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Clayton W. Williams, Jr.
Alumni Center
(attendance is Mandatory to seek election)

'Fuzzy logic' inventor defends math branch based on uncertainty

By Stephen Masters

SENIOR STAFF WRITER

Already in use in some automobile transmissions, "fuzzy logic" will become crucial in the next few years for people working with "expert systems," the inventor of the mathematical branch said.

Dr. Lofti Zadeh, a professor of electrical engineering and computer sciences at the University of California at Berkeley, addressed a group of more than 250 students and educators on "Management of Uncertainty for Expert Systems" Thursday.

"Fuzzy logic," designed by Zadeh in 1965, is a controversial branch of mathematics which is being used in artificial intelligence systems. Its name is derived from the use of "fuzzy," or vague, terms.

Zadeh said the vague terminology is used because precision is too difficult to achieve in many cases. He gave an example of parking a car to show the difficulty of precision.

"If you are parallel parking your car and you are supposed to stop within plus or minus one one-hundredth of an inch from one foot from the curb, how long would that take you?" he asked. "Three or four years maybe?"

"Fuzzy logic" allows for terms such as "close" and "almost" to be used, so it allows for more leeway, he said.

Use of the technology in transmissions is possible because parts don't have to be placed exactly. Zadeh said some Subaru and a Nissan test vehicle currently use "fuzzy logic."

Several recent papers on artificial intelligence have ignored "fuzzy logic," but Zadeh defended his invention by saying most critics of "fuzzy logic" don't know anything about it.

"An expert is a person who cannot afford to say 'I don't know,'" he said.

"It happens frequently that something that is generally considered bad turns out to be something very basic to human reasoning. Instead of rejecting it, we should try to understand it."

Black history

(Continued from page 1)

for me to see my kids and the strides they're going to be making as it is for my parents to see the strides I'm making," Gray said. "My father couldn't go to Texas A&M when he was growing up — blacks had to go to Prairie View (A&M). For me to be here at Texas A&M, it gives them a sense of pride."

Gray said the denial of a quality education was just one of several forms of racism blacks had to deal with in the 1960s. And though laws have been passed granting civil rights, he said racism is still a problem.

"I think (racism) is still there," he said. "Anyone who says it's not is crazy. I think it's just more subtle. It's more institutionalized. People have this misconception of what a racist is supposed to look like or act like. The more that people try to hide the fact that it does exist, the worse it's going to get."

"I think people seem to think that after Martin Luther King Jr., civil rights and all the acts that were passed, that everything is just hunky-dory. We still have a lot of racism and discrimination that takes place."

Charles Gordone, a distinguished lecturer in theater arts at A&M and a Pulitzer Prize winner, said the lack of appreciation society has for black culture results from bad teaching of black history in high schools and universities.

"I know the history books that I studied left the black man out entirely," Gordone said. "He had no face in history except that there was slavery and that he was free."

"But as far as his participation in the history books, he wasn't even able to be found. The history of the black man was not infused in the dialectics of American history — there was no true depiction of the importance of them, either collectively or individually."

Gordone said black culture has made great strides in civil rights in the 1980s and that America still has a responsibility to itself to end racism.

"There has been a lot of good changes," he said. "There's been changes right here in our own backyard. Ten or 15 years ago, it would be unheard of for me to even be on this campus teaching."

"There has been great progress. Either you have it or you don't — showing some sign of progress is not fulfilling the total dream."

McMullan said one reason why racism is still a problem is because blacks fell behind in the civil rights movement during the 1980s. She

blamed Ronald Reagan for not doing more for civil rights, but expressed hope for the future.

"Over the last eight years, blacks lost some serious ground in the Reagan administration," she said. "There are a lot of negative things said about Richard Nixon, but he did a lot for the civil rights movement. He put through a lot of good measures to help equalize what was becoming an unequal situation."

"I'm very optimistic about the Bush administration. He's made some really strong moves so far — not only with his views on education, but he sat down with school teachers and said that he will be the 'education president.' He values education. I think education is the way that we're going to continue to grow and remain strong. Again, we might equalize what is becoming an unequal situation."

McMullan said racism isn't necessarily evil — it is just based on people's fears and misconceptions about a particular culture they don't know enough about.

"Racism is just a matter of ignorance," she said. "If you don't know about another culture, then of course you can't appreciate anything about it. If you don't know about any of the contributions by that culture, then you won't have any appreciation."

Robyne Kelly, executive vice chairman of BAC, said although racism is hard to find, it is a problem which must be corrected.

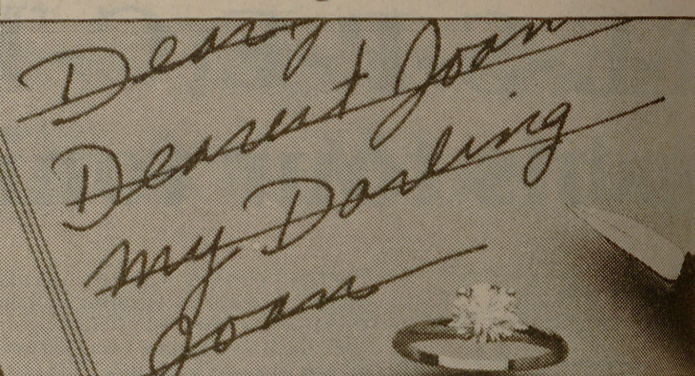
"Racism is a hidden type of thing," Kelly said. "I think we have come a long way, but we have a long way to go. If we don't watch it, we will be reversing the progress. If we don't keep up with our achievements and educational benefits, we will be reversing back to the way things were 20 years ago."

The way things were 20 years ago is something McMullan said she remembers all too well. Unless America is careful, she warned, the progress blacks have fought and died for in the area of civil rights will be reversed.

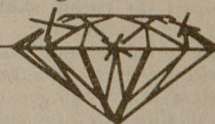
"Racism is still evident," McMullan said. "Now it's just in a different form. Twenty years ago, racism was overt: Bull Connors, the dogs, the hoses, the colored washrooms, segregated restaurants. It's a little more subtle now. It's just a little different now. As a nation, we still have a lot to do."

Gray believes racism can and will be ended by a group effort in society.

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