

## The 'N-Word': A look at its past and its future

By Becca Heller  
STAFF WRITER

"Inside the door just walked a nigger," said Dr. Eddie Moore, director of diversity of the Bush School and featured speaker of "The 'N' Word" workshop. He had turned off all the lights in Bryan Jr. auditorium and asked his audience to clear their minds. "What does he look like to you?"

The audience gathered in the room on Sept. 23 was a diverse one. At Moore's opening statement, students, teachers, African-Americans, whites, and Latinos, all took in a sharp breath. The room was silent for a few seconds. Then, suddenly, people began to call out words: "black," "male," "skinny," "ignorant," "baggy clothes," "unkempt," "uneducated," "rude."

Moore wrote down each word until the whiteboard was filled, and then gave everyone a moment to reflect on the image they had just created.

During the workshop, Moore acknowledged both the painful history and associations that come with the n-word, but he also admitted that chances were slim of the word dying out anytime soon.

"Nigger's here to stay," he said. "I'm not here to stop 'nigger' from existing. What I'm more concerned about is the

psychological impact."

The audience discussed the rapid spread of the word, examining its acceptance into the everyday vocabulary of many young African-Americans, and in popular music.

"Nine times out of ten, you see teens using the word in a seemingly friendly way," said senior Jabari Sellars, who attended the workshop. "It's becoming extremely colloquial. Pop culture uses it so much, it's almost been completely desensitized."

Its usage today, however, cannot escape the degrading history of the word, Moore pointed out. The history of the 'N-word' is entrenched in hierarchy and oppression, whether or not rap artists are willing to recognize it. In fact, according to Moore, the popular usage of the word in rap music may have stemmed from the inherent sense of superiority that it grants the listener.

"People believe you can take poison and turn it into kool-aid," he said, discussing its seemingly harmless usage among teens and rap artists today. "It just doesn't work that way."

He explained that the 'N-word's' acceptance into our culture is practically complete, due to the cultural effect of wildly popular artists like Dr. Dre, and to the thirst for the word that exists in

society. People feed off of the negative reflection that the word has on people, because it puts one group of people down, and brings the listener up in the process, Moore explained.

"That's the thirst for 'nigger,'" Moore said, referring to the hungry way in which people listen to and seek out music that uses the 'N-word.'

"The niggerization of America is complete," Moore continued. "It's got a pretty good chance to last through the next century."

Having established its permanence in our culture the focus shifted to how we can minimize its impact on people today.

The group discussed the effects that the 'N-word' has on young African-Americans, often returning to the negative image constructed on the whiteboard.

"My main concern with 'nigger' is that, especially with young black men, when this becomes a point of identity, there's something really wrong with that," Moore explained. "That you can take something born for greatness and end up at the bottom--that is some serious 'nigger' success," he said, referring to the 'N-word's' ability to bind and oppress the people it's applied to.

The workshop emphasized the word's

remarkable power. The associations that went along with it--that of being uneducated, especially--were real. The word's presence alone, in common conversation and music, has drawn many young people towards achieving the image that comes with the 'N-word.'

"We need to teach young blacks how to disconnect from this 'nigger' picture," said Moore, pointing back at the whiteboard.

By the end of the workshop, after Moore's exhaustive coverage of the topic, the group still had come to few conclusions.

"The extinction of that word, at least in my lifetime, is not going to happen," said Sellars. Still, it has the power to inflict damage on our society.

"The 'N-word' has been and continues to be pejorative," said Dana Professor of English, Carolyn Beard Whitlow, in an interview. "It's painful, it's hurtful, and it ought to die out in usage. Period."

When asked for some simple steps that we can take to curb the usage of the word in our community, Moore listed three:

"We have to continue to build and establish multicultural relationships," he said. "There has to be ongoing effort to talk about difficult topics, and we need to lead by example. There need to be more positive role models in our communities."

## Edible Schoolyard will teach children about health, local food

By Eric Ginsburg  
STAFF WRITER

Digging their shovels into the dirt, four Greensboro children may not have understood the historical significance of their actions. On Sept. 24, The Greensboro Children's Museum broke ground on "The Edible Schoolyard," making health and wellness a cornerstone of visitors' experience.

Standing with elected officials, author and advocate Alice Waters, and museum board members and staff, the four children helped kick off the Edible Schoolyard. Located in the heart of downtown Greensboro on Church Street, the Edible Schoolyard is designed to teach children about how food is grown and the importance of eating well.

Alice Waters, who created the first Edible Schoolyard over 10 years ago, came to Greensboro for the event as the guest of honor. Waters is an internationally known advocate of local, organic food, teaching children about health and food, and is also the famous cook and co-owner of the Chez Panisse restaurant in Berkeley, Calif.

"They described you as the Michael Jordan of edible gardens," said Mayor Yvonne Johnson, introducing Waters. Johnson also gave Waters a key to the City.

"It's planting an idea in very fertile ground and I think it's a universal idea," Waters told The Guilfordian at the event. "We need to embrace it as a nation."

The groundbreaking of The Edible Schoolyard comes as community gardens are on the rise in Greensboro and nationally, including the new garden at Guilford. The project at Children's Museum is the first Edible Schoolyard in the Southeast. But the idea for gardening and food education isn't a new phenomenon.

"I can remember when my parents had a Victory Garden in New Jersey," Waters told the crowd of roughly 200 people attending the groundbreaking.

Victory Gardens were popular during both World Wars as a way for families throughout the country to grow more of their own food and offset a strain on the nation's food-supply. Victory Gardens were supported and encouraged by the U.S. government, and Waters is urging more federal support for local and organic food growth and consumption.

After remarks by a number of people associated with the project and the official groundbreaking, dozens of women and a few men waited in a line to meet Waters and for a book signing of her various books.

Senior Katrina Siladi works full time as the Edible Schoolyard Education Programmer and AmeriCorps Access Member.

"I've been working my dream job for the past five months, and today is a celebration of what we have done and what we're going to do," Siladi said. "My education at Guilford directly prepared me

to understand the importance of a project like this."

Other people working on the Edible Schoolyard project were excited about the event and the potential for the garden.

"It's a refuge for me in the City where I can get my hands dirty," said Justin Leonard, who has been working at The Children's Museum for a year and a half.

His wife Dawn Leonard worked on preparing the groundbreaking, and emphasized the opportunities for other edible gardens in Greensboro.

"We can grow food in the city--there's a lot of unutilized space," she said.

A number of Greensboro City Council candidates were present, including Joel Landau and Mary Rakestraw. Landau is the general manager of Deep Roots Cooperative Market and is the co-chair of the Greensboro Community Sustainability Council. Rakestraw sits on City Council as an at-large representative but is running as a district candidate this fall. They are two of the four candidates for District 4, which includes Guilford's campus.

"I'm so pleased to see this happen," Rakestraw told The Guilfordian. "It's going to teach children about the importance of Mother Nature."

Check next week's Guilfordian for a full interview with Joel Landau about local food, his work on the Sustainability Council, and his connection with Guilford students.



Alice Waters, local, organic food advocate and author, kicks off the Children's Museum Sept. 24 groundbreaking with two Greensboro children. The Edible Schoolyard, located in downtown Greensboro, is designed to teach children health and food awareness.

ERIC GINSBURG/GUILFORDIAN