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## Students relate personal battles against racism

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• Socialist/Marxist luncheon

## Students relate personal battles against racism



Bonnie Newsom, a Native American student representative from Wabanaki Center speaks at Wednesday's Socialist/Marxist lunch. (Geyerhahn photo.)

By Robert S. Bellamente  
Staff Writer

Racism is a problem that has grown larger in the thirty years since the era of the Civil Rights Movement, Doug Allen, professor of philosophy, said.

"Racism can only be fully understood as a specific dynamic complex within a political, economic and historical context," Allen said at yesterday's Socialist/Marxist Luncheon Series in the Memorial Union's Bangor Lounge.

This was evidenced by the testimony of the three other panelists, Bonnie Newsom, a Native-American student; Angson Dhlakama, an African student from Zimbabwe; and Ricardo Tubbs, the president of the African-American Student Association.

The panelists illustrated that an ingrained prejudice and fear of being different still exists today.

Newsom, a student from the Wabanaki Center, commented on the inherent quality found in nature of being fearful of differ-

ence. Using that concept as a backdrop, she chronicled three incidents of racism that had a profound effect on her.

Newsom, whose father is Indian, remembered two incidents from her childhood that involved racial put-downs. The first happened as she and a friend played outside of her house, and her father walked up and into the house. Her friend asked, "Is he a nigger?"

Newsom, taken aback by the comment found herself only able to reply, "No, is yours?"

Shaken by that early brush with racism, Newsom said she learned to keep her defenses up.

When she was a little older and on her way home from school, several boys rushed up to her and proclaimed, "You sure are ugly. What are you?" Another chimed in, "She's probably too dumb to know."

Her father picked her up shortly after and told her to stop crying. It was that incident

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• Wilderness

## Organization lets students travel, conserve parks

By Maria Zando  
Special to the Campus

The Student Conservation Association gives college students and others a chance to see and experience another part of the country while working toward the conservation of national parks, a representative of the organization said.

With the opportunity to work in the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska after graduating college with a degree in English, Meg Wickwire joined the SCA. As a resource assistant for the SCA, Wickwire patrolled wilderness areas in the two-million-acre national park, on a mountain bike to find poachers and illegal trespass cabins.

"They [National Park Service staff] were pretty wonderful to all the volunteers and encouraged them to take time and get out and see Alaska," said Wickwire. "They wanted us to get as much out of our experience as we could."

Wickwire spoke to a handful of students about conservation opportunities Wednesday

night in the Sutton Lounge in the Memorial Union.

She said the SCA is an association that organizes volunteer conservation efforts with various state and federal agencies including the National Park Service, the US Forest Service and the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

The SCA needs volunteers for 12-week positions involving skills in biology, botany, resource management, archaeology, anthropology, recycling, recreation management, resource management, trail maintenance, photography, environmental education and many others.

In some positions "in the fall or spring, there are field trips going on and so a major part of what you might be doing is leading hikes and teaching school kids about the area you're working in," Wickwire said.

Resource assistants are volunteers who receive funds to cover travelling expenses to the site and home, a uniform allowance and

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• Organizations

## Varner seeks local NAACP post

By Jeff Teunisen  
Staff Writer

Under James Varner's supervision, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People is expected to enroll the 100 members needed to reactivate Bangor's local chapter, but the local chapter concerned, mostly, with membership may be unaware of some national problems.

Varner, advisor to the University of Maine African American Student Association, said he was "excited" about the local chapter and is planning on running for the presidency of The University of Maine and Greater Bangor Area Chapter of the NAACP.

The NAACP deals with equality and improvement in education, promotes residential integration and helps deal with homelessness.

Varner said the reactivation of the local NAACP chapter will make blacks feel more comfortable in Maine.

"Blacks think they will be met with hostility when they come to Maine," Varner said. "They think they might get hurt. With the NAACP chapter here, blacks will not be afraid to participate in mainstream activities in Maine."

Asked about the decline in the NAACP's membership from about one million in 1960 to approximately 500,000 people now, Varner said, "Where did you get those figures? You can't trust everything you read in the newspapers."

According to *The Crisis*, the magazine pub-



James Varner. (File photo.)

lished by the NAACP, and articles published in *The N.Y. Times*, membership has declined in the last thirty years to comprise only half of what it once was.

Dr. Benjamin Chavis Jr., who served only 16 months of a 3 year contract as the executive director of the NAACP, has been the source of many of the NAACP's current problems.

Chavis was asked to step down from his position as executive director because of accusations of financial mismanagement, admitting

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that changed her forever.

Through that painful episode she learned to fight, but later found that toughness didn't work against racism.

"Being strong does," she said, and by being a victim, she found strength.

Angxon Dhlakama, an African student from Zimbabwe, has spent the last seven years in the United States and the last five in Maine.

While here, he has noticed that racist comments and attitudes abound, some of which he likened to things Hitler might have said.

"Maine is not culturally diverse. I don't know if it's ignorance or racism," he said.

Once in New York, a black person there asked him where he was from. He said Maine, and the person replied, "Maine? That's white man's land. What are you doing living there?"

Dhlakama didn't agree with this man's

view that a land could belong to any one color, and felt he should be able to live where he wanted, thus illustrating the pervasiveness of racism in both cultures.

Dhlakama also talked about the fight at Doris Twitchell Allen Village last semester between a white woman and four black women describing it as being overblown and given a false racial quality by the press.

Speaking third was Ricardo Tubbs, student and president of the UMaine African-American Student Association.

He also related stories about early childhood experiences with racism. Living in a mostly white community in Massachusetts, he found racism on the youth football team when he was 11.

On the team, his coach told him, "I'm sick and tired of you niggers with your pro football and your sports... you don't belong here!"

When his father had been informed of the coach's remarks, he went in to tell him how he felt. The next week, Tubbs' father was the coach of the team.

Tubbs said he still encounters hassles here in Maine, being pulled over three times in a row by the same police officer who, after the first time, pretended not to remember him. The officer claimed that he pulled Tubbs' over for having a tail light out, when in reality the light was on.

Fighting used to be his answer to racism, but later Tubbs found that social education was more effective. This is where he focused his negative energy.

Allen, in bringing the panel discussion to a head, pointed out that our nation was con-

demned to a racist future before we were even a nation. Genocide of the American Indians, slavery and more recently, segregation are all testimony to the depths of racism taken root in this country, he said.

"Racism is often termed as a black problem, in the same way that anti-Semitism is termed a Jewish problem and homophobia a homosexual problem," he said. "Racism is a white problem, anti-Semitism is a Christian problem."

In this sense, he named racism as a socially constructed problem, and as such, it should be able to be socially deconstructed.

Indeed, racism will continue to be a problem until we understand that "what unites us as human beings is more fundamental than what differentiates us," Allen said.