

Goshen College confronting racism

I never ever expected to have a one-on-one, up close and personal conversation with a President. But it happened last year in October.

It was an honor and privilege to meet and talk with the President; such a charming, compassionate, intelligent person! I immediately realized how very fortunate they were - the faculty, staff, students and alumni of Goshen College - to have President Shirley Hershey Showalter as their leader.

In 1997, President Shirley became Goshen College's first woman president. She is a Mennonite (not to be confused with Amish) and Goshen College is a Mennonite college.

On the day of her inauguration, this new president made visible her advocacy and strong commitment to GC's diverse, multicultural student body as flags of 36 nations filled the room representing the 83 international students on campus. "Goshen is a biblical name," said President Shirley. "Let us be guided by the biblical imagery...people from all nations streaming toward the throne."

Last month on Feb. 1, Dr. Herma Williams, a member of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universi-

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ties presented President Shirley and Vice President for Multicultural Education Zenebe Abebe the "Racial Harmony" award.

More than 70-member schools sent letters to the CCCU regarding race relations on their campuses and their efforts toward racial harmony. Dr. Williams said, "Goshen College deserves this award. Your letter said Goshen College is serious about confronting racism, first on your campus and then in the world."

Goshen College is the only CCCU member that has a vice president for multicultural education. GC is involved in the Damascus Road anti-racism training, the Underground Railroad project, and sponsors Alumni Scholar forums to hear stories and experiences of

ALANA (African, Latino, Asia, Native American) or international alumni.

I understand why GC won. The campus atmosphere and old attitudes have radically changed and improved. I saw ample evidence of this when I came on campus to speak at the Alumni Scholar forum, October of 1999.

That same October, near Baltimore, Md., Enolia McMillan (Ms. Mac) was turning 95 years old. At age 65, in 1969, Ms. Mac became president of the Baltimore Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Then at age 80, she was elected the

knowledge, wisdom and ideas were invaluable. At age 90, she cast the decisive vote making Myrlie Evers Williams the second woman president of the national NAACP.

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Long before Ms. Mac was a local or national president, this life-long civil rights worker was an educator. She was the first black administrator assigned to an integrated school in Baltimore and she was active in the Maryland Public Schools for 42 years. "It's my role as a teacher that I've most enjoyed.

When I look back on it all - I consider myself a teacher, an educator."

President Shirley echoes that same sentiment. While still a college professor at GC she promised a

roomful of students that she would continue to teach. "I'm glad I made the promise to teach. In fact, I'm going to do it again next year."

Dorothy Word of Kokomo is a retired teacher.

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Under her leadership many historic and crucial decisions were made that strengthened and improved the organization. Her

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