

UP Profile



Amilcar Shabazz

Photo by Drew Loker

Shabazz makes history fun

By Deldre Murley
UP senior staff writer

The greatest journey that one makes in life is the journey back to oneself, so the old adage goes.

Self-discovery has been a very important part in Amilcar Shabazz's life.

His desire to help others has been one of the factors that has brought Shabazz back to Beaumont and Lamar.

It's simply not enough to say that this man is willing to try to make a difference. A conversation with Shabazz is perhaps the most intriguing and enlightening experience a person can have.

"College is important because it brings together young minds," Shabazz said.

Shabazz is working on a master's degree in history as well as teaching American history classes.

In this way, he hopes to make a contribution to youth, he says.

"Teaching is something I can do well and interact well (with the students) to create a good product," Shabazz said.

In choosing history, Shabazz hopes to make a usually dull subject more enjoyable.

"History — by seeing the so-called dead people — offers a signpost or a guide to uncover some of the truths that are laid out for us," Shabazz said.

"It can tell us things about the road of life stretched out before us," he said.

"I see history as disconnected from me ... as a way in which I can

"I see history as disconnected from me ... as a way in which I can work with other people."

—Amilcar Shabazz

work with other people," Shabazz said.

"If I can engage a student's interest, take it a little higher, then I've done my job," he said.

Shabazz, whose surname was originally Frank, chose to change his name because through this he was "making an extension" of himself.

"I've retained my birth name, just moved it to the middle," he said.

"Shabazz is arabic. Malcolm X took it on a pilgrimage to Mecca," Shabazz said.

"He acts as my spiritual guide," he said of Malcolm X.

Amilcar Barka was the leader of the Carthaginians during the time of the Roman attack on Carthage in Africa. His son Hannibal eventually sacked Rome, Shabazz said.

"There is meaning in that," Shabazz said.

Earning his bachelor's degree in economics at the University of Texas in Austin, Shabazz went to work, but when he saw "how management worked to pay employees less," he decided to change his profession.

"I decided it just wasn't what I wanted to do," he said.

Shabazz spent time working as a paralegal and working with inner city youth, and dabbled in journalism.

"To try and make some contribution," he says.

But after all of this, he decided to return home.

"I'd been away from home (Beaumont) for over a decade," Shabazz said.

Not that he had not been home to visit, but he wanted to come home and stay for at least a while, he points out.

The relevance of history is very important to an individual and his life. Few people know any history, not even their own.

"There were limitations to oral history," he said, "but one thing about it, it was a vital part of the community."

History gives a strong sense of self and community, Shabazz said.

Shabazz hopes to make the "learning process more profitable."

"Tuition is not always a motivator; there are other roles to play in assisting students to see relevance in a certain course material," Shabazz said.

He hopes by doing this, by being even a small part, that he can make a difference.

"Reduce the number of young people getting into crack, working for sub-minimum wage," he said.

It seems like an impossible dream, but just go and sit in his office for 20 minutes, and you'll come away realizing that Amilcar Shabazz is not a dreamer; he is a doer.