

# Annenberg Students Discuss Communications Research of Social and Cultural Impact



Ria Davis

Annenberg Honors students Ria Davis, public relations, and Phyllisia Gant, legal communications, recently completed research and internships in their specializations. Ria Davis explored the implications of religious communication in the African-American community, discussing theories relating to the effectiveness of various homiletic styles of delivery. Davis explains that her research looks at “how religious communication may be used to promulgate a culture of emotionalism, and has played into ‘victimization discourse’ in which externality and inertia abound.” She states: “From the days of slavery, it was used as a balm for oppression and cruelty. Today, its communication is criticized as still being an emotional exercise which has not helped the African American to move beyond the oppression that was part of slavery but has continued to cultivate notions of ‘victimology,’

and a culture of emotionalism rather than intellectualism.”

Phyllisia Gant’s research explores “Caste, Race, and Affirmative Action.”

She explains in an abstract on her research that around the world, there are examples of citizens being treated inequitably because of their race, ethnicity, class, gender, or religion. South Africa, Botswana, Australia, Northern Ireland, and Brazil are just a few of the countries, in addition to the United States, which have used policies to subjugate their citizens with oppressive restrictions and laws. Yet, governments are not helpless in the means that they can employ to administer social equality to all citizens.

Gant states in her abstract that India is providing its citizens equal opportunities after centuries of caste oppression through compensatory policies involving governmental hiring practices and educational admissions criteria. In the United States, some private

The Annenberg Honors Program (AHP) in the John H. Johnson School of Communications was established in 1989. The late Walter H. Annenberg, publishing magnate and philanthropist, donated \$2 million, the single largest endowment at that time, to Howard University. This gift, matched by the University, offers assistance for more than one hundred students in the program, as well as administrative and faculty support.

The program provides a total learning experience and a framework that fosters intellectual development as well as scholastic excellence. Students participate in seminars, honors courses, and a wide variety of projects and internships that enhance their collegiate experience.

The program also provides students the forum to work with such distinguished communicators as the late Ossie Davis, distinguished playwright, actor, and producer, who served as the Annenberg Visiting Professor for the 2003/2004 academic year. For more information, contact Dr. Audrey Byrd, director, 202-806-4042; abyrd@howard.edu.

American companies and some higher educational institutions are instituting initiatives to increase diversity. Her comparative study explores the purpose of affirmative action policies in India and the U.S., while comparing the role that caste and race played in the necessity of the programs.



Phyllisia Gant