

A month is not enough to rejoice

Black History Month is the time to remember and celebrate the heritage of black America. A heritage filled with pain and strife, overcome by strength and endurance — strength, which kept our ancestors going when their bodies were exhausted from picking cotton all day, everyday, without pay. And endurance, which helped them to withstand the pain of being whipped and beaten mercilessly, for asking questions, learning to read and write, or just being black.

Without the strength and endurance of Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, Martin Luther King Jr. and many, many other black leaders of yesterday, we wouldn't have Rev. Jesse Jackson, Shirley Chisholm or Bill Cosby of today. If it had not been for the courage of those great people, Jackson could not have run for president of the United States, Chisholm could not have been a member of Congress and Cosby would not have his own hit television show or be able to donate \$20 million to a black college.

For centuries, the white man has tried to take away our lives, our heritage and our future. And for centuries, we have endured his racist antics with pride and dignity. His ancestors may have founded this land, but ours built it, tilled it, picked it, slaved it and died for it. This is the heritage for which we celebrate Black History Month, an event which is, and should not be limited to only one month. For 28 days a year is not nearly enough time to commemorate the lives

and achievements of the countless blacks who have made and shaped our history as well as our future.

All year-round, black students learn of George Washington, Paul Revere, Thomas Jefferson and other white men and women of American history. But only once a year, if that, do they learn about George Washington Carver, Booker T. Washington, Harriet Tubman and the many other black men and women who are also a part of American history. For years, we have heard of Betsy Ross, the white woman who made the first American flag. But what about the black woman or man who stood in the fields all day, picking the cotton for her to make that flag. She or he are also makers of the flag which now waves boldly and proudly across this nation.

As the black leaders of tomorrow, we must take the initiative to continue educating the up-and-coming black youth of their heritage. For if they don't know where they came from, they won't know where they are going, or why it is important to get there.

So, don't just celebrate Black History in February: continue to honor the lives and accomplishments of our ancestors throughout the year.

February wasn't the only month they fought for freedom and justice.

(Yvette N. Freeman)

Judged by culture or color of skin?

Opinion
by Cheryl Floyd

It is important that you, the reader, know that I am a black American woman. Had I only revealed that I am an American, you probably would have been quick to assume that I am white. This is understandable, though. You, like me, are a victim of the system that engulfs us in skin color.

When I say that I am a black woman, the average mind envisions first the color of my skin without ever having seen me. My being a woman comes to mind later. It is more important in that critical first moment of knowing that I exist to contemplate my being black. Now, just what does being black mean?

In this, the American society, it means I will be "handled," smiled at, promoted, demoted, scrutinized and "advertised" because of the color of my skin. We are all locked in a system of color that has been nothing less than cruel. Too often, the word "black" has been associated with evil, filth and darkness. What about "black" people?

From a word which has such negative meaning we blacks have learned to accentuate the positive. In the past, we were constantly at war with ourselves about who we are because we were willing to accept oppressive people's views about us. Then we decided to define ourselves, and "black" became beautiful. Nonetheless, "black" still only tells the color of the skin. Isn't there so much more to us?

When I say that I am an African American woman, that first impression may be different. The average mind may envision color still but not always of the skin. Multicolored flowing pieces of cloth may be seen moving in the wind and dust to the rising, swelling and falling of distant drums that call home to Africa native souls from every corner of the earth.

Those drums can communicate a message in a language that only people of

African origin can understand. The hands which beat those drums have perfected an art through which a people can express themselves.

If indeed these things go through the imagination, then that average mind sees and feels a culture, and culture is a tie that binds.

For black Americans, skin color has been a tie that binds. We have been bound in chains mentally, spiritually and physically just for being black. Before the first blacks were brought to America, they were considered barbaric savages by outsiders who knew nothing of their culture. After they reached America, they became property. These people were our ancestors.

We have also bound ourselves in a common struggle to overcome the harshness of being black. We fought to become human and we became an uplifting people poised with stamina and grace. We noticed that the one thing that we all have in common is the color of our skin, and we rejoiced in it.

What runs beneath our skin, though, through our veins is common blood. We all have bloodlines that stretch all the way to Africa—to a culture of people whom we cannot disinherit (nor they us) simply because of the miles between us. They are we, and we are they—one struggle, one skin, one culture.

Yes, I know there are those who beg to differ, who claim that neither they nor their ancestors are from Africa but "from Jamaica or another island." There are also those who say, "My ancestors came from Africa. I was born in America." Had those ancestors not come from Africa, where would these people have been born I wonder? We should continue to call them black Americans because they are obviously more "comfortable" with it.

I prefer to be called an African-American, although I have no problems with being called a black American. Contrary to what I have been taught to believe, I know that Black is beautiful. I know, too, that I will be forgiven for capitalizing the word "black" in this writing.

State of sisterhood at home and drugs in the capital

My Bennett Sisters,

Do we realize a good thing when you see one? Apparently not. Sure, Bennett's endowment isn't as high as Hampton's or Spelman's yet and granted A&T has a larger enrollment, but look around: we aren't destitute. We have a beautiful campus, small class sizes which enable one-on-one contact with the instructors, and, last but not least, the opportunity to enhance our present talents and discover new ones.

My sisters, it is past time we stop negating ourselves because whether you realize it or not everyone watches the actions of the "Belles" of Bennett. If you really don't like it here and you can't think of one good thing to say about Bennett, leave! You are wasting time, energy and, most definitely, money. Granted the food may not taste like home-cooking, and, yes, I realize that there are problems in the residence halls, but it takes time, patience and a group effort.

This is not Dr. Scott's college. She is president, and while it is her duty to be on top of things, we must help. Instead of com-

plaining about what needs to be done and what Dr. Scott isn't doing, we need to be lending our assistance not because we'll get paid but because we want this to be an A-1 college.

When some of us decide to speak for the consensus without taking one, and go behind the backs of fellow students and the administration, everyone must suffer the consequences whether they are positive or negative because someone chose to speak for everyone and no one. There are channels of command on this campus and ignorance of that fact could lead to some really serious problems. All I ask is that we think! Think before we respond to our present feelings, think about consequences such as: will this jeopardize the safety of others?; will this make everyone associated with Bennett College look bad including myself?; Am I positive that I will be happy with the end results?

If we all just start thinking before we act on impulse, a lot of animosity present on this campus can and will be alleviated.

Lorraine Patton

To the editor:

As I was recently standing in line to buy my books, I looked around at the array of paraphernalia dangling from the ceiling and noticed that something was wrong. Either the words on the shirts have been misspelled or a word has been left off.

There are cute little sweatshirts with a picture of Snoopy on the front of them and another with acid-wash-looking letters which bear the words "Bennett Belle's." My question is Bennett Belle's what?

In case you miss the point, an apostrophe denotes a contraction (which means that a letter or letters have been left out) or shows possession.

Is the missing letter an "i," and the correct phrase "Bennett Belle Is?" Is there something that belongs to Bennett Belles that we don't know about and that for some reason has been left off the shirts? Or is the entire phrase a misprint?

As an English major who has a good working knowledge of standard English and as a student who has noticed the faux pas, I can't see myself sporting the paraphernalia, no matter how good it looks.

Sincerely,
Cheryl Floyd

To the editor:

Washington, D.C. was once a place I bragged on. Now I am afraid to walk down the street in fear of being shot accidentally.

This past year the Washington metropolitan area had 536 homicides. Therefore, until the people in the metropolitan area wake up, I will continue to pull my black dress out of the closet.

Drugs played a major role in the homicides. The murders began with people who were involved

(see page 4)

"Mississippi Burning"

Film shuns fact

a review
by Tish Richmond

"Mississippi Burning" is based on a true story about the disappearance of three civil rights activists — one black, two white — which takes place in Mississippi in the summer of 1964.

Gene Hackman portrays a FBI agent originally from Mississippi who is sent from the "north" to investigate the disappearance. Played by Willem DaFoe, his boss is a younger, educated, Kennedy look-alike who's young spirit guided by a sincere heart often clashes with Hackman's southern nature.

The interaction of these two characters is predictable, but the boss's learning experience and fighting nature are sometimes humorous and come off as sincere. Gene Hackman finally "does it his way" at the end of the movie which satisfies the audience's desire to get the "bad guys."

The storyline is interesting, but there is a question of its accuracy. The movie portrays the FBI as a great army of men who have no problems in coming to Mississippi by the hundreds to search for the missing students. I feel that the depiction of hundreds of government people swarming to this small town to look for these activists was a bit overrated. (It was maintained by the news media recently that in reality, the FBI did not

employ the hundreds of men in the case. At any rate, the movie shows that the FBI went out of their way to find the students, but this is questionable.)

What is particularly interesting is the movie's depiction of the news media interviewing southern whites about the case. These people said such things as "blacks stink" and "they get what they deserve" and various other racist statements. What is haunting to me is that many people still hold these attitudes.

The Ku Klux Klan is shown as running things and is involved with the sheriff's department in the small town.

The best aspect of this movie is that it shows the spread of the civil rights movement very well. It shows that the movement not only hit the larger cities in the south, but it seeped into southern small towns.

Overall, I feel that the movie was good and showed a realistic account of the civil rights movement of the time. When the movie was over, I thought to myself that during the time this movie took place (late June, 1964) I was about three weeks old. The thing we need to realize is that the height of the movement occurred only a generation ago.

Despite the question of the story's accuracy, I feel that this movie is real and entertaining.

The Bennett Banner

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