

For Immediate Release

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### **IU vice president to deliver Berger Lecture**

The controversy about the image of a KKK cross burning in one of Thomas Hart Benton's mural on Indiana history will be the topic of the 2003 Sydney Berger Lecture by Charles Nelms, vice president for Student Development and Diversity at Indiana University Bloomington, at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, March 27 in Carter Hall at the University of Southern Indiana. His lecture title is "Art, Diversity, or Censorship: Who Decides?" The program is free and open to the public.

Benton painted the mural series in 1933 and, since 1941, the controversial scene has been permanently displayed in Woodburn 100, a lecture hall at the Bloomington campus.

The mural, according to a description by author Kathleen Foster, shows tiny figures robed in white at the center distance, where a burning cross stands against a dark sky. Here, the Ku Klux Klan gathers between a church (St Charles Catholic Church in Peru, Indiana) and a raised flag, representing the forces of Protestantism and patriotism that fronted a national white supremacist movement in the 1920s. The press is represented by a reporter, a photographer, and a printer in the foreground. Victory over the Klan seems secure in the vignette at the center, where a white nurse tends both black and white children.

Dr. Nelms has been at IU Bloomington since 1998. His 30-year career in higher education includes work in academic affairs, student development, and enrollment management for private and public universities. The focus of his scholarly and research activities includes college access and degree attainment for African Americans and other underrepresented groups. He established the Interracial Communications Project at four urban universities to explore the causes and consequences of racism in America.

Nelms work in quality improvement in higher education and accreditation has taken him to South Africa, Japan, the United Arab Emirates, and the United Kingdom. He was a contributor to the book, *Grass Roots and Glass Ceilings: African American Administrators in Predominately White Universities*.

The Sydney Berger Lecture is an annual event sponsored by the USI School of Liberal Arts to honor the memory of Sydney Berger, one of Evansville's most prominent attorneys and an instructor in constitutional law at USI. Because of Mr. Berger's commitment to individual liberty, the theme of the

lecture program relates to civil rights or liberties. The 2003 Berger lecture committee is Hilary Braysmith, associate professor of art history; Leonard Dowhie, professor of art; and Joan Kempf, assistant professor of graphic design. The Berger Lecture, established in 1996, is underwritten by local attorney Charles Berger and his wife Leslie.

Sent to: Shield; WSWI Radio Station; Pat Swanson; Inside USI; Our Times; Message; Indianapolis Star/News; WIKY; WNIN-FM; Henderson Gleaner; South Gibson Star-Times; Princeton Clarion; WGBF, WRUL, WFIE, WEHT, WTVW, Indianapolis Recorder, Web