

Expert on race relations to deliver commencement address

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ALFRED, NY -- Dr. Alvin F. Poussaint, an expert on race relations in America, the dynamics of prejudice, and issues of diversity, will be the speaker at Alfred University's annual commencement, scheduled for 10 a.m. May 14 in McLane Center on the AU campus. "We are honored to have Dr. Poussaint speak at our commencement," said Dr. Charles M. Edmondson, president of Alfred University. "As our country becomes increasingly multicultural, we all need to understand how to not just co-exist, but establish productive relationships with people of diverse backgrounds." It is a message very much in keeping with the historic mission and spirit of Alfred University, which was the first institution of higher education in the United States to admit women on an equal basis with men, and among the first to admit students regardless of their religion or ethnic heritage," explained Edmondson. The University will bestow a Doctor of Humane Letters, honoris causa, on Poussaint. Poussaint is Director of the Media Center of the Judge Baker Children's Center in Boston, as well as a professor of psychiatry and faculty associate dean for Student Affairs at Harvard University. Well-known as a writer for both lay and professional publications, Poussaint is the co-author, with Amy Alexander, of *Lay My Burden Down: Suicide and the mental health crisis among African-Americans*, published in 2000 by Beacon Press. In its review of *Lay My Burden Down*, the *New England Journal of Medicine* called it "A remarkable achievement" in which the "authors have exposed the scourge of suicide among blacks with a cogent analysis that is emotionally powerful." A frequent media consultant on issues relating to the needs of children and changing families, Poussaint was a script consultant for NBC's hit series, *The Cosby Show*, and currently serves as a script consultant for *Little Bill* and *Fatherhood*, two shows on the Nickelodeon cable network. He is an advocate for more responsible television programming for children, and serves as a consultant to a number of governmental agencies and private corporations, particularly as a proponent of non-violent parenting and parenting education. Born in East Harlem, Poussaint attended Columbia University and earned his M.D. degree from Cornell University's School of Medicine in 1960. He completed additional training at UCLA Neuropsychiatric Institute, serving as chief resident in 1964-65. At UCLA, he conducted research in psychopharmacology. From 1965-67, he was Southern Field Director of the Medical Committee for Human Rights in Jackson, Miss, providing medical care to civil rights workers and aiding in the desegregation of health care facilities throughout the South. In 1967, he joined the Tufts Medical School faculty as director of a psychiatry program in low-income housing developments, and two years later, he joined the faculty at Harvard where he has been for 36 years. Poussaint is a distinguished life fellow of the American Psychiatric Association, a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, a member of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, and a fellow of the American Orthopsychiatric Association.