

Psychology professor feels ‘representation is extremely important’

By Alesa Corin
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Students took to Twitter at the beginning of the semester to show their enthusiasm over having a new African-American psychology professor.

Terry Davis began her career at UNT in January of 2019 as a lecturer and undergraduate advisor for the psychology department. Davis, who is not on social media, said she was unaware of her online popularity.

“One of my students from the spring came to my office and informed me that I was blowing up on social media,” Davis said. “Now that I know, I feel honored that my students can sense that I am truly passionate about what I do.”

According to a *North Texas Daily* poll from Twitter, 38 percent of UNT students of color have had at least one professor of color from a different race, 33 percent have had a professor of color from their race and the remaining 29 percent have never had a professor of color.

“Representation is extremely important because students on our campus should see someone that resembles them,” Davis said. “This allows them to reach for the stars because seeing is truly believing.”

When Davis chose psychology, she did not realize how few people of color were a part of her field.

“[It wasn’t] until I married a marine and lived all over the country, only to find that obtaining employment in various companies that most often I was the only African American working,” Davis said.

With UNT emerging as a Minority Serving Institution (MSI), students have wondered why the faculty doesn’t match the demographics of the students.

“Even though my school is an MSI, I think it still has a long way to go as far as representation when it comes to hiring faculty,” psychology junior Tiyonna Cobb said. “It’s seldom that you hear about professors that are people of color and when you do hear about the rare POC professors that are in your major, you can’t help but get excited and tell everyone that you know. Suddenly class is more exciting, you want to pay more attention and be active in participation.”

Cobb is appreciative that she has a professor that not only looks like her, but is also from her major.

“Being a woman in society already puts you at a disadvantage, but being a black woman in America is an even harder feat,” Cobb said. “Seeing someone that looks like me that is not only a professor but a faculty advisor makes me want to work even harder for my goals and continue to break down doors for other little black girls that will come after me.”

Last fall, UNT had students and faculty submit a Campus Inclusion Climate survey. According to the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, the purpose of the survey was to create a strategic plan for diversity and inclusion that will guide their efforts for the coming years. The survey achieved the highest response rate for any institutions they have administered surveys for in the past.

The survey included a section related to search committees that hire new faculty and administrators.

“This data will be disaggregated by the

division and college to help make decisions about how to improve UNT’s efforts to create an employee demographic similar to its student demographic,” said Shani Moore, the director of

the Office of Diversity and Inclusion. “We anticipate that after conducting focus groups, the implementation of diversity and inclusion infrastructure will be well-informed and create amazing changes that benefit everyone within the UNT community.”

Even though UNT continues to work on producing a more inclusive environment reflective of the student body, Davis gives advice to students that don’t see themselves in the people that lead them.

“In life, there are roadblocks, with road blocks, they always have detours which means you may be taken off your current path by going around; however, you

will eventually be redirected to your path,” Davis said. “The path that you are on, you are there for a reason, so even if you get detoured, find your way back and get it done.”

Terry E. Davis, an Undergraduate Adviser at UNT poses for a portrait in her office on Oct. 16, 2019. **Bertha Smith**



Opinion: Amber Guyger’s verdict is a reminder that black lives don’t matter as much

By Kaycee Hubbard
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The story alarmed the public, causing a media frenzy. News articles from CNN, the *New York Times*, the *Dallas Morning News* and many others detailed the horrifying murder of Botham Jean, a black man, by former white Dallas police officer Amber Guyger. Guyger fatally shot unarmed Jean in his own apartment believing she was in her own home and that he was an intruder.

Guyger called 911 after the horrifying incident, indicating to dispatchers her fear of losing her job, an odd reaction after killing a man in his own home.

During her trial, Guyger tearfully testified in her own defense, allegedly believing her life was in danger when she walked into Jean’s apartment. She expressed remorse for her actions.

A guilty verdict delivered on Oct. 1, 2019, had left Jean’s supporters relieved thinking maybe justice could be served for the black community. But the 10-year sentence — with the possibility of parole after serving approximately five years of her sentence added onto the guilty verdict — was insulting to many supporters and unraveled any progress that was believed to have been accomplished.

Protests erupted immediately after the sentencing, and rightfully so. Justice was not served. Ten years of imprisonment cannot make up for the

loss of a 26-year-old man’s life. Especially when it concerns an irresponsible police officer who did not follow protocol as a so-called protector of the peace.

We’ve seen similar situations with unsatisfying verdicts. Eric Garner, Philando Castile and Alton Sterling, all black men who were killed by police, were let down by the justice system

when officers involved were either not charged or acquitted. Although the circumstances of Jean’s murder take on an almost entirely different nature, the outcome is still similar.

According to a 2016 study conducted by the U.S. Sentencing Commission, black men receive sentences that are 19.1 percent longer than white men who have

committed the same federal offenses. The disparity is larger when women are taken into account.

White male offenders receive longer sentences than female offenders of all races. White women receive lesser sentences than black men regardless of crimes committed. Black men have also sat in prison for longer periods for lesser

charges. If the roles were reversed, placing an innocent white woman in her home and a black police officer barged into her apartment and killed her, the trial sentencing would likely be vastly different.

Although Guyger’s actions appear to be a horrific accident, she admits to shooting with the intent to kill. Instead of calling for backup before entering what she thought was her apartment, she entered and murdered an innocent black man. The clearly preventable nature of her actions is a testament to the inadequacy in her sentencing.

Jean’s prosecution wanted Guyger to be sentenced to no less than 28 years, the age that Jean would’ve turned this past September. While Guyger can walk free in less than 10 years with parole and good behavior, Jean’s life is over.

The sentencing of Amber Guyger is an eerie reminder of what it means to be black in America. When you’re unarmed, innocent and even in the comfort of your own home, you are still viewed as dangerous and untrustworthy.

In this country, black lives do not carry as much meaning as a white policewoman’s shame-filled tears.

Our judicial system is not broken. It works exactly the way it was intended to work, by placing more value on white law enforcement than the lives of black people.



Illustration by **Kylie Phillips**

CommUN RooTs is partnership between *North Texas Daily* and the National Association of Black Journalists to highlight the voices of the African American community at UNT.