

Dominican honors Melba Beals, celebrates diversity

The all-day event culminated with the first annual Melba Beals Awards for Excellence in Diversity. Alissa Gumbs, a pre-med student, Tri-Beta Biological Honors Society member and president of the Black Student Union at Dominican, received the Student Award while Dr. Asayehgn Desta, professor of economics and finance, was given the Faculty Award, and campus minister Lianni Castro received the Staff Award.

Dominican's Office of Diversity and Equity and its advisory board, the Diversity Action Group, created the awards to recognize significant contributions to diversity work by individuals, groups (including student organizations and honor societies), and programs from the Dominican community.

A "Unity In Diversity" exhibition is currently on display on the first floor of Edgehill Mansion. It highlights diversity on the Dominican campus and honors Dr. Beals' life and tenure at the University.

Dr. Beals recently retired from Dominican as chair emeritus of the Department of Communications and Media Studies. In 1957, Beals was one of nine African-American high school students to integrate Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. She holds more than 100 awards for heroism and courage.

[Read more about Beals, her legacy, and her work at Dominican.](#)

Unity in Diversity Day at Dominican began a student multicultural fair from 11:30 a.m. until 1:30 p.m. on Caleruega Plaza. At 3 p.m. in Edgehill's Garden Room, Andrew Jolivette discussed "The Legacy of Civil Rights, the Future for Diversity." Jolivette is associate professor and chair of the American Indian Studies Department at San Francisco State University and author of *Obama and the Biracial Factor: The Battle for a New American Majority*. Following the lecture, a panel discussion features Dominican faculty members Cynthia Brown, Cynthia Taylor, Suresh Appavoo, and Josh Horowitz.

At 7 p.m. Anthony Brown's Asian American Orchestra performed in Angelico Concert Hall. The event featured the first annual Melba Beals Awards for Excellence in Diversity. Dominican's Office of Diversity and Equity and its advisory board, the Diversity Action Group, created the award to recognize significant contributions to diversity work by individuals, groups (including student organizations and honor societies), and programs from the Dominican community.