

the CSUF Ethnic Studies Program, there are Native-American studies, Black studies, and Armenian studies. At one time, there were also Asian-American studies and Chicano studies, but they moved into separate programs.

#### **How has ethnic studies evolved?**

Ethnic studies is becoming much more demanding and much more scholarly than it was 15 years ago. Then, the emphasis was on raising consciousness. The emphasis today is on producing scholarly involvement and studying minority ethnicity. We want to educate students to become cognizant of all the new changes in minority/majority relationships in society. Society at large should understand the vast resources of creativity, intellect, and contributions to our society by Black Americans and other minorities, which historically, before the creation of ethnic studies, were ignored by educational institutions.

#### **How are students affected by ethnic studies?**

I believe that an ethnic studies program is essential for all students because of the failure of the public school system to teach students significant facts about minority cultures — all minority cultures. In California, a minor in ethnic studies is essential information for business majors, social science majors, even physical science majors, because of the variety of ethnic groups that students will be working with. For minority students in the valley, Fresno State offers tremendous opportunity for professional and personal growth.

#### **What community activities is the ethnic studies program involved in?**

There is the Rosa Parks Distinguished African-American Award, which recognizes outstanding achievements of students and community leaders, regardless of ethnicity. Ms. Rosa Parks was a courageous civil rights worker who in the early 1950s refused to give up her front seat in a segregated bus in the South. [The significance of this civil protest was that it led to the Montgomery, Alabama, bus boycott against the Jim Crow laws, southern laws that called for separate public facilities for Whites and for Blacks.] We brought her to CSU, Fresno in the spring of 1981, although she was turning down about 20 offers each month to speak. We have brought to campus some of the outstanding change makers in society, including Willie Brown, California assembly speaker; Tony Brown, nationally syndicated T.V. talk show host; James Farmer, founder of the Congress for Racial Equality; Yvonne Braithwaite-Burke, California congresswoman, and others.

In spring 1986, I created the Black Theatre and the Talent Showcase as vehicles for both Black and other students interested in theatre and performance to have exposure in Fresno. For our first production, we had a standing-room-only crowd in the Satellite College Union. It was a chance for our students to act, dance, and sing; the production included "The Love Song of Winnie Mandela." The multiracial production was co-funded by the Cultural Arts Committee of the Fresno City Council and by the CSU, Fresno Associated Students.

#### **When did your interest in creative writing begin?**

Even as a very young child, at about 10 years of age, I decided to be two things: a teacher and a writer. I think it is the most important public service you can perform in society, to communicate vital ideas and concepts to the uninitiated and the young. The most important undertaking of the intellect is to communicate ideas. I'm interested in producing writing, and that's my focal point right now — literature and

creative writing. I am currently working on a scholarly study of the seminal writer Charles W. Chesnutt, as well as a book of poetry, a play, and a collection of short stories. All of my writing is an appeal to expanding consciousness.

#### **What is your philosophy?**

I would like to be remembered as a professional who cared deeply about communicating subject matter and increasing awareness of cultural variety in American society. I believe I am fair and open-minded in academic matters. I welcome opinions of students and others. I teach that all cultures have equal value, that Anglo-Saxon culture is no more important than Chicano or Hindu culture, and it's no more important than American-Indian culture. We try to develop a truly multicultural perspective on the evolution of human kind. I have very strong opinions. I have been described by others as intense, controversial in political issues, opinionated, and also highly knowledgeable concerning Black culture. I totally disagree with many social-racial perspectives of institutional racism in both educational programs and society at large. I do perceive that as the years have passed, ethnic studies is becoming a permanent program in the university, broadly accepted by both faculty and students.