

Being black: Reverend Brenda Tapia tells all

By Sarah Teachworth

Because the African-American population at Davidson is small, SERCH (Students Established for Racial and Cultural Harmony) sponsored a meeting entitled "Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Being Black, but Didn't Have the Courage to Ask" to increase understanding. Assistant Chaplain Brenda Tapia led the discussion in the Big Screen Room of the Union Tuesday night.

Tapia began with a brief outline of her life from her birth to her college years. She was born in the "negro ward" of a local hospital and was exposed to discrimination in the earliest stages of her life. In elementary and middle school, she made good grades, but her success was hampered when North Mecklenberg High School integrated in 1965 and her school closed. In a predominantly white school, she was treated as an inferior by many of her teachers and was harassed by some of her peers. Discrimination even existed at the traditionally black college she attended, Howard University. For instance, the sorority she wanted to join did not accept dark-colored women.

Feeling confused and alienated, Tapia turned to her history for solutions. Among other remarkable feats, her African ancestors were performing delicate eye surgery centuries before such tech-



Reverend Brenda Tapia talks to curious students about being black..

Photo by Brooke McRae

nology reached the Western hemisphere. After years of soul-searching, she concluded to "no longer define myself from the outside in, but from the inside out."

After telling her own story, she gave the audience a chance to write questions on paper placed in a shoebox which was passed around the room. Her responses to various questions evoked a variety of reactions from the audience.

One person asked whether she thought that blacks had a stronger bond than whites because of the

struggles they had to endure. Tapia says that while she doesn't feel this is necessarily so, she has noticed that whites seem to be family-oriented while blacks are group-oriented. She believes that the reason for this is that in slave days, the only way to have a family was to consider all blacks family.

The audience went into hysterics when Tapia was asked how she feels about being asked questions for the sole purpose of discovering how a black feels about an issue. She says, "Why do people

have to begin their questions with, 'Brenda, from a black perspective...?' Of course, if they're asking me, they're going to get an answer from a black perspective."

Tapia advises that the best way to be more sensitive to African-Americans is to meet individuals, being certain that actions and comments come out of love.

Before she received a standing ovation, Tapia concluded, "My office is in the corner of the basement of Pryer. Please visit me any time. I get lonely down there."

Dean Shandley to lead dinner discussion

By Jennifer Kerns

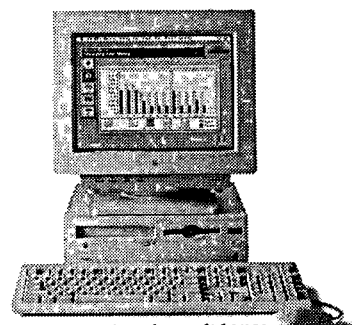
Once a month, the Chaplain Committee sponsors a dinner, allowing professors to give a "lecture" with informative knowledge for students. In Dean Shandley's case, the Committee chose a "lecture" instead. On Tuesday, September 27, at 6 p.m., Shandley will hold a dinner discussion with students in the Union.

"We wanted to give upperclassmen a chance to meet with new Dean in an informal setting," says Dinner Discussions Chair Matt Rich.

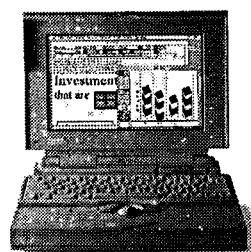
Shandley wants to introduce himself to the campus and to meet students as well. He plans to discuss his personal history, how he balances his family and his career, his faith, and his first impressions of Davidson. Afterwards, he intends to open up a discussion about students' concerns. "I don't want it to be a speech," says Shandley. "I want a conversation."

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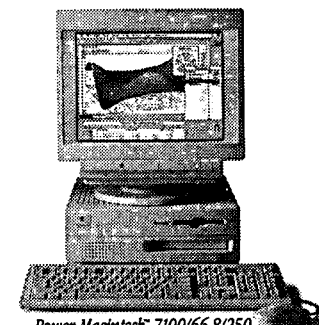
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