

Celebrate achievers each day

People of African descent have been lifelong contributors in the development of history, here in America and abroad. It goes without saying that many of them have been a neglected part of history.

Black History Month is the time in which these great personalities can be lauded and uplifted along with the well-known African-American history-makers such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass.

It is a shame that history books never mention such illustrious individuals as Alessandro de' Medici (1510-1537) who was the first reigning duke of Florence, Italy and the alleged son of Pope Clement VII. According to Italian history "the young duke began his reign well . . . with wit and wisdom, a true sense of justice, and 'judgments that would have done credit to Solomon."

Another was George A. P. Bridgetower (1789-1860) also known as "The African Prince" in British aristocracy. Bridgetower was one of the most brilliant violinists in history and was envied by great musicians such as Beethoven. He wrote seven compositions, two of which are preserved in the British Museum.

A woman by the name of Mary Seacole was the first "modern Red Cross nurse" during the Crimean War, and Dessalines "The Ferocious" was Haiti's liberator and its first emperor.

The greatness didn't stop there: it poured into America which, in fact, was explored by African and non-European explorers even before the Europeans knew land existed beyond the Atlantic Ocean. People of color were rulers of great empires that were "technologically advanced" prior to European influence. These people were mentors in the world of knowledge and entertainment. They demonstrated this in ways such as early pioneering, the arts and sciences, athletics, politics, business and humanitarianism.

February is the period set aside for commemorating the struggle and accomplishment of African-Americans and other distinguished people of color. Their legacy, however, cannot be sufficiently memorialized in 28 days. It is up to all Americans to correct the neglect of black and non-European history-makers 365 days a year.

Only then can their many contributions to this planet be justly recognized.
(Rehan Overton)

Ex-Mernerites invoke golden rule

As we all know, several of the students who were residents of Merner Hall, including myself, suffered quite a loss from the fire damage. And luckily, members of the community did what they could to help us in our need for clothing and other items.

However, it seems to me that although the fire was a major impact on the lives of all of the Merner residents, not all of our fellow "sisters" understand the significance of that impact. All of the residents of Merner were relocated to other dormitories, and from what I have witnessed myself and heard from other fire victims, many of our new neighbors are insensitive and uncompassionate in dealing with us and our possessions.

We are lucky to have our lives, much less our possessions from Merner, yet our neighbors don't seem to care. All they care about is the removal of our things from the hallways. Now, granted, our boxes do have an unpleasant smoky odor, but if we moved them into our rooms, our rooms would then smell of smoke. So, until we have the opportunity to try and clean anything that can be salvaged (remember, we still have classes to go to as well as you do, in addition to other activities), and Bennett comes up with suitable storage space to meet our needs,

our boxes will have to stay in the hallways.

After the deadline for this editorial, on Feb. 8, 27 days after the fire, it was announced that space for boxes had come available in Barge and Pfeiffer. So, I'm sure, that all of our boxes will be out of the hallways as soon as possible. And I stress "possible."

All we ask, and I'm sure I speak for all of the Merner residents, is that you, supposedly mature Bennett women, be a little more patient. If the situation were reversed, I'm sure you would feel the same as we do.

I would also like to thank members of the faculty and staff for offering their help and patience to myself and the other fire victims. It's some consolation to know that there is a spirit of kinship between the faculty/staff members and students, if not between the students themselves.

And this entire situation reminds me of the old adage that you find out who your true friends are in times of tragedy. I just hope a situation like this never happens again, especially to those complaining about the odors of our boxes.

Why, you ask? Let me put it to you this way: Treat others as you would have them treat yourself. Get the point? (Yvette N. Freeman)

Has our sisterhood deteriorated?

by Louise Morris

A strong bond between Belles has been one of the finest attributes of the college, but as years pass, sisterhood seems to be a concern of the past, according to respondents to a Banner poll.

Sisterhood is slowly deteriorating and many students do not seem to have any suggestions on how to improve the situation, but they do know just why it exists.

"Sisterhood is limited to certain situations," said Nichelle Green, a senior from Montclair, N.J. "Like the big sister and little sister program, it has a bonding of sisterhood."

"Where is the togetherness between the ladies of Bennett College?" asked Sherrilyn Hicks, a freshman from Richmond, Va. "We are pulling each other apart instead of sticking together."

There are a few who believe first impressions and stereotyping weaken sisterhood.

"One of the reasons we do not have sisterhood is because there is too much jealousy, conceitedness and prejudice of others," said Rhonda Williams, a sophomore from Asbury, N.J.

Regional differences sometimes cause antagonism.

"One of the reasons why we do not have sisterhood is

because there is a geographical separation on the campus," said Asiya Abdella, a freshman from Washington, D.C. "Bennett is now competitive and stereotypical because people automatically know where you are from by the way you dress or look."

One respondent felt that sisterhood was an issue that could be solved by discussing problems.

"I feel our sisterhood is a very debatable subject because I don't feel we have lost all of it," said Paulette Ross, a junior from Charlotte. "I feel it's up to the individuals that make up Bennett to come together and improve our sisterhood."

On the other hand, a respondent said we did have sisterhood.

"Yes, I believe that there is a sisterhood at Bennett," said Cynthia Washington, a junior from Washington, D.C. "Although it is not as tangible to some or obvious, it is there."

Washington said that "students have to realize that you are not going to get along with everyone you meet and that's life! Almost everyone has had some 'adventure' or good experience with another student that they will not trade for anything. Then there are times when you disagree or argue, but all in all, that's a part of sisterhood."

Rap is a positive force

by Rehan Overton

The political and social messages of rap artists are a positive effort towards building a unified and drug-free culture in America, according to students.

Although rappers are often criticized for their non-conforming and sometimes radical lyrics, Belles approve of the messages that rappers send out.

"They (rap artists) start an awareness," said Shana Chambers, an advanced freshman from Denver, Colo. "And an awareness is needed . . . Our (black Americans) position right now in the United States, we're kind of between a rock and a hard place . . . There's two forks in the road. One way, we could keep going the way we've been going for all these years. And then one way, I see a revolution. I feel the deciding factor will be rap music."

Belles feel that rap music is the key to end the social and political problems that this generation of blacks is facing.

"Young (people) are much more aggressive than the

older generation and they are getting tired of a lot of the social and economic deprivation that is on them. And I feel like they (rap artists) are using the music to get a message across to the young (people) and they're waking up . . . It's not a bad thing when it has a good message," said Jacqueline Jennings, a freshman from Washington, D.C.

However, some Belles spoke about the negative and profane messages that rap artists such as N.W.A. (Niggers With An Attitude), The Too Live Crew and L.L. Cool J. exhibit in their music.

"When it's negative, they (teenagers) pick up what the words are," said Marya Moon, a sophomore from New York, N.Y. "Like L.L. Cool J. for example . . . In his video when he's climbing up a wall . . . It's not realistic; it's not something that you know people admire . . . That (he) should go out and tease their minds with something as criminal as that."

According to junior Erica Salter of Cincinnati, the rap group N.W.A. was almost

banned from performing in Cincinnati and was prohibited from singing certain songs because of obscene lyrics.

Special interest groups claim that album covers should display labels that warn parents of songs that contain adult or negative lyrics.

"They (white Americans) don't understand what needs to be censored with us and what doesn't need to be censored," said Chambers. "If there is going to be a censorship . . . of rap music and R&B music, it should be done by black people who understand what our situation is right now."

White America's insecurities about its own position in society may be the reason behind all the uproar about the political messages in rap songs such as "Fight the Power" and "Don't Believe the Hype" by Public Enemy, according to Jennings.

Belles feel that no matter how much rap music is put under fire, it announces the awakening of black America's consciousness. It is the music of this generation.

Gravely comments on changes in students' attitudes

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students who are just beginning their careers and help them focus on a positive career."

A Greensboro resident, Gravely has "never been far from the college," but in 1985 she decided she "needed a change," so she left the college to work at the YWCA as a program director at educational services. Though she was not working at Bennett, she was still an advocate of the college. She was president of the Greensboro Alumnae Chapter as well as a national officer for the national organization for alumnae for three years.

As the assistant vice president of student affairs, Gravely says she does not foresee making any changes. She says she's here to "support the administration and their whole effort to focus the college towards the future or to address the year 2000 and its expectations of its generation of students."

Gravely has been "surprised to a little degree at the extent of the apathy among students and the lack of students involved in their college learning experience."

Gravely's idea of a college student is "a person that is thirsty for learning and that every experience for the stu-

dent becomes a learning experience whether it's positive or negative," but a few of the students she's seen "tend to want to dwell on negative aspects, and it seems there's a lot of energy wasted on negative things and that's not the norm for most of the Bennett students." She thinks "most of the Bennett students are really into their studies and moving about."

Even though she's had a variety of positions here at the college, she feels this is a challenge to work in a new area with students in another capacity. She says the job is a 24-hour job instead of a 12-hour job.

The Bennett Banner

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