

# Protesters demand participation in decisions on diversity

Chris Barton  
Daily Texan Staff

Approximately 50 South Mall protesters blasted UT faculty and officials Friday afternoon for postponing changes to English 306 and excluding students from diversity awareness workshops attended by administrators.

"The army hasn't been called in to UT, and the University hasn't been closed," said Barbara Harlow, associate professor of English. "But we need to recognize that there are academic death squads operating on our campus."

Reforms in E306 that would have focused the freshman composition course on writing about diversity and difference were postponed last week after several UT faculty members expressed concerns that the changes were occurring too quickly, were veiled in secrecy and would politically indoctrinate students.

"I am bewildered by [English Professor Alan] Gribben and company's hyperbolic and hypocritical attacks on an important but actually innocuous attempt to reorganize English 306," said Kim Emory, an assistant instructor in English.

"I am confused by their constant confusion of principal pedagogy with ideological indoctrination," she said. "And I am appalled at their assumption that their politics are somehow apolitical."

Gribben — a frequent target for attacks from speakers at the protest — had been invited to the rally by Students' Association President Toni Luckett but said he declined because he was given less than 24 hours notice and felt the setting would not be impartial.

"It was not a true debate. It was a rally at which I was to be summoned, appear and explain myself. It was a rally with an already formed point of view. I look forward to opportunities at which I can debate [E306] on neutral ground," Gribben said.

Criticized along with Gribben was UT President William Cunningham. The protest began with Luckett ridiculing Cunningham for his spring speech inviting "everyone to join us as a part of the solution" to racial discord.



Austin Holliday/Daily Texan Staff

## SA President Toni Luckett speaks at Friday's rally.

Cunningham came under fire at the rally for the absence of students and their input at Friday's workshops conducted by the Anti-Defamation League.

"Why weren't we invited to Cunningham's multiculturalism workshop?" asked Danielle Conteras, a member of Todos Unidos. "Isn't his exclusion of us as racist as any slur? Doesn't this speak volumes about how he feels about us? What do we need to hear to get angry and do something?"

Cunningham refused to comment on the attacks Sunday.

Please see Protest, page 2

## Awareness workshop called 'quiet,' rewarding

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UT administrators who participated in Friday morning's diversity awareness workshop gave the program mostly positive reviews, although one of the session's conductors said the group was "a little quiet."

Caryl Stern, national director of special training for the Anti-Defamation League or ADL, said the morning workshop was not as "lively" as others the ADL had conducted at the University last week.

"I think that's one of the hard things about doing a shorter program — people don't have as much time in the morning to ease in," Stern said. "But I can say, as someone who stood here and watched faces, there [were] some eyes opened today."

UT President William Cunningham called the program "educational and rewarding" and said in a prepared statement that he looked forward "to further discussions of ways that the ADL may be able to assist the University in a long-term program of cultural awareness."

The morning workshop — which included representatives of the president's office, the dean of students office, general libraries and the various colleges — duplicated in the afternoon with another group of UT officials.

Stern and Kevin Slater, assistant

national director of special training for the ADL, began the sessions by presenting a history of the league.

The first exercise for the group required the participants to join smaller groups and label themselves. Slater, for example, identified himself as "an African-American male parent."

The administrators were then asked to name five prominent Americans from each of several ethnic backgrounds. No one could complete the task alone, but the lists were filled when the entire group was polled.

The exercise, explained Stern, was designed to demonstrate that information about diverse ethnicities exists within the group as a whole but can only be accessed through cooperation.

The workshop closed with several films and videos dealing with discrimination, ethnic sensitivity, ethnic humor and stereotypes based on race, religion and sexual orientation.

Robert Jeffrey, College of Communication dean, said Friday's shortened workshop lacked the personal communication he found in two full-day ADL workshops earlier in the week with the faculty and staff at his college.

For the longer sessions, he said, "there was more opportunity for interaction and sharing of ideas among participants. The feedback

Please see Diversity, page 2

# Protest

## Continued from page 1

At the end of the rally, Conteras presented a list of the protesters' demands to be met by the UT administration. The demands included:

- The immediate insertion of a sexual orientation clause into the UT anti-discrimination policy.

- A break in the administrative silence on the financial interests Cunningham has in Freeport-McMoran's controversial dealings in Indonesia.

- The immediate implementation of the Black Student Alliance's PRIDE and Todos Unidos' TU Manifiesto.

- The institution of extensive racism and sexism workshops designed by local and student communities.

- The immediate reinstatement of the reforms to E306.

The protesters challenged arguments from detractors of the reforms who charged that E306 instructors would attempt to mold student opinions on the topics covered by the course.

"We're asking them to involve themselves in summarizing, evaluating and analyzing an argument," said Margaret Downs-Gamble, an assistant instructor in English. "We're using court cases ... to try and show a number of arguments at one time. The plaintiff's argument, the defendant's argument, the court's opinion, the minority and dissenting opinions. That doesn't sound like one point of view to me."

The University's reluctance to implement the E306 reforms, Downs-Gamble said, is attributable in part to fear of the power students in the course would gain.

"If you have 1,500 freshmen who can use analytical thinking skills and communicate those in writing, you have a very, very powerful voice. You have 1,500 points of

view, and that's too many for the administration."

Evan Carton, associate professor of English, agreed with reform opponents' claims that the changes would bring politics into E306 but argued that by living in society, students are already engaged in political issues such as racism and sexism.

"The new 306 would have been — and I hope will still be — a politicization of entering freshmen and their curriculum ... on the grounds that it would have engaged them immediately in their first year in the polis," Carton said. "That is to say, it would have engaged them in the community of this university in several very direct ways."

In addition to their displeasure with the exclusion of students from the diversity awareness workshops, several speakers at the rally were wary that UT officials would view the two 3½ hour sessions as a sufficient nod toward multiculturalism at the University.

"We are somewhat concerned that one ... workshop will adequately convey the issue of institutional racism to our deans," said Steve Carr, a UT graduate student and Western Region representative for New Jewish Agenda.

"If the deans use this workshop as yet another opportunity to candy-coat their lip service to fighting racism and sexism, the only service they have done is a disservice to the work of the Anti-Defamation League," he said.

Lockett urged "each and every one of us [to] come out of the academic closet and fight for where we're at." Friday's protest, she said, marked the beginning of "a really good year."

"I think one of the most important things is that we take this over into the fall and we continue the struggle," she said. "It's obvious that the conservatives on campus have set the battlegrounds, have set the stage for war."