



NATIONAL TECHNICAL NEWS

A Publication of the National Technical Association

Coed With Laser Vision

Josiane Wolff, an electrical engineering/physics major at Duke University, is a budding laser researcher who is mastering the challenges that come with entering areas where few African Americans or women have embarked. Breaking tradition can be lonely sometimes, says Wolff, who is philosophical about dealing with discrimination. "It's pervasive, but you have to rise above it. I'm the only Black woman who is working around the physics building now. And in my [electrical] engineering class, I think I am the only Black woman," she says. "But I love the challenge of slapping the world in the face, of taking them up on their dare: 'I dare you to be an engineer. I dare you to be a double major.'"

Wolff, an A.B. Duke scholar, is currently involved in an independent study project, working on a laser diode system under the supervision of Daniel Gauthier, assistant professor of physics. Laser diodes are devices that convert electric currents into light that is then amplified by a laser. After graduation, Wolff plans to pursue a PhD in electro-optics with the aid of her GEM Fellowship. As part of the fellowship, she will begin an internship with Corning, Inc. this summer.

New Summer Teacher Program

A \$4 million Summer Teacher Enhancement Program will retrain 800 teachers each year in math, science, and technology through work with professional scientists and engineers in 16 federal laboratories and facilities, the White House announced recently. Education specialists will also help the teachers in the use of new curriculum and teaching aids. The four-week program is funded through the Department of Energy.

Hip-Hop Chemist

Chemist Tyraine Ragsdale, a.k.a. Grand Hank, is using one of

his special talents to teach urban teenagers about the importance of science and education, reports the March 1993 issue of *About* . . . *Time* magazine. Ragsdale, a chromatographer at R.W.J. Pharmaceutical Research Institute in New Brunswick, New Jersey, is a rapper--former member of West Philadelphia's Grand Master Hank and the Punk Funk Nation, now the leader of Grand Hank Productions, Inc. and creator of the Education Rap Lecture.

Drawing upon his experience as a teenage DJ, Ragsdale combines rap, lecture, and audience interaction to get his message across. He has performed in schools, on television and radio stations, in concerts throughout Philadelphia, New Jersey, and Delaware, and at conventions. Ragsdale's rap lecture circuit is coordinated by Grand Hank Productions, a 19-member group of accountants, attorneys, and marketing and technical personnel that he founded in 1989.

At R.W.J. Pharmaceutical Research Institute, a Johnson & Johnson company, Ragsdale isolates and purifies novel compounds for the manufacture of new drugs. He has a degree in chemistry from the University of Pittsburgh.

For more information about Grand Hank Productions and its "Education of a Nation Tour," contact Grand Hank Productions, 1821 South 58th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19143; (215) 724-5260.



Congratulations to the winners of US Black Engineer's 1993 Black Engineer of the Year Awards. This year, NTA member and past president Larry King was on the selection committee. The winners are:

Black Engineer of the Year: Dr. James W. Mitchell, head, Analytical Chemistry Research Department, AT&T Bell Laboratories, Murray Hill, New Jersey.

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