

DePaul 8: DePaul Returns to the Bud

By Jaymee Lewis

After more than a decade's absence, the Black Student Union (BSU) at DePaul University made a triumphant return to the annual Bud Billiken Parade. Held on Chicago's Southside in the historic Bronzeville neighborhood, 31 BSU members arrived bright and early on August 14th to walk in the support of academic excellence. Since the parade's inception the purpose has been to stress the importance of education through entertainment and awareness.

Initiated in 1929 by Robert Abbott, the fictional character, Bud Billiken has served as a representation of hope for many Chicago youth who struggle daily in their homes, schools, and communities.

As people gathered on King Drive near 37th street they were met with a light breakfast, bug repellent, and familiar faces. Questions swarmed amongst BSU members as they wondered how long the parade was and when they would begin. As students started their march down King Dr. former BSU President, Segun Dent, excited the participants and engaged the crowd as he lead the chant "We Are...DePaul!" Looking into the crowd there were numerous reasons for this excitement. Families took advantage of this south side tradition and lined the streets with lawn chairs, grills, and smiles.

This was quite a welcome for parade newcomer, Tyricia Parker, a senior marketing major at DePaul. Parker expresses her take on the parade by saying, "I was really excited to see so many Black people together for a good cause. I enjoyed the floats and seeing people really ecstatic about education". Parker continues, commenting on the importance of the Black Student Union's presence at the 81st Annual Bud Billiken, stating, "It is important for the Black students at DePaul to be involved because we should be immersed in our community at large. To show we are invested in the welfare and education of our youth exemplifies the Vincentian mission". Many students who participated in the parade had this same investment and mindset, and the overarching consensus of the day was minority children and teenagers need to see people who look like them in higher education.

Similarly junior, Gabby McCadd, spoke on the benefits of a minority representation at the university and its participation in the parade. She declared, "It is our duty as Blacks students at DePaul to show these kids that they can be here and succeed!" When asked if she would participate next year she laughed and said, "I will be there...in more comfortable shoes."

Nearing 41st street the vibe of the crowd intensified as the BSU was featured walking past the cameras of national networks ABC-7 and WGN Channel 9. The organization took this opportunity to challenge other's ideas of what the face of DePaul looked like. Along

with BSU The Center for Intercultural Programs, the Office of Multicultural Student Success, DePaul Gospel Choir, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, and the School for New Learning all walked in the parade making very special connections along the way.

Recalling the day, school spirit was alive not only within the metal boundaries of our float, but for on lookers as well. One marcher recalls a male waving his DePaul ID in the air and yelling “Go Blue Demons!”

After more than an hour of walking the group reached Washington Park with determination to reach DePaul’s booth. The university provided lunch for the participants while representatives spoke openly with those who walked by. All who endured the nearly 2-mile walk began to reflect on the day.

As a true testament to the activism of people of African descent on campus, this opportunity highlighted the need for DePaul to move forward with Vision 2012. This initiative expresses that one of its goals is to become a model of diversity. The Black Student Union has been an avid supporter of this goal, exemplified through annual staple programs geared towards students of color gaining a familiarity with the institution. Likewise, the Bud Billiken Parade was just the start of an amazing year for BSU. Somewhere in between singers Tyrese and Jeremih the Black Student Union at DePaul University represented an active voice of progress not only within the institution, but for the greater Chicago community as well. We are a face of DePaul.