

## Davidson programs seek to make minorities feel welcome, comfortable

BY MARY CLARE JALONICK  
Editor Emerita

When Junior Jose Ruiz was applying to colleges, Davidson didn't stand out. "What Latino," he asks, "is going to come to an all-white, Presbyterian college in rural North Carolina?"

### The Minority Experience at Davidson

But Davidson wanted him to play football. "I was in to that," he says, "so I came."

He says he is glad that he did. "I wish there were more Latinos here. And I wish that people were more open-minded. But I'm glad I came."

Junior Wesley Hart says he would recommend Davidson to other African American students, but only if they were fully aware of the College's negatives. "You can't be happy here unless you are willing to accept the situation, or change it."

Assistant Dean of Students and Director of Minority Student Affairs Ernest Jeffries is in charge of giving minority freshmen their first impression of Davidson. To do this, he leads a minority orientation that takes place before freshmen orientation.

The brochure for the program states that it is "not a substitute for freshman orientation, [but designed to supplement it] by introducing students to issues that are unique to the experiences of African Americans and Hispanic Americans attending Davidson."

The brochure also states that pre-orientation has three goals. First, it seeks to acclimate students to college life. Second, the program introduces minorities to campus resource persons. And third, "[The program seeks to expose] students to important concepts in English and science."

Hart says that the program was "a very good experience. It helps you to build up a network of students."

He disagrees with those who claim that the orientation is "separatist." "Whatever separates people is going to happen anyway. People are going to go with people like themselves. It's not pre-orientation [that is doing it]," Hart says.

Ruiz, who did not attend the pre-orientation because of football, feels that it definitely forms a clique, but he understands why. "The sheer numbers [of white students] are intimidating," he says.

Jeffries, who has been in his position for a little over a year, says he feels race relations are on the upswing at Davidson. "The increase in numbers in applicants tells me that the College is getting our name out there, and that potential students are hearing it."

However, Jeffries seems to feel that there is a level of stagnancy about the issue. "There doesn't seem to be a lot of concern. The people that need to be at diversity forums are not. Some people have never really had to confront feelings about the issues, and never will."

Hart agrees. "People are afraid to step out of their comfort zones."

Tene Moore, a counseling assistant in Career Services, has been at Davidson for six years. She feels that relations are not really on the upswing at all.

"I was on a committee once with an alum who graduated in 1985. He turned to me one day and said, 'You know, these are the same issues that we dealt with when I was here.' I don't think that things have really changed at all," Moore says.

She says she is encouraged by the increase in numbers, but isn't sure that relations will necessarily improve.

"There needs to be more of an effort to change things," she says, "more of an effort on the white students part. They try and make BSC more open, but that doesn't matter if no one comes."

Part of Moore's job in Career Services is to lead the ACES program. ACES, which stands for Academic and Career Enrichment for Students, "aspires to enhance the educational and vocational experiences of multicultural students at Davidson College," according to the brochure.

Moore schedules dinners with alumni and local professionals, holds goal-setting workshops, organizes "life skills assessment" seminars, and meets with students informally. The program also awards some students money to work or travel over the summer.

Ruiz, who is receiving money from ACES this summer, wishes that these programs were not so focused on African Americans. "It seems that when Davidson speaks of minorities, it immediately means African Americans."

He points out, however, that this is because they are the majority. "Often minority programs are attended solely by African Americans."

Both Moore and Ruiz feel this is because African Americans stand out more as minorities. "People often consider Hispanic Americans and Asian Americans to be white," Moore says.

Ruiz says that it is difficult to program anything specific for all minorities. "We are so diverse within ourselves, so in turn our own experiences are very different."

All of them say that they experience subtle racism every day — teachers calling on them to give the "black perspective," overly nice do-gooders, or complete ignorance on the part of the naive — but all say that they have experienced very little racism that is completely overt.

Much of the issue is chalked up to the passive nature of many Davidson students.

"We have to interact with white people all of the time," says Hart. "Many white students don't ever have to interact with a black student."

## Burrero fights against past, for future in Guatemala

BY LORI BRAMBLETT  
Guest Writer

Pedrina Burrero, co-founder of the Committee of Widows, Orphans and Displaced Persons in Rabinal, Guatemala, and Annie Byrd, a member of Guatemala Partners based in Washington, D.C., visited the campus last Monday to describe the violence and destruction which occurred in Guatemala during the 1980s.

As part of her visit, Burrero gave a testimony in Spanish to a group of students, faculty, and community members in the 900 Room which recounted a series of massacres that left 25% of Rabinal's population dead, including her husband and two brothers.

Specifically, Burrero described the September 15 massacre which occurred in the marketplace in Rabinal where 800 people, mostly men, were killed in one hour by civil patrolmen and army troops. To escape, she hid in a store for the day, and exited to find "widows, orphans, and displaced people who couldn't live as they had before." Burrero recounted how the army and patrolmen stole property, including the people's cattle, and burned clothes and houses, which forced the community into the mountains for safety.

According to both Burrero and Byrd, who served as Burrero's translator, the citizens of Rabinal were civilians, with no association with the guerilla movement fight-

ing against the government. The violence used by the army "was successful in stopping any type of civilian organizing," according to Byrd, and in dividing the community. "There are many people who have left [Rabinal] and can't go back. They can't afford it and there are still threats and intimidation," said Burrero.

In an attempt to reconstruct the divided community and "to say all of the reality of what happened in Guatemala," Burrero co-founded the Committee of Widows, Orphans and Displaced Persons in 1995. In addition to bringing forward the human rights violations which occurred in Rabinal, the organization has petitioned the Guatemalan government to exhume the more than 75 clandestine cemeteries around Rabinal and has raised money to construct a memorial for those who were murdered.

Burrero stated that the exhumations are particularly important "because the government has left under the earth everything done to the Mayan people." She added, "It's easy to destroy in one moment, but to construct a new Guatemala is going to be a very difficult task."

Burrero's trip to the United States is sponsored by Guatemala Partners whose purpose is to provide "educational outreach in the US and support grassroots organizations in Guatemala," according to Byrd.

## Cofer liberates power through creative process

BY ALLISON DOLPH  
Staff Writer

Judith Ortiz Cofer, professor and writer, spoke in the 900 Room on Thursday.

Cofer is the author of *The Latin Deli, Silent Dancing ... The Line of the Sun*, and two other poetry collections. The title of her talk was "Women and the Creative Process: Making Writing Happen."

Cofer began her talk by reading from her essay, "The Woman Who Slept With One Eye Open." Her message was modeled on Virginia Woolf's description of the "Angel in the House," an overly solicitous creature who threatens the woman artist by giving everything to others and nothing to herself.

Cofer's essay unveiled a striking contrast between two antithetical creatures, her muse (Maria Sevida) and her vampire (Maria Laloca). These two women, whose stories were told to her in the form of "quentos" by her mother and aunt, serve as a "germinal point" for Cofer's existence as a female writer and a free woman.

Her vampire, Maria Laloca, is a broken-hearted woman foresaken at the altar and shamed by a man. It is the story of a woman who fails herself and blames another; the implicit message for the artist is not

to let someone else steal her dream. Maria Sevida, on the other hand, is a powerful inspiration for the female artist. Cofer feels a sacred alliance with this Maria, whom she describes as "the smartest woman in Puerto Rico," because she married an assassin.

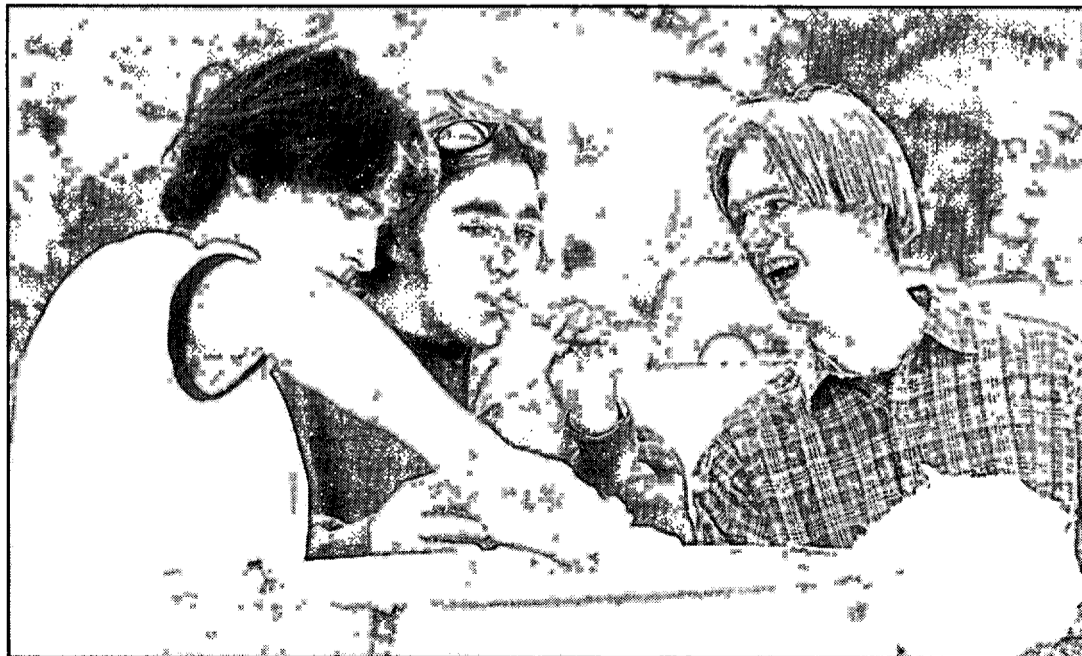
Maria Sevida was able to surmount the traditionally male quality of "macho," which Cofer defines as the arrogance to assume you belong where you choose to stand. Although she must constantly sleep with one eye open in order to preserve her safety, Maria Sevida has used the power of words to conquer her fear and vanquish her villain.

Cofer sees the story not only as the parable of a good woman taming a bad man, but as a powerful metaphor for the woman writer who must overcome her own personal villain in order to create.

Cofer also read several poems. She read one of the few "Southern Puerto Rico" poems in existence, which described her employment by an overly affectionate Southern woman in a bakery shop at the age of fifteen. She also read two poems that she wrote for her only daughter, Tanya.

Cofer sees writing as an essential activity in her life, since it helps her to discover "what I know and what I don't know. Often, it's more of what I don't know."

## AU COTON



Lawrence Cann (l-r), Stuart Frye, and Dan Ford try their hands at whipping up some cotton candy at KA's Karnival Saturday.

Anna Judy