

Belles approve of African-American as racial name

by Monica L. Hawkins

What's in a name?

What name should be used, African-American or Black American? This is a question that many African-Americans and or black Americans are striving to answer.

The question of identity is not only a concern of prominent African-American and black leaders across the nation, but a concern of students and teachers on this campus.

Dr. Benjamin L. Hooks, executive director of NAACP, gave his opinion in Ebony Magazine. "Our primary concern remains the protection and enhancement of civil rights, sheltering the homeless, defending the powerless, finding jobs for the jobless, caring for the helpless, fighting the scourge of crack and other drugs and making our communities safe. Therefore the dialogue about what we call ourselves should not overshadow the more immediate and pressing problems that afflict our community," Hooks said.

Ms. Charmaine McKissick-Kemp, director of the Interdisciplinary Studies Program, explains her view. "We have been defined by the majority race as number of things ranging from coon, Negro, even nigger. I feel it's time for us as African-Americans or blacks to define ourselves instead of someone else telling us who we are."

A poll was recently taken on campus, asking students

which name they preferred to be called. 70 percent said they want to be called African-American, 25 percent said it does not matter what they are called, and 5 percent chose Black American.

Stefanie Warren, a sophomore business administration major, tells why it does matter what name is used. "Basically they are the same thing. We have been called African-American and Black American, so why do we keep changing?"

The name African-American is very inspiring for Christine Clyne, sophomore political science major. "Our ancestors are from Africa and the first people originated from Africa, and that is something that we can't neglect."

Ramona H. Edelin, president of National Urban Coalition, stated in Ebony Magazine why the name African-American must be claimed. "We must unify. We want African people throughout the world to refer to ourselves as Africans wherever we are in the diaspora. This is our proper geopolitical identification. It is our obligation to reconstruct our culture at this critical point in history so that we can move forward and not be satisfied with one or two people rising to the surface. Calling ourselves African-American is the first step in the cultural offensive. Our cultural renaissance can change our lot in the nation and around the world."

On the opposite side of the

issue are those who do not see the point of being called African-American. The term black is very suitable.

Sophomore Kim Dargan, majoring in broadcast communications, explains how she feels. "I feel that we live in the United States and there are different shades of the color black. African-American sounds like we are all from Africa, and everybody that is black is not from Africa. The people from Africa when they come to the United States can become a citizen of the United States and they are called African-American, and we are from the United States and we are already Americans, and we are black. It would seem to me that we would be called Black American because there are so many different heritages."

Dr. T. J. Jemison, president of the National Baptist Convention U.S.A. INC., gives his opinion in Ebony. "I see no particular need to change. I am comfortable with the term 'Black.' I've gone through changes in the deep south over the word 'Negro.' I fought with the press here in Baton Rouge, La., to write the word 'Negro' with a capital N. Then we got them to go to Black. I don't see any need for me to make any change at this time. African-American is all right for those who like the term. I'm perfectly at ease and accept the term 'Black.' I don't see any need to identify us as 'African-Americans.' I will use what I've been using 'Black.'"

Rivers delivers a rousing address

by Rehan Overton

King Holiday got off to a rousing start this year as unsuspecting students got a jolt of adrenalin during the annual convocation services commemorating the life of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The guest speaker, Mr. Nelson Rivers III, executive director of the South Carolina NAACP, began his address by saying that "I can't think of anyplace I'd want to be than with all my beautiful African-American sisters here at Bennett College."

From that moment on, Rivers captured the attention of everyone with his fiery and passionate words denouncing President Bush's use of Jan. 15 as the deadline for war in the Persian Gulf. "How dare George Bush do that to the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King!" Rivers dubbed Dr. King as the "20th century prophet" and added that if he were alive Dr. King would ask us ardently, "What-cha gonna do?"

Students cheered and applauded Rivers as he conjured up realistic and musical scenarios about college life, male/female relationships, on campus, and the duty of

young African-American women to "walk the high road of excellence." "Command respect from these young men and know who and whose you are! You must love yourself before anyone loves you."

Rivers gave his listeners the 5 C's of leadership: confidence, competence, consistency, compassion and courage. "Our ancestors were the masters of excellence... We don't need anymore trifling black folk!" he said.

Rivers declared that the "King Holiday has been made into a monument instead of the remembrance of a man." Rivers eloquently used a metaphor of a man's search for an eagle amongst birds who didn't know how to fly. "We are eagles," he said. "We are supposed to fly!" Rivers received a very deserved standing ovation.

"We Shall Overcome," the anthem of Dr. King's civil rights and peace movement, rang throughout the chapel as the audience stood, hands grasped in unity, hoping and praying for a more peaceful world, dreaming about the day when the words of the song will finally come true.

"Each One-Reach One" succeeds

by Olivia M. Rowe

When Keturah Morehead, an eighth grade student at Lincoln Middle School, began her tutoring sessions, she was an average student.

However, after achieving a goal to make an "A" in one of her classes, her new goal is to make straight "A's."

Morehead is one of the many children in grades K-12 participating in the "Each One-Reach One" program implemented by the National Black Child Development Institute of Greensboro (NBCDI).

"Each One-Reach One" is a multi-faceted academic enrichment program designed to improve the self-esteem and performance of children who are academically at risk.

The State of North Carolina devised a definition for the term "at risk," according to June Valdes, assistant program director for the NBCDI of Greensboro. "The definition is so broad that it can include any child," said Valdes. "If a child hasn't been on public transportation, that child is considered at risk. We can

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Daughter and Mom are triumphant

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I don't know why, but at that moment something was different, something sizzled inside of me, and I knew that I couldn't allow her to make it up those stairs. Maybe it had been the cold water on my face, or maybe there had just been too many years of silence in that house.

"So, are you going to tell me what's wrong?" I said. I almost choked on my words, or maybe it was just that lump the size of a plum that got stuck in my throat.

She stopped abruptly midway up the stairs and she beamed down on me. I could feel my face getting warm again. I wanted another splash of water. But this time I looked her straight in the eyes; I took the heat. But as I looked into my mother's eyes, I seemed to be looking into something deeper. Maybe it was the little girl inside of her because I saw something I had never seen in her before—weakness.

"I just had a hard day, baby, that's all."

"I know I'm your baby girl, but I'm also a young woman, and if you want to talk, if I've offended you, you can tell me. We can talk about it; you can open up; but the silence, it's killing us, so please, please don't abuse yourself this way," my voice quivered.

"It's just so easy to abuse myself. Everybody else does. Everybody else does all day at work, so I just get used to it. I guess, and I bring it

home with me, and I can't stop, it's easier." I heard her words, and I wanted to say something, but I didn't know what to say. She was almost unaffected by what she had just said, and I knew she was hurting, but she couldn't really feel it anymore. And there was silence, silence bouncing off of her, and me and the walls. Then she took another step, but I couldn't let her go.

"Mommy, if you can't stop abusing yourself, well, could you please stop abusing me. Can we please stop the silence?" I pleaded.

"Abusing you?" At first she looked at me as if I were some kind of enigma, but then something snapped inside of her too, and she started down the stairs. I didn't know how she was feeling, but I wasn't finished. I was going to tell her what I had been harboring for nearly eighteen years.

"I never know what's wrong with you, but you always make me feel like it's my fault, like I'm two years old again. You look at me with those scornful eyes, and it makes me sick, sick physically and mentally."

At that moment I really didn't care how she felt, but I felt triumphant. And I was crying aloud, but not for me, or even for her, but for us, and for what we had accomplished that day, for the hug we shared, and for the breaking of the silence, the shattering of the silence, and for the death of the silence.

Single Mom has strength

by Elizabeth Richardson

The typical life of a teenage girl is filled with slumber parties, jump rope, school and the signs of puberty, but 15-year old LaTonya does not fit this mold.

LaTonya (fictitious name) gave birth to a baby girl when she was 13 and in the eighth grade. The father Eric was 18.

"My mother told me it could happen, but I trusted Eric to be careful," she said.

When she found out she was pregnant, she was already four months along and did not have the money to consider an abortion. She went straight to Eric for advice. At first, he disclaimed paternity, but then he started to plan for the baby.

One of the hardest decisions LaTonya and Eric had to make was how to tell their parents. They agreed Eric should take responsibility. Having endured their parents' castigation, they are now dealing with the ups and downs of parenthood and receiving aid from their parents.

How did it feel to be pregnant and give birth at such a young age? LaTonya said, "When I started showing at first, I was embarrassed because I was the only one, but most of them girls I went to school with had had abortions so after a while it didn't bother me. Even giving birth wasn't all that bad. It was

painful but Eric was there for support and Erica came right out. I guess the hard part came after the delivery and me and Erica came home. Even though my mother and my father and Eric and his parents took a lot of the responsibility, most of it was on me. Between Erica and my school work, I didn't do anything else."

She admits that it was very hard caring for her baby because she was but a baby herself and did not know what she had done to herself and her carefree lifestyle.

Now LaTonya is 15, her ex-boyfriend Eric is 20 and their daughter Erica is 2. Even though she and Eric are not together, he still takes responsibility for his daughter's well-being and he and LaTonya plan for her future. LaTonya feels blessed to have gotten pregnant by a guy like Eric because even though there is a five year span between their ages he has never left her alone in the raising of their daughter.

"Even though we broke up a while back, we are still friends, and he never did not claim Erica as being his, and if he ever showed me he loved me, he showed me by never leaving me alone to care for our daughter," said LaTonya.

LaTonya's day starts at 6 a.m. when she dresses herself for school and Erica for daycare. By 7:30, Eric has picked up Erica, and LaTonya is on her way to school where

she is a member of the honor society and maintains a 3.85 g.p.a. After school there are no extra-curricular activities except feeding and playing with Erica, then putting her to bed, after which LaTonya does her homework. She watches a little TV and goes to bed.

For being 15, LaTonya is very mature. She does not outwardly regret her "very grown-up" lifestyle, saying "God does not put on anyone any more than they can stand. Though I never thought it could happen to me, I am now part of a growing statistic and I am not going to let that keep me down, for my sake and the sake of my daughter."

**You wanted
Spring Break
and now it is here
Get there safely
So you can
celebrate
in good cheer**