

# 'Love Like Sweezy'

## *Celebrating the life of Rakeem Sweezy*

By Calum McAndrew  
Managing Editor

"To the family, I want to thank you," BC Associate Professor of Political Communications Ralph Hamlett began. "Thank you for sharing Sweezy with this campus, and with me."

On Jan. 23, a little over a month after the tragic death of 20-year-old Brevard College student Rakeem Sweezy, family, staff, faculty and students of the college gathered at 4:30 p.m. in the Porter Center for Performing Arts at Brevard College to celebrate the life of the much loved student.

Campus Minister Sharad Creasman welcomed the audience to the ceremony by introducing the family of Sweezy and thanking the audience for coming. Creasman then said a prayer, before handing the stage to BC President David Joyce.

"We don't know why Sweezy, all that he did and all that he was for each one of us, died at

such an early age," Joyce said. "But we know that he loved us and we loved him, and we know that his God loves us and will suffer with us.

"He heals the pain with us, he gives us hope, redemption and celebration," Joyce said. "Each one of us will carry a piece of Sweezy with us."

The next speaker to offer a reflection was Ralph Hamlett. He recalled Sweezy's smile, his unique laugh, his hugs and the impact he had on every moment he spent at BC. These themes were repeated from person to person throughout the evening.

"We're wearing bracelets, and it says 'Love Like Sweezy,'" Hamlett said, referring to blue bracelets that had been handed out at the beginning of the ceremony. "Let's all follow in Sweezy's path. Let's love like Sweezy. Let's love like our colleague, our brother, our friend."

Dean of Students Debora D'Anna was the next speaker to share her memories of Sweezy. "I had a really difficult time trying to figure out what to say," D'Anna said. "Not because I didn't have enough to say, but because I have too much to say.

"[I have] So many great memories and stories of Sweezy," D'Anna said. "So many times he influenced me in such a positive way."

The final reflection of the evening came from Associate Professor of Theatre Brandon Smith,

who had been Sweezy's academic advisor. Smith said. "Within a week of meeting Sweezy, he greeted me with one of his trademark bear hugs and he told me that he loved me." Smith said. "Sweezy had a way of fast tracking relationships.

"I was blessed to be able to work with him on plays, dances with the President and his wife for the Gala, and just tons of campus projects in and outside of the class," Smith said.

The BC concert choir performed the songs "Bright Morning Stars," and "My Good Lord's Done Been Here," and his friends and fellow students Lily Bartleson and K'Nique Eichelberger sang "The Prayer."

A "Celebration of Life" video with a compilation of photos and videos of Sweezy with his friends was played to the audience in the Porter Center as the event began to conclude.

David Joyce then returned to the stage and said a Benediction and invited those in attendance to dinner in the Brevard College Dining Hall to continue the celebration of Sweezy's life.

"We've come here to celebrate the life of Rakeem 'Dimples' Sweezy," Sharad Creasman said at the beginning of the evening. The next hour was a fitting celebration for a wonderful life, and a reminder for all to "Love Like Sweezy."



Photo by Mary Lew

Marchers peacefully walk down sidewalks on both sides of Baltimore Ave. for the Women's March in Asheville this past weekend, chanting, "Hey hey, ho ho, all this hate has got to go!" See the full article on page 5.



Photo by Peter Trench

Theatre Professor Brandon Smith tells of his fondest memories with Sweezy. More photos can be found on page 4.