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Varner seeks local NAACP post

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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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Chavis was asked to step down from his position as executive director because of accusations of financial mismanagement, admitting to a sex-discrimination settlement involving NAACP funds for a former employee and his ties to Louis Farrakhan, the leader of the Nation of Islam.

In reference to Chavis, Varner said, "He seems all right. I met him. The media played it (the scandals) up big."

The NAACP currently has a debt of more than \$2 million, according to The N.Y. Times and The Wall Street Journal. The Times said that the accounting firm of Mitchell and Timis indicated that "at worst case" the NAACP was at a break-even point when Chavis took over for executive director Dr. Benjamin L. Hooks in April 1993.

Varner was not aware of the magnitude of the NAACP's debt and said, "I don't think that one person embezzled it all."

He said he did not know who the current acting executive director of the NAACP is or why the NAACP opposed the North American Free Trade Agreement.

Varner attributed the NAACP's large debt to immense racism in the United States.

"The NAACP has never had enough money to fund programs that will help each other look beyond the color of skin and religious status," Varner said.

Under the leadership of Hooks, the NAACP reached many milestones: The Civil Rights Act of 1991, the Martin Luther King Holiday Bill of 1983 and the Fair Housing Amendment Act of 1988, to name a few.

A regular membership for the NAACP costs \$10.00. The Crisis magazine can be included in the membership for an additional cost. Applications for the NAACP can be found outside of Varner's office located in the basement of Chadbourne Hall.