

# Speaker stresses networking for survival

By Kathy Wright  
Emerald Contributor

Networking and coalition-building are essential elements of survival according to Jan Oliver, acting director of the University's Council for Minority Education.

Oliver gave the keynote speech to open the Association of College Unions-International Region 14 conference in the EMU Ballroom on Thursday evening.

Oliver believed she was asked to speak because she networks very well. "For me and for many women who are single parents, for people of color, and Third World people, networking is not an academic experience, it's a matter of survival," Oliver said.

Having survived the 60s, Oliver doesn't think that the challenges of that era are even going to compare to the challenges of the 80s and 90s. She believes all of the obstacles in the future will be liberally shared by everyone.

"It's not just going to be one group of people that has to deal with differences and fear in the world, it's going to be

everyone," Oliver said.

Oliver told the audience of delegates attending the ACU-I conference that people hold stereotypical images of others who may be different culturally, racially or in their sexual preferences. These stereotypes are unintentionally passed down from parents and acquired through watching a lot of television, she continued.

Oliver said that it will be a challenge and an opportunity to grow when an element parents "told us to stay away from" is met. And when these encounters occur, it is time to look at and examine the oppressive pieces everyone carries with them, she continued.

"If we look around the world, we discover that we are connected with all the problems. Nothing, not one challenge that faces us in the 21st century will be solved without coalitions," she continued.

Oliver emphasized that coalitions are not about families who share the same values and think the same way, but about coming into contact with people every day who are different. Cultural assumptions ingrained in youth are not going to work, Oliver pointed out.



Jan Oliver

She stressed the human connection in forming coalitions and support networks. When the obstacles arise, Oliver said, this precious connection between people will be very important.

Oliver ended her speech by asking everyone to remember one thing: "If you have any problems... the key to solving all of those problems is in other people, probably people who are quite different than you are."



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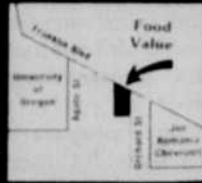
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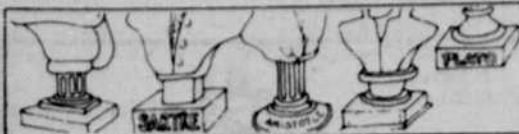
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