

Speaker comments on white privilege

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National speaker Art Munin made his belief clear that whites have privilege over other races.

During Friday's speech in the Duke Ellington Ballroom, Munin explained what white privilege is and what it entails.

According to Munin, slavery produced a position of economic prosperity for whites because no labor fees had to be taken into consideration for years of work done by blacks.

"Even after slavery was abolished, whites were already so financially well off it didn't make life equal for those of different ethnicity," Munin said. "Whites have been put in a position to be successful, and that's what white privilege is."

Munin grew up in an Irish-Catholic household in a predominately white south Chicago neighborhood, and said he used to not believe the very things he spoke of.

"I grew up in an environment that was very close-minded, very conservative and, quite frankly, very racist," he said.

He said it wasn't until he was more educated that he began to realize that white privilege exists and often goes unseen. Munin believes an often-veiled racism that goes along with white privilege continues to exist today and can be seen in the media, in schools and even in sports. Munin not only explained how white privilege evolved and how it exists today, but also what people can do to reduce its power.

"If we walk out of here and never look at life in a different way, then our time spent here was a waste," he said. "This is not knowledge for the sake of knowledge; this is knowledge for the sake of action."

Munin said that people can not only make a difference locally by engaging in campus activities, but they can also help reduce the power of white privilege at a global level by donating money at www.kiva.org.

"Kiva is a great organization that allows individuals to loan money to people who want to start a business but need some help financially to get it off the ground," Munin said. "I invested the money I made for today's presentation into the businesses of two women from Peru."

According to Munin, Kiva has a 98 percent payback rate and donations can be made through PayPal free of additional charges.

"There are things we as individuals can do to make a change," he said. "We are not powerless."

One student agreed that change can be made.

"I think everyone can make a difference," said Phillip Moore, a senior communications major. "It is just about trying."

Others found the presentation informative and empathized with the speaker.

"Being from Chicago, I can relate to a lot of what was presented," said graduate student Jose Manzano. "The facts and events he pointed out demonstrated he knew his stuff."

Munin encouraged those who are interested in more information from this vantage point to visit his Web site at www.artmunin.com.