white institutions are constantly reminded of the stark difference between history and reality, and the loss of community we have suffered in past years."

The theme, the booklet states, "serves to remind us that our collective family history and the strength it represents are too valuable to forget."

Family, regardless of race, is a key component of society, said John L. Harris, special assistant to the vice chancellor for student affairs.

Harris will be running the workshop, "Creating a Cohesive African American Community on Your Campus."

Family helps shape values and a person's view of the world, he said.

But, Harris said, because of its history of slavery, the black family has had a difficult time recuperating.

"The black family was literally destroyed in slavery," he said.

Overcoming the psychological effects



ABOVE: VOLUNTEERS PREPARE bags of supplies to be given out to people who will be attending the Big 12 Conference on Black Student Government. From left to right are UML freshman Rosie Walker, freshman LaKisha Starks, Doane College sophomore Bennie Rucker and Doane senior Greg Downs.

RIGHT: SOPHOMORE ERIC CRUMP piles bags of supplies that will be given out to participants in the Big 12 Conference on Black Student Government. More than 1,000 students from Big 12 schools are expected to attend the conference today through Sunday.

of slavery is a lifelong process, Harris said. Families were split — parents from children, and wives from husbands.

"(During) plantation days, the master's plan was to pit slave against slave," Harris said. The more chaos that could be created, the less the slaves would fight the master.

Those things didn't die with emancipation and have been applied generation by generation, Harris said.

The conference theme, he said, shows there is still concern relative to the black family.

Eddie Brown, an APU member, said the American family is falling apart and people of color face injustices, which will make the theme of the conference hit home for many participants.

Adair Shanks, conference management coordinator, said the word "family" used in the theme is collaborative, encompassing things such as health issues, retention on college campuses, religion and sisterhood.

APU President Donny White said the theme works because of that idea.

"It's working very well because it can be that encompassing," White said. "It's so deeply rooted in everything."

Shanks said the speakers the organizers chose represent a wide variety of issues.

Julianne Malveaux, an economist; Cornel West, a Harvard religion professor; and George Fraser, whose focus is networking, are just some of the speakers representing different facets of society.

There will be five workshop times with about five workshops available during each. Workshops also delve into the collaborative theme of the conference.

Harris's workshop will "focus on the challenges of realizing that, as students who are outnumbered, there is a sense of unity whereby you can be successful collectively," he said.

He is going to take the students through present-day issues and historical issues that show that success.

The description of another workshop, "Restoring, Regaining and Restructuring the Black Family on Campus: An Athletic Perspective," states: "We as African-Americans/Black people have allowed ourselves to take on the damaging constructs of American society.

"The result is the growing wall of self-hatred and animosity towards our fellow Black brothers and sisters that continues

Big XII
Black
Student
Government

black history month, the
your opinion and fight for it," Shanks said. "Nothing
"If you truly believe in something, you must voice
for more student hours in the new
A lot of students are busy with
Tuesday that the Union Board push
engineering major suggested
center be open from 8 p.m. to 10 p.m.