Race scholar speaks about blurring of racial lines

BY NICOLE ROYLANCE
CRUSADER NEWS STAFF

What does Greek tragedy have to do with the 20th century African American experience? What does Dionysus have to do with the 20th century African American experience? What does the African American athlete and the African American athlete and the African American athlete have in common with Dennis Rodman? In his book, Rituals of Blood, Orange Patterson, Professor of Sociology at Harvard University, examines unique phenomena in African American culture, ranging from the widespread smiling faces of minstrel show performers to the deformed victims of lynching. Speaking to a crowd at the Concert Hall on Thursday, Feb. 22, Patterson explained his fascination with the African American experience.

Raised in the West Indies, Patterson was enthralled by three characteristics of African Americans. The long history they suffered as a result of slavery, their commitment to and understanding of freedom, and their extra-ordinary spirituality. Patterson studied their experience throughout American history.

In the second chapter of Rituals of Blood, Patterson relates in gory detail the realities of lynching in America from 1882 to 1968. Patterson spares no details in relating the brutal murders of young men and, in one instance, a pregnant woman. In his speech, Patterson said that he was drawn to writing about this savage practice because it was so foreign to his experience in the West Indies and also because it was an issue that few people have really addressed. Unlike other atrocities of history, the fury of lynching has been gazed over in American history textbooks.

Patterson focused his lecture on American culture's fascination with African Americans and the blurring of racial lines. Since the nineteenth century, Americans have had a preoccupation with African Americans, as evidenced by the popularity of minstrel shows. These shows were performed by white men in black face to pack houses. Patterson questioned why four-fifths of the population was so enamored with the other one-fifth. In no other country has the minority been the subject of so much attention (i.e. the untouchables in India). Most cultures tend to neglect and dehumanize the minority.

Patterson offered Michael Jordan as an example both in his book and in his lecture. He saw many parallels between Jordan and African American sports figures. The author of Rituals of Blood also addressed the blurring of racial lines in his lecture. Drawing on his knowledge of the ancient figure of Dionysus who blurred gender lines, Patterson cites O.J. Simpson and Dennis Rodman as examples of the evolving image of the African American in society. Patterson spoke of Simpson as, "The perfect racial cross-over baby...To Euro-American audiences, no longer a black man but a white man-culturally, verbally, satirically, and even in his body language, masquerading as an Afro-American athlete." Just as Michael Jordan was returning to basketball, O.J. Simpson was standing trial for the violent murder of his ex-wife and her friend. In Simpson, Patterson sees the combination of the glorified African American athlete and the feared criminal.

Patterson concluded his lecture by saying that being white in America means nothing except in relation to being black, and being black means nothing except in relation to being white. Then, "There's no racial integration in America, but instead just the rotation of one force taking over another."

Price Scholarship chosen for senior gift

BY TIMOTHY O'CONNOR
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

The Senior Class Gift Committee recently cast their votes to choose a senior gift. The class of 2001's gift to the College: a three year scholarship dedicated to the memory of a classmate, John Price, whose death tragically struck Holy Cross last year. John was an active participant in athletics as a member of the lacrosse team, was diligent in church activities and was a religious studies major. The committee selected a scholarship as the class of 2001 gift based on the idea that it would best embody the college's motto of "men and women for others."

Fundraising for the scholarship has already begun with the help of students. Volunteers collect donations at the Hogan kiosks, and collections are taken at various gatherings sponsored in part by YO-YO. Following Spring Break, on March 11 at 9 p.m. in the Hogan Ballroom, the Gift Committee will be hosting the first ever "Mr. Holy Cross Pageant." The event is open to all classes and its proceeds will support the John Price Scholarship Fund. Planners hope to see many members of this year's senior class participate.

Two anonymous alumni have agreed to donate $1,000 for every 10 percent of the class that makes a donation to the scholarship. The first 18.5 percent of the class has contributed and the committee is very optimistic for what can be achieved. It is hoped that as many people as possible participate in this endeavor.

Two teenagers have been charged with murders of Dartmouth professors.

Two boys are only suspects in Dartmouth slayings

The Dartmouth, Dartmouth's campus newspaper, reported Wednesday that New Hampshire authorities are not looking for any other suspects in the murder of two Dartmouth professors. Robert Tulloch, 17, and James Parker, 16, are accused of the Jan. 27 stabbing deaths of Susanne and Half Zantrop, a married couple that taught at the school. No other arrests are expected in connection with the case.

According to the Boston Globe, it is unlikely that the death penalty will be sought in this case. Senior Assistant Attorney General Ann Rice was quoted on Wednesday as saying, "To my knowledge, this is not a death penalty case."

New Hampshire law prohibits capital punishment for defendants under 17 years of age. Parker is too close to spiritual worship. Patterson was enthralled by three characteristics of African Americans. The long history they suffered as a result of slavery, their commitment to and understanding of freedom, and their extra-ordinary spirituality. Patterson studied their experience throughout American history.

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Bush outlines budget to Congress

President Bush addressed a joint session of Congress for the first time in his presidency on Tuesday. He took this opportunity to outline his plans for the federal budget, which include an emphasis on education and a $1.6 trillion tax cut.