

Prof. Rousseve calls for identity 'balance'

By MARY FORAN
Of the Emerald

Blacks and other minorities "must work out a viable balance between their ethnicity and the standards of the dominant society," University education Prof. Ronald Rousseve said Thursday in a lecture sponsored by the Black Student Union.

He added that only then will blacks be able to get into a position to obtain "some of the economic power that makes for real security in the American Dream."

Black students at a predominantly white university develop a "double-identity," said Rousseve, quoting from the experiences of a black Harvard student, and from the autobiography of Barbara Jordan, former U.S. Rep. from Texas, describing her Boston Law School years.

Both accounts underscore the "social realities" blacks have to deal with in a white society, Rousseve explained, such as black students having to study twice as hard just to keep up at institutions oriented to the middle class.

As in the world of sports or business, "the fittest will prevail," said Rousseve. "In a competitive educational system, the same ground rules prevail," he adds. "Merit is given priority."

Black students must realize that subculture behavior patterns, ("rapping on street corners"), cannot be substituted for the dominant culture's standards of success, said Rousseve. "They can be pursued in addition to, but not as substitutes for...the kinds of talents required for success by the middle-class mainstream."

As an example, Rousseve told the story of "Tim", a 20-year-old black who could "rap" perfectly with his friends in the neighborhood but could not write in standard English and therefore didn't get a job that involved writing reports.

Quoting from Tom Swowell, a black

economics professor at UCLA, Rousseve came back to the question of the black students' identity crisis. "You think about questions like, 'Are you selling out to The Man'...are you wandering off into something irrelevant...is the struggle going on without you?"

"The question is not whether to separate or integrate; the question is whether you want to be competent," Rousseve said. "Rhetoric is not logic."

Education Prof. Roy Poole said institutions with which blacks must deal are "forever changing the ground rules."

They often don't use the "logic" they seem to value and try to perpetuate, he said, using as an example the tendency to question the value of Afro-American History because of reduced students enrollment.

"It's a two-way street," Rousseve agreed. "The University has responsibilities to live up to also."

Rousseve said he had been the victim of enrollment decline in an ethnic studies course he taught on Black psycho-social perspectives. Enrollment started with 40 or 50 students and dwindled to six when the course was discontinued, he said.

"Political and economic realities have to be juxtaposed against philosophy," Rousseve said. "But the question remains whether Afro-American History will continue to be taught at the University."

The BSU is circulating a petition this week demanding the University reaffirm its commitment to a "pluralistic curriculum" by continuing to offer Afro-American History "taught by someone who has expertise in this area," said BSU director Wisson West.

Next Thursday the BSU will sponsor a lecture by sociology Prof. Lawrence Carter on the implications of blacks becoming, after Chicanos, the nation's second largest minority, West added.

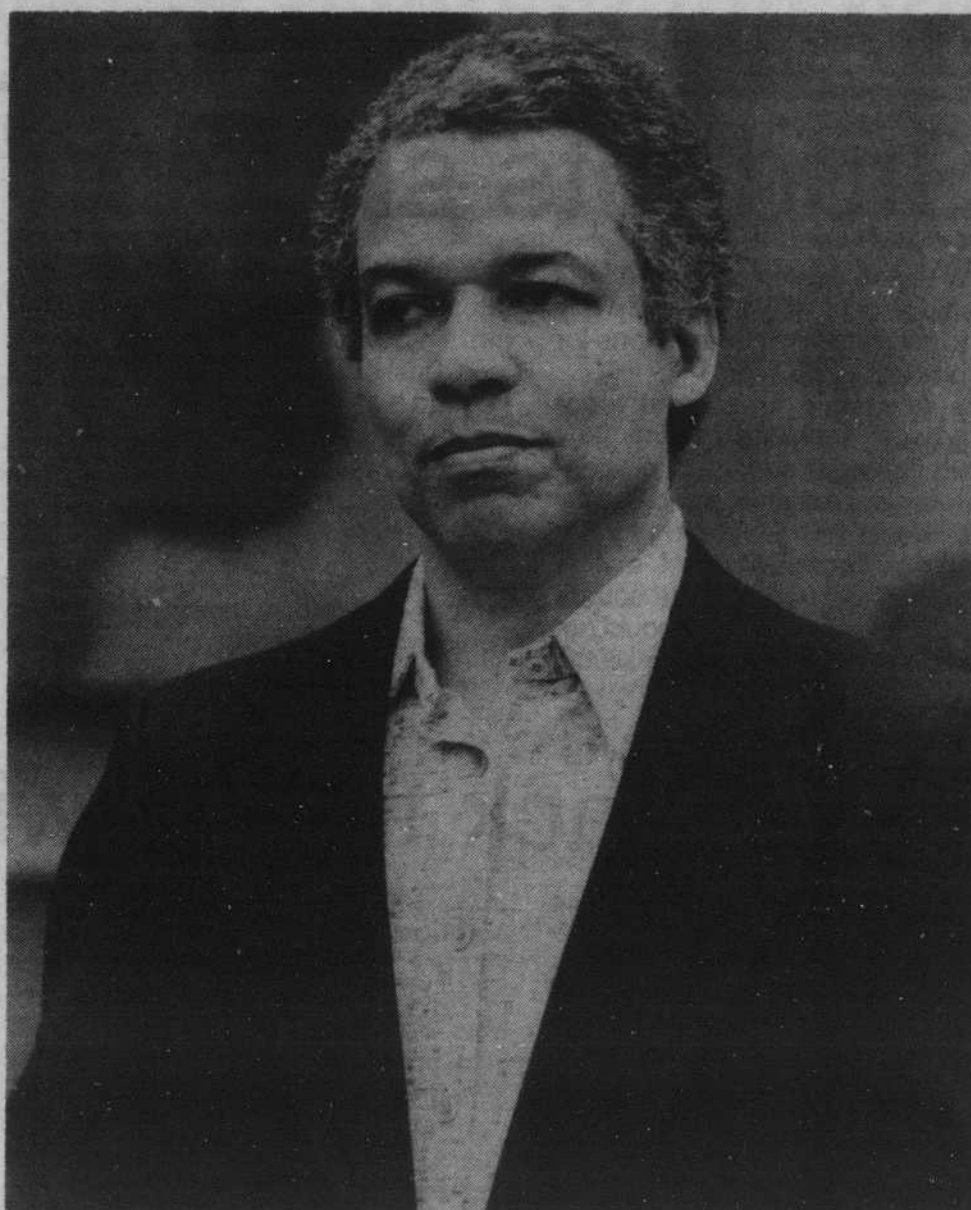


Photo by Ron Rousseve

In a competitive educational system, the "fittest will prevail," education Prof. Ronald Rousseve said Thursday. He added that black students have to study twice as hard to keep up at institutions dominated by the white middle class.

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