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The Trip of a Lifetime

This year the Center for Multicultural Education (CME) took a trip of great splendor to Alabama and Tennessee. This trip was unlike any other the CME had taken before. Our 16 hour bus ride was a minute sacrifice compared to the injustice and mistreatment we were heading to learn about that took place in these States histories. Our focus for the trip, you may ask, was to gain a better understanding of what took place during the Civil Rights Movement in these two states.

Our trip began in Montgomery where we visited the Alabama Department of Archives & History and the Civil Right Memorial. We also were able to see the outside of the Dexter Ave. Church where MLK gave some of his first sermons. Montgomery set the stage for the entire trip. It not only gave us history about the city’s experiences during the Civil Right Movement it also us to learn more about the individuals involved in this movement.

Our next stop took us to Selma, another significant city in the Civil Right Movement. We visited the National Voting Rights Museum, the Edmund Pettus Bridge, and Brown’s Chapel. Selma was a crucial chapter in the Civil Rights Movement. It became the headquarters for voting rights activist. Brown’s Chapel was where many came to plan and organize non-violent marches protesting the right to vote for African Americans. The Edmund Pettus Bridge was the site of three infamous marches taking place in 1965. One march entitled Bloody Sunday became the most violent out of the three with 600 marchers being attacked by state and local police with Billy clubs and tear gas. Being in these areas and seeing the effort put in by thousands of individuals for the right to vote gave me a new, more appreciative perspective regarding my freedom to vote and have my opinion heard.

We continued our tour with a visit to Birmingham where much hostility and racial division was taking place during the Civil Rights Movement. Leaders, specifically Eugene “Bull” Connor, were not willing to give up their segregated city and took extensive measures to keep it segregated. Our visit to Birmingham included visiting the 16th street Baptist church where four girls were killed from a bomb that was placed near the church by the KKK. We also visited Kelly Ingram Park, the site of a peaceful demonstration gone wrong.

This demonstration ended quickly when “Bull” Connor ordered dogs and pressured fire hoses to stop the child demonstrators in their tracks. This was the first time the violence of this protest and the Civil Rights Movement was televised for the nation to view. It sparked a change in the nation and prompted President Johnson to sign the Civil Right Act of 1964.

Our tour ended in Memphis Tennessee where we visited the National Civil Right Museum, The Mason Temple, and, The Rock and Soul Museum. The Mason Temple is the site of MLK’s final ‘Mountain Top’ speech where continues to promote hope and change and also alludes to his untimely death. As you enter this venue it becomes immediately apparent that thousands of people were here to partake in MLK’s last speech. It was also apparent that these thousands of people hearing MLK’s last speech and many more would effected by his untimely death at the Lorraine Motel which has been converted into the National Civil Rights Museum and chronicles the history of the Civil Right Movement and honors the last place MLK was seen alive. Our final stop at the Rock and Soul Museum showed how music played a key role in the Civil Rights Movement.

Katie Gregor
Office Assistant

Jesus, Interrupted: Revealing the Hidden Contradictions in the Bible (and why we don’t know about them) by Bart D. Ehrman

Dr. Ehrman will be present at this discussion to answer any questions or comments you may have!

Stay tuned for next semester’s book club line-up...
Hispanic Latino Student Union

The Hispanic Latino Student Union is a student union that was started in 1971 at the University of Northern Iowa. We hope to create an environment that is open to all UNI students that want to learn about a new culture while respecting all of the other cultures that our campus has to offer.

Through HLSU, we promote diversity amongst all students and want to keep the campus and the surrounding community informed of all of the great events we have planned throughout each academic year. We are an open organization and hope to collaborate with different student groups on campus to continually promote diversity through all cultures. For more information on our events, please visit the CME website. We hope to see you at our next event!

For more information on HLSU, contact Selso Casares at scasares88@gmail.com

A Word From the Director...

Dr. Michael D. Blackwell
Director

Ever since I was in elementary school, I had a love of poetry. I just could not get enough of Countee Cullen, Margaret Walker, and Edna St. Vincent Millay. As time marched on, by the time I was in high school, I had added many more to my repertoire of recitations. And, I must confess, I became an excellent copycat, fashioning poems from my own perspective but using the meter, style, and cute rhyming culled from others. Before I was eighteen, I was feted at least five times for my oratorical skills. As I departed high school, I was awarded a Martin Luther King Jr. scholarship; upon leaving college, I had become a leading spokesperson for the anti-apartheid student movement in the northeast; and I even won a prize for reciting hymns and poetry from Yale! Poetry can be a marvelous tool for entrance into otherwise closed doors.

I’m open to all types of poetry, but I have an affinity for rhyming, metered poems. The author of nearly a thousand poems, I believe the vast majority of them are of the 8-6-8-6 syllabic kind. I encourage everyone to try one’s hand at giving voice in poetic voice and reading a variety of poets to find and sharpen one’s communication skills and enrich one’s soulful introspection.

Since poetry is highlighted nationally this month, why not take advantage of the commemoration by creating expressive verses that speak to both your head and your heart? If you already have exercised your poetic muscle heretofore, perhaps reading a bit more or trying some style outside your comfort zone will pay homage to this period. I guarantee it will be worth your while!

Check out Dr. B’s Blog!

Featuring his comments on current events and social issues

http://drmdbwell.blogspot.com

Michael D. Blackwell
Director
Bart D. Ehrman

The CME has had quite the exciting semester and has hosted a wide range of speakers, but that doesn’t mean we are starting our summer vacations early. We still have one more notable guest on the schedule, and we are really looking forward to this special visit.

Bart D. Ehrman is one of the top New Testament scholars in the country, most known for his controversial research and perspectives. Currently the James A. Gray Distinguished Professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Ehrman is also the author of three New York Times Bestsellers: Jesus, Interrupted (an account of scholarly views of the New Testament), God’s Problem (an assessment of the biblical views of suffering), and Misquoting Jesus (an overview of the changes found in the surviving copies of the New Testament and of the scribes who produced them). Dr. Ehrman will be visiting the UNI campus on Thursday, April 22, 2010. He will be facilitating a book discussion of Jesus, Interrupted at 3:30 p.m. in the CME. Following the discussion, Dr. Ehrman will also be giving a lecture entitled “Who Wrote the Bible?: The Surprising Findings of Modern Scholarship,” at 7:00 p.m. in SEC 244-245. All are welcome and encouraged to attend these free events.

Dr. Ehrman has scholarly expertise in the areas of historical Jesus, the early Christian apocrypha, the apostolic fathers, and the manuscript tradition of the New Testament, so there is much to learn. A graduate of Wheaton College (Illinois), Professor Ehrman received both his Masters of Divinity and Ph.D. from Princeton Theological Seminary, where his 1985 doctoral dissertation was awarded magna cum laude. Since then he has published extensively in the fields of New Testament and Early Christianity, having written or edited twenty-three books, numerous scholarly articles, and dozens of book reviews. We expect this to be a very eye-opening event, so come enjoy some controversy and learn about some of the hidden truths of the Bible and why we don’t know about them.

APRIL EVENTS

Check out our website for details on additional events!

San Jose Taiko- Friday, April 16

San Jose Taiko has mesmerized audiences for three decades with the powerful and propulsive sounds of the taiko drum. Inspired by traditional Japanese drumming, San Jose Taiko performers express the beauty and harmony of the human spirit through the voice of taiko. This event is held at the GBPAC at 7:00 p.m. Check with the CME for free ticket opportunities!

CME Seven Book Club- Monday, April 22

As the CME Book Club reviews the 7th and final book in the series entitled Jesus, Interrupted: Revealing the Hidden Contradictions in the Bible (and Why We Don’t Know About Them), Dr. Bart D. Ehrman will join the group for discussion from 3:30-5:00 p.m. at the CME. Examining the New Testament with critical eyes, Dr. Ehrman highlights the authors (and supposed authors) of the books, their conflicting points of view, and the dates when various parts of the New Testament were actually written. He will return to campus at 7:00 p.m. that night to provide a lecture on his book.
Cornel West Reflection

Many years ago, while walking on campus with former UNI President Robert Koob, I was talking with him about various speakers coming to our hallowed halls to talk about the state of race relations in the United States. He suggested the Center stage a debate between Dr. Cornel West and Dr. Shelby Steele or someone of his ilk. I told him about my disagreement with Steele on a number of fronts, which Koob already had imagined, of course, and said I did not want to engage in such a “show”; rather, I would like to have West come and share with us his thoughts about race, for it was not long ago that he had written Race Matters. Besides, I asserted, having both of them here on campus at the same time would be outrageously costly, and I would have to run around pleading for financial support, for the Center could not handle one of them coming, let alone the pair! We concluded our talk, for he moseyed onto his house and I ambled northward to the Center next door.

So, you can imagine my joy that the Center was able to host the visit of the esteemed public intellectual and my collegial friend in the Gallagher-Bluedorn Performing Arts Center. I had first met West when he was being interviewed for a position at Yale Divinity School, from which I had received my Master of Divinity degree. He was considered a curious prodigy back then, and I had no idea who this man was sporting an outdated Afro and spewing forth philosophical heavyweights in casual conversations. But he was ever so gracious, almost to the point of being obsequious—so deferential and unassuming was he about his genius. Over the years, I came greatly to appreciate his point of view; I resonated a lot with his condemnation of racism, his trenchant critique of capitalism and imperialism, and his advocacy of embracing democratic principles. Besides, as we both grew in our adult lives, we traveled in a lot of the same circles. His latest book, Brother West: Living and Loving Out Loud, A Memoir, was so interesting to me because we share fundamentally the same era and know a lot of the same people. Good stuff!

“An Evening with Dr. Cornel West” was simply fantastic, beyond words! He was in stellar form that night, and he spoke much from the heart. He respected the fact that we were having a student leadership retreat on the following Saturday and kept bringing the conversation back to how people should be leading in this new century of ours. He was able to let go of much of his high-faluting intellectualism and to speak to each of us somehow where we are. He urged us to become alert to the injustices around us and to be beacon lights of hope to those who are languishing for one reason or another or forced to live on the margins of our society. As Martin Luther King, Jr., stated years ago, West argued that no matter our occupation or position in life, we can all serve our fellow human beings, for we are all tied together and ultimately will have the same destiny.

The audience seemed rather receptive to his words, and they appreciated his generosity with his time and the care he took in responding to their questions. We had the opportunity to tape his speech. Once the DVD becomes available, it will be accessible primarily for in-house viewing. Please check out our Facebook page and our website for photographs taken during his visit.
In the past, I had not spent more than a few minutes in Selma, Alabama. As I followed the bus in my own vehicle from Montgomery, I silently paid homage to Mrs. Viola Liuzzo when I passed the marker representing her terrible and cowardly murder along the highway while she was escorting marchers back home after the Selma-to-Montgomery march. And just as I was getting over that somber reminiscence, I had to slow the car down, for I got a sudden ache in my heart upon sighting the Edmund Pettus Bridge. Oh, the humanity! as I recalled the tragedy of Bloody Sunday—when local police and mounted state police chased, clubbed, and tear-gassed the non-violent marchers heading two-by-two to the state capitol demanding voting rights for all. Not many cars were on the road while I paused to take in the landscape, until finally the beep of a horn compelled me to move to the access road on the side of the highway where there was a small group of markings conveying the sacrifices the marchers had made.

One reason why I did not travel on the bus with the other participants is because I knew that the trip would be, metaphorically speaking, an emotional roller-coaster ride for me. I have been characterized as an eminent King scholar and expert on the Civil Rights Movement, but there have been some places along our route that I had not visited, which are vital to that figure and that period. Now I feel more equipped, especially psychologically, to lecture and discuss the classic 13-year era that has stamped its imprint upon my very soul!

Alone, I briefly roamed around the city awaiting the arrival of the charter bus which I had zoomed ahead in anticipation of my unpredictable feelings. In trying to find the National Voting Rights Museum and Institute, which had relocated, I took a wrong turn and entered into a neighborhood wracked by poverty. I was stunned! My astonishment was based upon the assumption that a place high on the list of tourist attractions would be a vibrant place where no one would be impoverished. How naive of me! Selma is about the size of Cedar Falls, with less population and more diversity. Approximately 70% of the population is African American and the next largest demographic is Caucasian. Needless to say, despite the advances in the Movement, over a third of the people are really poor and an overwhelming majority of them are still the people that fought over 45 years ago for their basic civil and human rights. Momentarily, I was thoroughly both mesmerized and demoralized by what I saw. These feelings quickly turned into a raging anger that forced me to park and get out of the car—so forgone I had become! Subsequently, I was disturbed from my connipation by the arrival of a text signaling the bus was in town and the driver and the CME grad assistant were looking for an adequate place to have lunch. Now I was compelled to hide my discomfort and displeasure in order to return to the group and be my jovial self.

Thank goodness, the speaker at the Museum/Institute was superbly engaging. As he kept wiping the sweat from his brow and continued speaking, we were all captivated by his command of the substance and minutia of the Movement in Selma. Even I learned a tidbit or two from the enlightening eloquence of this elderly man. The speed limit is markedly reduced around the bridge for the city-dwellers are used to tourists boldly crossing the street between the museum and the structures situated where the marchers were bludgeoned. We checked out Brown’s Chapel, where the marchers had assembled before and returned to after they were beaten, but we were unable to take pictures there because another large crowd were occupying the grounds.

As the bus trundled on towards Birmingham, I lingered just a little longer to ponder March of 1965 from my new vantage point. There is no way that we should let the city of Selma remain in its current state....
National Minority Health Month

Why are American racial and ethnic minorities disproportionately numbered among all the major health issues and diseases in our country? Is it because the stereotypes are true: they are lazy, unintelligent, reckless, and hedonistic? Is it because they are unemployable, uninsurable, and uneducable? Is it because they are encased in unhealthy behaviors endemic to their culture and would risk being ostracized were they to contravenor or criticize those conventions in any way? Of course, not!

Health care in the United States is another bastion of institutionalized racism. Historically for decades, the health care system was racially segregated and people of color, particularly African Americans, were forced to seek service at a “colored” facility, even if none was nearby and even during emergency situations. Today, we’re not far from that dehumanization. The millions who lack health insurance, many of whom are persons of color, do not have access to the medical care they routinely need and are egregiously treated as second- and third-class citizens. In my opinion, it is unconscionable for a citizen of this country to be denied the fundamental means of survival because they lack participation in a structure that deliberately discriminates against certain categories of people and types of work—never mind those who are temporarily or perpetually jobless!

President Obama’s health care reform was never intended to fix a broken system. Thus, to put it in other words, it was scarcely designed to insure everyone, let alone significantly reduce medical costs. Instead of focusing on those perennially unable to secure basic medical care, Obama and Congresspersons elected to improve the circumstances of middle- and working-class folks, without regard to the most disadvantaged. The probity of a nation is determined by how the poorest are treated or served. The United States has a bad moral record in this regard. It is like everyone complaining about the skyrocketing cost of health care, yet turning blind eyes to millions to whom the doors of hospitals, physician offices, and pharmacies are tightly shut. I know my tendency to advocate for not only socialized medicine, but also completely free health access to all citizens, is far to the left of most people who self-characterize as liberal, but the more moderate stance of a single payer system has also been relegated to the radical junk heap.

There’s a part of me that laughs raucously over the attempts beginning in the 1990s to reduce the racial disparities in the health care system, first by the year 2000 and then by the year 2010. As the Center for Multicultural Education held various health symposiums and even a health conference in 2004, I tried not to be cynical or pessimistic over the possibility of success. I knew realistically that social structures, processes, and policies in the United States were hopelessly and inveterately ill-suited for such an appreciative overhaul. Besides, the goal of reducing health care disparities for minorities was never elevated to a federal endeavor, for we are not equipped, nor do we have the desire or will, to address and redress the plight of the oppressed and the indigent.

April is National Minority Health Month. My laughter is nothing short of cacophonous. Who cares?
Iowa Gets Energized

On March 1, 2010, at 8:00 a.m., the Iowa Office of Energy Independence’s web site and phone lines opened for Iowans to submit their appliance rebates. By 3:45 p.m. that same day, all $2.8 million of Iowa’s stimulus funding was gone. Considering the fact that the website was down due to high traffic and phone lines were jammed for several hours and the stimulus package was still gone in less than a day, it is safe to say that Iowan’s are either really excited about saving energy, or they are really desperate for some extra cash.

There was about $300 million of stimulus funding available nationwide from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. To participate, you had to be an Iowa resident with a valid driver’s license that had purchased an Energy Star appliance before March 1. Participants received different rebate amounts depending on the appliance. The funds were spread out across six eligible categories: hot water heaters, heating, and cooling, refrigerators, washers and dryers, and dishwashers. Participants were able to receive more than one rebate if they had replaced two appliances, for example their refrigerator and their dishwasher, but could not receive a rebate for the same type of appliance, such as two dishwashers.

The Energy Star mark can be found on products who use energy in the most efficient and effective ways. It is a joint program of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Energy, with a goal of reducing the carbon footprint of the earth and preserving our environment. It is common to feel that it is impossible to make a difference in such a large population, but Energy Star has already made a noticeable difference with support from average consumers just like you. According to their website, “Americans, with the help of Energy Star, saved enough energy in 2009 alone to avoid greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to those from 30 million cars- all the while saving nearly $17 billion on their utility bills.”

Iowans may have been motivated by the financial incentives provided by the rebate, but it is still a start. Sometimes it just takes one or two small actions like replacing your washing machine with a new, more energy efficient appliance, to inspire action in other areas of daily life. The hardest thing to comprehend about the lack of "going green" seen in some areas is that it really only benefits the consumers. Replacing appliances with energy efficient ones saves money on utility bills and so does unplugging devices not in use and changing your light bulbs. Is it really that much of a hassle to carry a cloth bag to the grocery store in effort to reduce the amount of plastic bags used? Not only are you saving your self money, but you are also creating a better earth for you and your children.

The Energy Star rebate may be over, but it’s never too late to start going green. These appliances can still save you about a third of your energy bill. Iowa has started down the path to “going green”, but we need to keep progressing. We must find motivation other than a stimulus rebate to care about our environment and the well being of future generations.

GO GREEN!

Here are 5 easy ways you can go green this earth day.

1. Unplug laptops, TVs, and DVD players when not in use
2. Walk, ride your bike, or take public transportation as often as possible
3. Spring for the $3.00 cloth bag instead of using plastic bags at the store
4. Avoid buying heavily processed foods and products with extra packaging. Support local growers and producers! Their products don’t have to travel as far.
5. Make your home energy-efficient by changing light bulbs and replacing showerheads with water-saving devices
NATIONAL POETRY MONTH!!!!!!!!!!

This year marks the 40th anniversary of Earth Day, a holiday created by Senator Gaylord Nelson back in 1970 in effort to advocate for the care and keeping of the earth’s environment. Unfortunately, as we prepare for the upcoming celebration, we must face the fact that our earth is not in very good shape. This year, more than 190 countries around the world will be creating awareness for things such as renewable energy and the dangers of climate change. Future generations are depending on us to clean up the mess we have created and restore our environment back to a clean and sustainable place safe for everyone to live.

In celebration of this years poetry month, we asked Dr. Blackwell to submit a few of his favorite compositions. He chose to also honor earth day through his moving works. For copies of these poems and other original pieces by Dr. Blackwell, please contact the CME.

Down to Earth

The earth is yours, the earth is mine:
Rich black soil and fruit of the vine;
The morning dew, the bright sunshine;
Yellow kernels on which to dine!

The earth is mine, the earth is yours:
A place where peace is mocked by wars,
Where folks slam opportunity’s doors,
And money reigns while justice snores.

The earth reflects the love of God,
And creatures all get divine nod;
Sinking paws in the cushy sod,
Cool breezes blow o’er meadows broad.

How dare we taint God’s good green earth,
Pollute the air and risk each birth,
Confuse ourselves by judging worth
According to our auto’s girth?

Rolling hills and valleys galore,
Nooks and crannies yet to explore!
R & R on a sandy shore,
Jewels dotting the oceans’ floor!
Coffee beans, marijuana weeds,
Cocoa leaves corrupting deeds;
Human road kill as freedom bleeds
In honor of our selfish creeds!

Straight is crooked, and crooked straight:
Heaven on earth is hell’s front gate;
Sex is love as we populate
A stunning world gone reprobate.

Life is filled with second chances,
Thrusts of good and sincere lances;
Celebrations, gala prances,
Cutting carpets with fresh dances;

Building houses and planting trees,
Stomping roaches and killing bees;
Hoeing gardens and having teas,
Jailing migrants and refugees.

Let us have our fulsome jolly,
Earth Day songs and all the holy;
Nature rides and airy golly,
Gags of lolly, full of folly!

But also yearn for that day bright
When we will not be making light,
And everyone will have insight
To measure what is wrong and right.

May the warmth of the gentle rain
Pitter-patter your heart again
To make certain we can sustain
Living on this earthy main!

The next day that grace lets us rise,
I hope we all come to realize
That we are blessed with God’s great prize:
Earth—to prosper, not scandalize.

Peace, joy, hope, faith, community—
Let’s give these things their dignity.
Creation great and small, you see,
We owe all perpetuity.

Thanks for bearing this brief refrain
And not reacting with disdain;
But, rather, choosing to maintain
That being down to earth is gain!

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All We Got

Why has Earth Day a special slot?
With grand parades and scripted plot?
Each day’s Earth Day, is it not?
Pray tell me, what else have we got?

I love the mud, the sand, the dirt,
The night air o’er the grassy skirt,
The thick fog’s fight against dawn’s flirt,
The summer’s call to rip my shirt.

I love the wolf’s shrill serenade,
The rainfall’s prism-like cascade,
Smell of a tree-lined esplanade,
A bird’s un-caged Adelaide.

I love the sound of water’s roll,
Of schools of fish as they dare stroll,
Cattle feeding on a soft knoll,
Birds’ chirping midst a city’s droll.

But what I do not understand,
Is all the hurt humans command:
We spoil the seas and waste the land
And compete for the upper hand.

We dominate nature’s deep core,
Like it is a runaway whore;
Our failing health we just ignore,
While singing praises to Al Gore.

We owe children the debt of love,
The stuff fairy tales are made of;
But our actions trip them and shove
And kill their hopes in God above.

We must think about tomorrow,
If we want our kids to grow;
We must find and tell our sorrow,
And more righteous boulevards show.

We know that we are not alone:
We share this planet to the bone;
To treat it nice, we mustn’t groan,
But realize it’s an on-time loan.

Let’s, therefore, give it our best shot
From elders to tiniest tot;
Let’s make earth day our daily lot—
Alas, it is all we’ve got!

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Trouncing the Poor

We ignore the poor in this land:
We care not for their lot;
We simply diss them out of hand
Then take all that they’ve got.

We deign to make light of their plight,
We label them the same,
We cast them as a deadly blight
And place on them the blame.

There’s not been a time in our past
When we have helped them out;
Our welfare patchwork could not last,
Since rich folks have the clout.

There’s naught benign about neglect:
It’s evil at its core;
How can we have real self-respect,
While we trounce on the poor?

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“It is my deepest belief that only by giving our lives do we find life” Cesar Chaves

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Questions or comments? Let us know!

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