

DePaul 7: Honoring a Legacy – Ida B. Wells Professorship Reception

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By Melissa Platt

Since its establishment in 1999, the Ida B. Wells Professorship has brought to DePaul a variety of academic scholars whose works focus on issues of race, color, and social justice while being aligned with the Vincentian values of DePaul University. In memoriam of Ida B. Wells, a monumental civil rights and women's activist, the professorship appointment goes to someone whose principles reflect the life of Ida B. Wells and her commitment to equality for women and African-Americans. This year's Ida B. Wells Professorship is extended to Haki R. Madhubuti.

Madhubuti, originally from Little Rock, Arkansas, attended Roosevelt University in Chicago and received his degree in English. He speaks highly of his new relationship with DePaul University. After receiving a honorary degree from the School of Education, this professorship exemplifies Madhubuti's and DePaul's mutual coming together on the values they see important in the areas of race, color, and social justice, so "it was time to come home" as stated by Madhubuti. He is proud to be the Ida B. Wells University Professor since he so fervently admires the life and work of Ida B. Wells-Barnett. When asked why he feels this professorship is an important one in the DePaul community, Madhubuti stated, "She is a symbolic figure in history and to have her as the singular focal point of such a professorship is an honor for me and allows us to keep on with the history of her work"

On Wednesday, September 15, 2010, at his inaugural ceremony, Madhubuti made a profound speech emphasizing the importance of self-knowledge, self-commitment, and self-realization as individuals for the progress of development as a race within the Black community. The event was filled with significant individuals from the DePaul community as well as others who admire Madhubuti's work. They all expressed their congratulations and awe for Madhubuti and his work. The significance of the evening was furthered by the attendance of a few individuals. It was an honor to have descendants of the late Ida B. Wells at the event showing that her spirit is still alive in those who progress her work. World-renowned poet, Nikki Giovanni, attended the event to support her long-time friend on this special evening. Also in attendance were the many DePaul faculty and staff members who aided in the selection of Madhubuti and others who will soon work alongside him.

In the words of Madhubuti, the number one problem for Black Americans is abysmal ignorance of our own history. His speech was moving for the audience who listened attentively. The "self" was the recurring theme in his speech. The highlights recognized this problem and promoted self-development. "No longer can racism or white supremacy be used as an excuse for the non-development of Black Americans", insisted

Madhubuti. In achieving our epitome of success, we need to claim ownership for ourselves and for our rightful place in the American society. Once we stop lying to ourselves about our relationship with America and recognize the current state of our people will we then be able to move on to a culture of self-definition and self-reliance.

Madhubuti's presence at DePaul is one towards which many are looking forward. His speech allowed us only a glimpse as to what his classes at DePaul will be like. Eager to begin his teaching at DePaul, the esteemed professor hopes that the relationships he builds with his students will be ones that continue and develop. He enjoys mentoring and looks to mentor all the time. He hopes that out of students' time with him, they will find a new mentor and form lifelong relationships. In describing himself, he would say he is passionate, serious, and thorough. Haki Madhubuti certainly represents all that DePaul looks for in their Professors. His diversity and commitment to social justice is one that he will be remembered and these qualities are ones the DePaul community applauds.