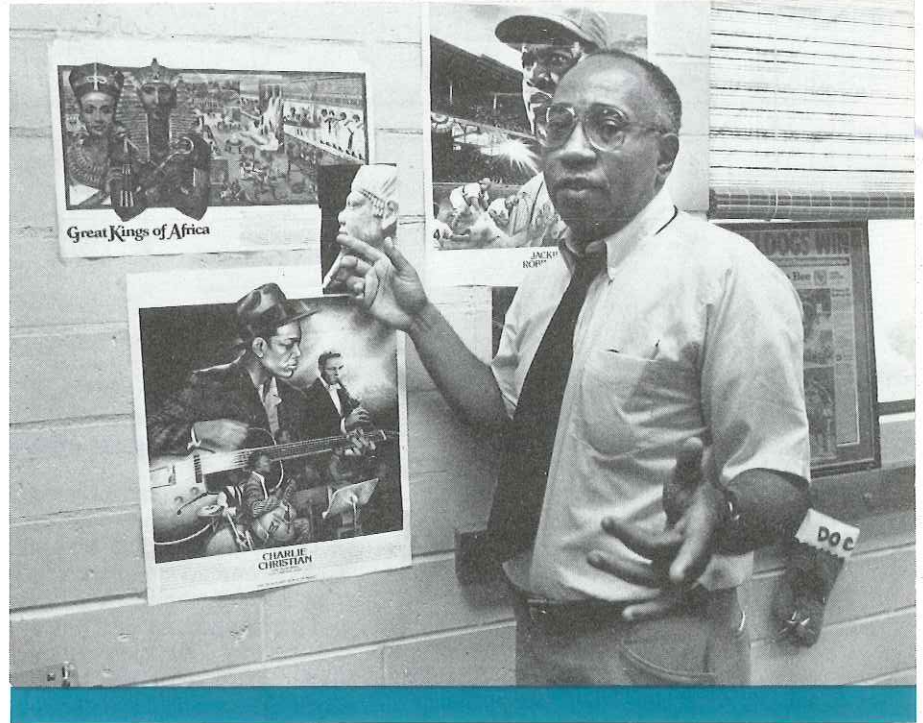


James H. Rogers

“Society at large should understand the vast resources of creativity, intellect, and contributions to our society by Black Americans and other minorities.”

JAMES H. ROGERS
Professor of Ethnic Studies



To Dr. James Rogers, the ideal classroom is filled with students from every ethnic background. Rogers enjoys sharing significant information on African and Afro-American cultures with classes that reflect the cultural and sociological diversity of the university.

The Ethnic Studies Program is aimed not just at the cultures being studied — Black, Native-American, and Armenian — but at the student population as a whole. “The most important value we provide to students taking ethnic studies is to understand and respect the cultures, religions, histories, and human contributions to society of all people on earth,” Rogers says.

Rogers’s desire for equal opportunity and racial equality for all peoples led him to involvement in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. He was a member of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee and the Congress of Racial Equality. He registered Black voters in Mississippi in 1965. “That’s how I got my consciousness raised,” he says. “Several times I was beaten up by Southern racists opposed to Black voter registration.”

While pursuing his Masters of Fine Arts degree in creative writing and English at the University of Iowa, Rogers established that school’s Afro-American Studies Program. Says Rogers, “I was instrumental in creating Afro-American studies there in 1968; I wrote the proposal, and following consultation with the president of the university, the proposed program was later approved.” Rogers also earned his Ph.D.

in American civilization at the University of Iowa. After teaching at Portland State University (where he was named Outstanding Black Educator in Oregon for 1974), St. Cloud and Moorhead State universities in Minnesota, and Simpson College in Iowa, he came to CSU, Fresno. “Fresno is a community that is both racially and professionally challenging because, historically, minorities have played a subservient role in agriculture and the labor market here,” he says.

Others say Dr. Rogers has very strong opinions, particularly concerning racial equality and opportunity, and the need for nuclear disarmament. An outspoken critic of the public schools’ curricula, which he charges exclude contributions by minorities in business, arts and sciences, and civil politics, Rogers urges emphasis in ethnic studies early in a child’s development. “In the San Joaquin Valley, we live in a multicultural community. We have one of the largest Asian and Chicano communities in America,” says Rogers. “Nevertheless, very little is taught here about Asian and Chicano experiences in the valley. It’s absurd!”

Rogers is also active in theatre at CSU, Fresno and has written several plays, including “The Love Song of Winnie Mandela,” which premiered in the Satellite College Union. Previously, Rogers was the recipient of drama awards at the University of Missouri in 1964 and at the University of Iowa in 1966. He plans to earn a master’s degree in theatre at the University of Oregon shortly. His poetry has been published in various magazines, including *Concerning Poetry*, *Impulse*, and *Iowa Review*. He was a member of MENSA, the

national organization for people whose I.Q. test scores are in the top 2 percent of the population. Rogers, however, believes that I.Q. examinations are a limited and inaccurate measurement of creative and critical intelligence. He has also been a member of the American Civil Liberties Union, People for the American Way (a recently formed national organization opposed to religious ceremonies in public schools), and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Now, however, he says that he has lost interest in organizations of all kinds recently as he concentrates on creative and scholarly writing.

When Dr. Rogers isn’t teaching or writing, he’s reading. A voracious reader, he normally reads 10–12 new books a month, including fiction, poetry, and history. He especially enjoys autobiographies of eminent achievers. According to the Kennel Bookstore, Rogers orders twice the number of books of any professor on campus. But, for a change of pace, Rogers plays chess or basketball on weekends with former Bulldog athletes. “They call me ‘Doc,’” he says. “And they always treat me charitably.”

What is ethnic studies?

Ethnic studies is an academic specialization that embraces primarily the minority ethnic cultural groups. Ethnic studies attempts to supplement information in the university that normally has been eliminated by mainstream cultural studies. It includes history, political science, literature, drama, and theatre, but from an ethnic minority perspective. Under