

BSU defines African-American role in war

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The Black Student Union sponsored a rap session on the issues for African-Americans in the Persian Gulf War last week. The focus of the rap session was to examine and discuss the roles and dilemmas African-Americans are currently facing in the War with Iraq.

Henry Taylor, a UB professor in the American Studies Department, began with a historical background of African-American roles in past United States military conflicts. Taylor cited the participation of African-Americans in both the Revolutionary and Civil Wars.

The significance of these conflicts and all others, he explained, is that they were fought in vain for the African-American way of life.

Importance?

"The idea in both of those instances, the Revolutionary and Civil Wars, was that participation would somehow yield a higher standard of life for African-American people," Taylor explained. "What happened? After the Revolutionary War instead of being free, the system of slavery flourished."

According to Taylor, following the Civil War the United States government turned the South over to a "bunch of traitors."

"I say a bunch of traitors because what else can you call a bunch of people who try to over-throw your government? As a result of those policies African-Americans were virtually re-enslaved. There has never been a war in which Blacks participated that they have derived a single solitary benefit."

"What happens after the war is over?" Taylor asked. "Conditions

for African-Americans worsened dramatically.

"There is no reason African-Americans should support that war (Persian Gulf)," he said. "We as a people should define our interests in ways that are based on what is important for our people."

War vs. domestic problems

Taylor questioned U.S. foreign policy, and how it relates to people of color.

"Why is it that in the last 50 years the U.S. has waged war against, invaded, and changed social order, in countries of people of color?" Taylor asked.

Israel in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and the Soviet Union in Afghanistan are just two examples that illustrate this, he said.

Taylor and other students discussed the irony of there being no money for social programs to combat the soaring rates of unemployed Black people and poverty, yet billions to wage war.

He also said that he cannot understand White people who refuse to vote for Black people and social policy beneficial to Black people, but will support a war that Black people are fighting for them.

Kuwait's money

Alexis DeVeaux, a doctoral student in American Studies, spoke of the necessity of Kuwait's money. American, Japanese and European money is substantially at stake due to their investment in Kuwait, she said.

Americans, however, have been "sanitized" he said, by the media as a result of the restrictions laid out by the government, making Americans unaware of the real is-

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sues involved.

Taylor said African-American interests are not of concern to the corporate structure, who are the real beneficiaries of this conflict.

DeVeaux also said poor African-Americans and Hispanics often use the option of military service to earn money for a college education. This linkage of education to the military is something well-off White middle class students can avoid, but poor minorities cannot.

The issue of President George Bush's "New World Order" was also raised.

"What is the 'New World Order'?" DeVeaux said. "It is an old concept, Hitler also used it. The 'New World Order' is the ideology of the strong getting stronger and the weak getting weaker, not a theory of participatory democracy."

She said that there is a need to "read between the lines" of what the government and the media is telling us, and to see the true meaning of what we hear, see and read, DeVeaux explained.

