A sign of the times. It is hard in this day and age to ignore the world outside of what we experience here at UCI. Some times it is easy to get complacent and comfortable with what we have and where we are. However, given the magnitude of events happening around the world and across the country we would literally have to have blinders on to ignore the travesty of events that continually plague our society and have a monumental impact on our communities, and particularly on people of color. I can hardly believe that in today’s times we are still having to witness and experience the type of vicious crimes against Black folk and other people of color, that simply doesn't make sense and in my opinion is just matter of ignorance and hate. While the nation waits for the ending of this story, which will not come soon, it is important for us to look at a bigger picture and begin to take stock of who we are and what we do that can make a difference in the world we live in and our local communities. I can certainly understand the emotional impact in the Trayvon Martin case. I applaud the demonstrations around the country and those that have taken place on campus and in our local communities. I’ve seen announcements about candle light vigils, and representatives in our political process and on this campus wear hoodies to make a statement and it is an outstanding show of support to be certain. With that being said, I have to ask myself, does it take such a traumatic event to get folks involved and motivated to become actively engaged to have their voices heard or to show solidarity?

A significant part of the discussion in the Trayvon Martin case centers around the lack of an arrest due to a Florida law that protects shooters who say they felt threatened. While we may not agree with the law, I’d like to know where we were when the law was passed? Granted I do not know when or what the vote was, or how Black folks voted about it at the time. I do know that in order to change that law, we are going to have to become actively engaged in the political process. The same can be said for what we do here at UCI. Admittedly our issues are no where near the magnitude of a Trayvon Martin case, nonetheless we do have our fair share of issues and concerns. Given the challenges with the state budget and the impact on students, staff and faculty such as increased fees, a hiring freeze, and in some places organizational restructuring. Throw in faculty challenges of teaching more with less and discussions that determine whether a program or department will continue to exist and it is clear to see there are items and discussions that will take place and decisions that will be made that impact our lives here. These are just a few of the challenges and changes we face. I would offer up that in the midst of these challenges, we also have means and opportunity to effect the change we want to see. It will not come easy or without sacrifice, but it can be done. Somewhere I’m reminded that anything worth while is worth working for. It requires two things: a commitment to be the change we want to see and time.
There are several ways to make that happen. Students can become involved in student government and other leadership opportunities. Faculty and staff can become members of academic and administrative committees like staff assembly, the Chancellors Advisory Committee on the Status of Staff, (CACSS), or become actively engaged with BFSA. These are arenas where topics are discussed and decisions are being made that impact all of us. It is easy to raise our fists and demonstrate when something goes array, but wouldn’t we be better served by being at the table working collectively with others who are also impacted, to frame the discourse and ensure that what is produced addresses our needs? Let’s take this opportunity to build upon the programs and successes we are experiencing at this time. We have had an increase in the number of Black students admitted and who have accepted the offer to attend. We have Deans of two of the strongest academic units on the campus headed by African Americans. We’ve increased our visibility with programs like the Fall Harvest, and the Family Breakfast taking place as part of Celebrate UCI. We have supportive leadership from the offices of the Chancellor and the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs.

I challenge you to think about what you can do to make your time here more worthwhile and beneficial to all and for yourself. Alone we are swept away by the current, collectively we are strong and rooted in a foundation set for us by our mentors and ancestors. Folks who sacrificed so we might be in the space we are today. A reminder of two things. A commitment to be the change we want to see and time. Now is the time and this is the place.

Hotep, (Peace)
Gerald

P.S.
Don’t forget Celebrate UCI April 21st, and
The BLAC Night of the Stars on May 10th
### April 2012

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**Special Events:**

For additional events/event information please visit the calendar page on our website at [http://sites.uci.edu/bfsa/calendar/](http://sites.uci.edu/bfsa/calendar/)
Where are they now?  Kenneth Bentley

Vice President, Nestle USA

Started at Nestle in 1982. Bentley received his Bachelors degree from the University of California at Irvine in 1973 and Masters of Arts in Management from the University of Redlands. In 1988 the trustees of Lane College in Jackson, Tennessee awarded him an Honorary Doctorate in Humanities. He also completed the University of Michigan Executive Management Program. An accomplished writer, Bentley penned Nestlé Very Best In Youth 2001 as his 14th book.

Bentley is dedicated to mentoring and generating opportunities for African American individuals and communities. He is a member of the Executive Leadership Council and Phillips Temple CME Church where he serves on the Steward Board. He is also a member of the board of directors of Reading Is Fundamental and the Arthur Ashe Learning Center.

Ken recently was notified that he will be the recipient of the African American Golfers Digest Leadership Award for his business success. This prestigious award will be presented to Ken during the week of the Masters in Augusta, Georgia.

In His own words:

UCI really prepared me for what has been a very rewarding career. At UCI I was the sports editor of the school newspaper. I took a journalism class from Joe Bell and he encouraged me to develop my writing skills. Over the years I’ve written 12 books and had more than 60 articles published in magazines. We’ve even established a publishing company at Nestle. Another passion of mine is being able to encourage young people to be their very best. As head of all of Nestlé’s philanthropic endeavors I’ve been able to direct funds and resources to schools and community groups that do just that. When I look back on my UCI days the most beneficial thing that has come out of that are the relationships I developed. My best friends are still the friends I had at UCI.
Campus and Community Resources

Campus
Ombudsman: http://www.ombuds.uci.edu/
Employee Assistance: http://www.cascadecenters.com
Teaching, Learning, Technology Center: http://www.tltc.uci.edu/
Black Faculty and Staff Association: http://sites.uci.edu/bfsa

Community
NAACP: http://naacp.org
OC Black Chamber: http://ocblackchamber.com
100 Black Men of Orange County: http://www.100bmoc.com
THE Greenlining Institute   www.greenlining.org/academy
National Coalition of 100 Black Women of Orange County
http://www.nc100bwoc.org
Christ Our Redeemer http://www.corchurch.org/