

## Leakey speaks at Barrick lecture

by mary whalen

staff writer

The origin of the human species has not yet been precisely established, but the man who uncovered the beginnings of bipedalism (walking erect) among Homosapiens, will have established the origins of man, according to anthropologist Richard Leakey.

Leakey was a guest of the Barrick Lecture Series Thursday. He spoke at Artemus W. Ham Concert Hall where the topic of his lecture was "Origins of Mankind."

Described by *Time* magazine as the "heir to one of the greatest surnames in anthropology," Leakey is the son of internationally respected anthropologists Louis and Mary Leakey.

A Kenyan citizen and the director of the National Museums of Kenya, Leakey is widely known for his landmark discoveries in paleoanthropology. His major finds of fossilized remains of pre- and early man at

the Lake Turkana site in Africa in the 1970's are considered integral pieces in the puzzle of human evolution — "the missing links," as he describes them.

His most famous discovery, a 1.2 million year old homoerectus skeleton, was rare in the fact that it was a complete skeleton of an upright, bipedal humanoid.

Showing slides of his digging sites and of his famous discovery, Leakey explained that the skeleton was one of a twelve-year-old boy. This was obvious, he said, because of the eruptions between the teeth and the fact that the kneecaps had not yet fused.

The find was also notable because of the skeleton's advanced skull. The skull, compared to ape-like skulls, had a larger brain cavity and a smaller face, suggesting the beginnings of the evolution of mankind.

As a biological species, Leakey emphasized that we are extremely close to the chimpanzee. Physical

characteristics are shared by both creatures and the DNA in the chromosomes of both are remarkably similar. He noted that we share the same capacities for violence and aggression.

"Violence is the genetic component that has assured that we would make it through to the twentieth century as a species," Leakey said. "Genetically, we are programmed to annihilate, torture, and destroy other species."

"The fossils of our earlier predecessors in Africa confirm this. Early ape men themselves were violent and now we have a two or three million-year-old inheritance of violence," he said.

"As a result of our larger brain, however, and our capacity for self-awareness, we have the ability to go into "intellectual overdrive" which can suppress violence," Leakey said. "Although instinctually we daily experience rage, violence, and aggression, we have

the capacity to override these feelings as society now dictates."

"There is no need for future generations to be as prejudiced, violent, or bigoted as past generations have been. It's up to us," he said.

Further, he urged a greater understanding of the plight of all people everywhere, especially that of South Africans.

"We are all African," he said. "since we are all descendants of our original African ancestors. And, we are all black, since our ancestors probably also were. We all share in a commitment to this resolution.

"Africa produced humankind," he said. "The evidence is abundantly clear and we must see it for what it is."

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