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Crossroad Conversation: Black Face, White Place

Shireen Gul
COPY EDITOR

The Office of Campus Life and the International Center co-sponsored an awesome event named, "Conversations at the Crossroads: Black Face, White Place," last Thursday, February 26. It was an incredible two hours of real conversation with Lena Waithe, producer of the award-winning film, *Dear White People*. The issues raised in the film as they relate to the Illinois Institute of Technology community, as well as the dynamics created by the intersection of other identities, including sexual orientation, country of origin, religion, and more.

The movie was screened on January 29th, in MTCC Auditorium, which was attended by a good number of students, faculty and staff. The movie is a satirical portrayal of race relations in early 21st-century America, where the story covers the life of a biracial Winchester University student whose controversial radio show sparks a media frenzy of epic proportions. According to Fandango,

"When Samantha White (Tessa Thompson) begins her radio program by declaring that white people will now be required to have two black friends in order to avoid appearing racist (and that drug dealers don't count), she immediately catches the attention of the all-black residential hall that is being forced out of existence due to diversification."

The movie takes a good turn when the elected president of the hall, Samantha, becomes the subject of a reality show that deals with racial issues. At the same time, the Winchester University's student paper, which is run by 'all-white student' staff, mistakenly assumes that young black outcast Lionel Higgins (Tyler James Williams) is an expert on black culture, and recruits him to report on the brewing controversy which only makes the things worse.

In order to continue the discussion of the important themes raised in the movie, Lena Waithe was invited to IIT for a candid conversation along with some student leaders on campus. The conversation started with a brief introduction of the student panel and the guest speaker: Lena Waithe, where An-

thony Hollomen, Eghonghon Imarenezor, and Shireen Gul were on the student panel.

"One of the important questions which was brought up during this conversation was that why are there no white people in audience, which was so true. When someone asked this question, and I turned around, all I could see were only three white people," said Karanjeet Singh, a graduate student at IIT. He added, "We need more colored people on such events so such themes are been discussed rather than argued."

Another student added that one thing that really hurts him is that before anyone knows his name, he is labeled as black, and he is being hated without even being known. When the international students who land here get to know him, he is already a bad guy for them, because that's how the media has portrayed him. Anthony replied by saying that the media is portraying us like this because we don't put effort in portraying the right thing in front of the media. Further he added, "As blacks, we have to make sure that we represent the right thing. It's not the race issue only, now

it is religion, gender, country and what not."

One of the important messages that were given out in this conversation was that everyone has to understand that there is a wide range of difference. Rather than finding faults in each other differences, we should try to find out comfort in them and embrace them. If you are looking for solutions, go do research on it yourself; don't opt for the easy way out, such as media. The conversation was ended by a very beautiful quote by the president of MSA who said, "When you look at the person, look at that person's heart: not the face, color, religion or gender. Because no matter who you are, if you are a living creature you will have the same heart as another."

Please be noted that a follow-up article will come up next week with an exclusive interview with Lena Waithe and the panelist. If you have any specific questions to be asked then please feel free to send them out to: sgul1@hawk.iit.edu



Photo courtesy of Lynne Meyer

IEEE Holds Second General Body Meeting

Vijai Baskar
COPY EDITOR

The Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) student chapter at IIT hosted their second general body meeting of the semester on Wednesday, February 25 at the Siegel Hall Auditorium. Vijai Baskar Sathyanarayanan, Newsletter Editor of IEEE @ IIT, an ECE graduate student, conducted the meeting by talking about all the events and activities that involved IEEE student branch during the spring semester.

Sathyanarayanan introduced all the executive board members to the audience, including the newly elected board members,

Industry Chair: Sreeram Haridas, Publicity Chair: Isabelle Sophie Guitard, and Webmaster: Natasha Wijoyo. He spoke mainly about the IEEE Region 4 Student Leadership Conference (SLC) that happened at Madison, Wisconsin during the first weekend of February. He mentioned about the workshops, competitions, and seminars that took place in the conference.

He also mentioned about the best instructor poll being conducted by the ECE department, to felicitate one faculty member based on votes by students. The nomination form will be sent out to students soon and they can fill up information about the professor they wish to nominate and send it back to the de-

partment. The last date to submit these forms will be March 11. The projects that are funded by IEEE, namely, Quadcopter, Guitar Amplifier, Microsoft Kinect, are currently looking for new members to join the teams and work on them. These projects are an opportunity for students to utilize the skills that they pick up from classrooms in a real-time scenario and understand the aspects of engineering an application.

The guest speaker for the event was Robert Burke, Student Branch Activity Chair at the IEEE Chicago Section. He explained to the students about professional careers and offered advice on what kind of jobs to pursue in order to have a successful career. Burke shared

with the audience, his experiences in the field of engineering, and the jobs he worked in before his current position. He also answered student questions on what courses to study during their engineering education, which closely allies with the jobs they wish to attain.

The IEEE @ IIT student branch plans to have company tours, and general body meetings, that will be conducted every month, typically during the last week. They will also have their signature barbeque event, which will be held mostly during the last week of April owing to the weather permitting the odds of the event, since it is an outdoor event. Information about these events will be sent out to students soon.