

Verhaagen gives religious dating advice

By BURGIN HARDIN
Staff Writer

Introduced as a "passionate woman who can speak the truth," Ellen Verhaagen spoke to Davidson students on Wednesday, Nov. 18 in the Morrison Room. InterVarsity Christian Fellowship sponsored her talk, but a group including people unaffiliated with InterVarsity gathered to hear Verhaagen speak. After her welcome by the audience, Verhaagen began her talk by saying that she felt privileged to be speaking at Davidson again.

Her topic for Wednesday evening was "What Godly Women Should Look for in a Godly Man." She emphasized that a "Godly man" loves God above all else and that he is able to communicate openly about God. Also, she commented that she thinks women put too much pressure on men to be the spiritual leader in a relationship. Verhaagen added that the "Godly man" must love his girlfriend for who she is, insisting that "he has to accept you as you are." To drive home her point, Verhaagen related a personal story about a time when she was dating a man, and he said that he could no longer date someone who might have trouble controlling her weight.

Verhaagen is a professional speaker with years of public speaking experience — she started at the age of twelve. Although she was not a professional at twelve, she continued speaking in front of crowds from that age all the way through her college days at N.C. State. She graduated from State with a degree in mechanical engineering, and she admitted that she received many job offers that would have made her plenty of money had she accepted. However, during her senior year at N.C. State, she felt called to work with InterVarsity on campus. She obtained an intern position with InterVarsity right out of college and did not look back.

After her internship with InterVarsity, Verhaagen continued her education at the University of Virginia. Just recently, she became full-time speaker and started her own business, "Well Said." Now, aside from raising two children in her Charlotte home, Verhaagen travels the lecture circuit, speaking within the context of Christianity. She conducts marriage seminars, holds counseling sessions, and speaks with students on college campuses.

To continue with the relationship theme, InterVarsity will be sponsoring another speaker on "What Godly Men Should Look for in a Godly Woman" soon.

SST performs skits on current issues

By KELLS HETHERINGTON
Staff Writer

At 7:30 p.m. on Monday, Nov. 16, SST Communications presented an hour-long series of short skits entitled "The Next One Up" in the 900 Room of the Student Union. Each skit was performed with the intent of building an awareness about a particular problem in collegiate societies or problems plaguing today's society at large. Among the issues addressed by the company were eating disorders, alcohol abuse, drug addiction, depression, hate crimes, and rape.

Support for SST Communications, an organization acclaimed for its efforts to bring about a greater tolerance of differences through education, came from the Residence Life Office, the Student Health Center, and several student organizations. Aside from Davidson College, the cast has performed at colleges such as Bowdoin, Dartmouth, the U.S. Air Force Academy, and Yale. The resources of SST Communications have been solicited by the corporate world as well. Their skits' themes revolve around issues such as good public relations. In fact, SST Communications is more established in the corporate world than in the collegiate world. The group has performed for American Airlines, AT&T, General Motors, General Mills, M&M Mars, and Quaker Oats.

In the Business Section of the Oct. 23, 1997 issue of the Lexington Herald-Leader, the group was given high marks for its "different approach to customer service training" at Kentucky Utilities: "Three actors from Chicago-based SST Communications starred in 'Managing the Moment of Truth,' a presentation designed to show, among other things, the five factors and 10 'deadly sins' of customer service. Using a blend of humor and instruction, the presentation drove home its message of service using scenes and vignettes drawn from real experiences."

The presentation by SST Communications here drew a primarily female audience.

After the company had concluded its presentation, the actors fielded questions from the audience. The questions ranged from an inquiry into exactly why a particular scene had been cast a certain way to a question regarding affirmative action.

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Derrick Bell presents "Racial Liberation Day" address

By LAURA MCCANDLISH
Staff Writer

Law professor, writer, and civil rights activist, Derrick Bell came to speak at Davidson on issues of race and class in American society. His lecture, entitled "Racial Liberation Day," was held on Thursday, Nov. 19th and was open to the general public. The event was cosponsored by the Union Speakers Committee and the Black Student Coalition.

Tommy Ross '99, chair of the Union Speakers Committee, gave Bell's introduction. Ross talked about how he had discovered one Bell's books, "Faces at the Bottom of the Well: The Permanence of Racism." Ross said, "I read it and became completely mesmerized. I've been hooked ever since. He's become one of my personal heroes." When Ross looked further into Bell, he learned that he had relinquished both a tenured position at Harvard Law School and a deanship at the University of Oregon Law School after both schools failed to hire minority women faculty members. Ross said he discovered that Bell "carried out his ideals with action, always standing up for his principles."

Bell began his speech with some cracks on President Clinton and how the past presidents in general have failed to address the issues of race in the U.S. Then Bell told the audience that his civil rights thinker, the fictionalized Geneva Crenshaw, had written a speech on racism that President Clinton should give. He asked the audience, "Can you imagine if the President were to do such a thing?" He began to read the fictitious presidential address, which stated its purpose as "a public dialogue on the problems of race in our society." Bell said that American society is committed to a free enterprising economy but it is "losing the compassion race."

Bell asked the audience, through the President's words, "Why are we so behind in our own country that we are more willing to reach out to countries across the globe than to those in our own society?" Bell stated that the effects of racism cannot be ignored because the fact that "black Americans were enslaved for over 200 years is beyond denial."

Through the President's speech, Bell raised the key issue that "racism is the system of advantage in our society that benefits all whites, whether or not they seek it. It's not only open bigotry, although overt racism is reappearing." He sees that "whites come to rely and expect the wages of whiteness, even those without money or power. There is also a political advantage extended to whites. It's more than just an economic problem." However, Bell believes that this form of advantage has a cost to whites that results from relying too much on the power of their whiteness instead of on their own strengths as an individual person.

Idealistically, Bell said, "we want to believe that we live in a meritocracy, where anyone who works hard can succeed, but the system of whiteness continues to expose blacks." Through the President's voice, he said, "There is no easy answer to the problems of race in our society, but basic work must be done by every white person. We can no longer afford whiteness as an unacknowledged force." He suggested the formation of anti-racist white groups, called "Race Traitors, who are committed to rejecting loyalty to whiteness and taking up the cause of humanity." Although Bell believes that

plenty has been done to study the effects of racism on African Americans, he shared the sentiments of Martin Luther King, Jr. that "we need to study the effects of racism on whites." He said, "We need to ask ourselves, if blackness doesn't mean subordination, then what does it mean to be white?" Bell concluded the President's address by saying, "The issue is not whether or not we are or aren't racist. It's a question of if we whites have enough love and respect for each other to remain a stable society without using black people as the glue."

Rhetorically asking how the country would react if President Clinton really gave such a speech, Bell answered that all would pretty much "agree it would be political suicide." Following the President's address, Bell read a response from his fictional character, Geneva Crenshaw, who represents the black voice in civil rights. Through her words, Bell said that "black people have waited for a long time for whites to become enlightened about race." Bell said, "The deprivation of black people will continue, as long as we blacks give more credence to whites' property rights than to our own."

Through Geneva's voice, Bell dismissed the notion of a meritocracy because "being smart enough and working hard doesn't insulate one from racial abuse in a land where white is regarded as the norm." He also added, "If whites must give up their property right to whiteness, blacks must also give up their blackness." Bell said, "We must realize that our salvation, not in heaven, but right here on earth, comes from our recognition of our self-worth. Gandhi knew that power and freed India. Martin Luther King, Jr. knew that power, too."

Bell's lecture was followed by a brief question and answer period. A reception after the talk was also held for Bell in Chambers. Earlier in the day, Bell had gathered with student leaders for a caucus on activism. Bell told students that "college is here to provide you with training to deal with problems in the world." He also explained to the group not to be discouraged, though "it's seldom that you will find many other people that are committed to the thing that you are." Ross helped to organize the caucus and hoped that it would become a regular occurrence to "organize activists on campus."

Ross was also very pleased with Bell's speech. "I think people underestimate the power and radicalness of his message. The message is that not only is white privilege morally wrong, it also has bad effects for whites. His message for African Americans is also radical, in that they should refuse to recognize the white privilege system."

Bell is currently a visiting professor at the NYU Law School, where he has taught since 1991. Before he taught at Harvard, he had served as Executive Director of the Western Center on Law and Poverty and the University of Southern California Law School, Counsel for the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, and Deputy Director of the Office for Civil Rights in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

He has written several books and has been widely published in legal journals, national magazines, and newspapers. His fictional heroine, Geneva Crenshaw, appears in series of allegorical stories he wrote.

An exercise in cultural studies

By CARLOS LACAYO
Staff Writer

Last Monday evening, Jose Limon gave a lecture entitled "Yo quiero Taco Bell." Limon is a Phi Beta Kappa scholar and has published several books about cultural studies and literature. He is currently professor of English and Anthropology at the University of Texas at Austin.

"Yo quiero Taco Bell" (I want Taco Bell) is the famous line articulated by Dinky, the talking Chihuahua, in recent Taco Bell commercials. Limon explained that this advertisement relates to cultural studies. As

suggested by Professor Limon, TV shows, commercials, and magazines are all part of a branch of culture called "mass culture." Mass culture is the culture of the ordinary citizen, the consumer, who is a product of industrial capitalism and corporate marketing think tanks.

Its drive is mass consumption, yet in promoting consumption it tells people something about the world in which they live. This aspect of the Taco Bell commercial interested Limon. Even though the theme of the commercial is consumption of Taco Bell products (Taco Bell sales have increased 42 percent since the release of the commercials), it tells the viewer something about Mexican-American cultural life in the United States.

In reference to the commercial, Limon related how at first he could not help but laugh. But, as he thought about it, he distinguished that the Chihuahua, the Mexican image, is small and rodent-like. In a way, the commercial was saying that Mexicans were like small animals. But, as he thought

of the Chihuahua he again began to crack up. He then listed all the positive aspects displayed by Dinky. He pointed out that the phrase "Yo quiero Taco Bell" is pronounced in a clear and good register of Spanish that is not false or stereotypical. Limon thought that it is also a statement of desire, "I want Taco Bell," devoid of pleading or demeaning undertones. Dinky stands upright, is clearspoken and assertive and knows what he wants.

On the other hand, the American "white" world around Dinky seems to be falling apart; the people around him are befuddled, confused and do not know what to think or understand.

Limon interpreted these "30 seconds of affirmation" as a reflection of an emerging discourse in American society, of Hispanic Americans standing up. Of course, he remarked, this is only a commercial, but the reality is that by the year 2020, Hispanic Americans are expected to be largest minority within the United States. Dinky, being clearspoken, assertive and small, may represent this emerging minority.