

Perspectives

Are we learning different cultural histories?

Student Government Association

By Avery Smart

Is black history, or better yet, African-American history, something that should be celebrated and incorporated within our "American history," or merely disposed of because it's not seen as progressing and protecting "white institutions?" Culture is defined as "the totality of socially transmitted behavior patterns, arts, beliefs and institutions, and all other products of human work and thought characteristic of a community or population."

Why has America failed to embody African-American progressivism in creating an established concept of "American Culture?" Many African-American, Native-American and Latin-American students are viewing American history with a special dislike because it fails to reflect the social, political and economic advancement their ancestors have accomplished. America places emphasis on cultural diversity, but fails to realize that it is a society built along racial lines — so does pluralism, or, taken a step further, cultural pluralism, that exists in society today. Cultural pluralism is the political theory where there are multiple centers of legitimate power and authority. If this is true, then one can state that America is not culturally pluralistic, in that white elitists try to conceal black history to evoke a false sense of nationalism.

Maya Angelou, a phenomenal female writer, wrote, "History, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be unlearned, and if faced with courage, need not be lived." This is a crucial point. America needs to stress the importance of learning the struggles that my Nubian brothers and sisters have endured. Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, Harriet Tubman — the list goes on. If you don't educate, you violate one's ability to learn from the past to create a better future. Black history is not history designated for the under-represented (African-American, Native-American, etc), but history sought for all. In growing from a child to a man, I have been taught to respect white culture — learning the Constitution, learning the national anthem and glorifying

America's forefathers. So, the question I pose to you is, does teaching the "American Dream," a concept established by white elitists, mean glorifying institutions that protected slavery? Why can't white America lift their voices and sing in the glorious anthem of black America? Singing with the harmony of knowing that the victory of cultural diversity has won. Kwame Krumah wrote in his work "Consciencism," "The history of a nation is, unfortunately,

too easily written as the history of its dominant class." Black history must remain an important part of society. Black leaders and activists were

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not only fighting for the rights of one, but for the rights of all (women, poor white individuals, and other racial ethnicities). So when you study my history, black history, visualize it as history not only affecting my status in America, but your role in making society a better place to live. Henry David Thoreau wrote in "A Plea for Captain John Brown," "I am here to plead his cause with you. I plead not for his life, but for his character — his immortal life, and so it becomes your cause wholly, and is not his in the least." So like Henry Thoreau, I am here to make the same plea with UNCA. I plead not only for you to include black history as a part of UNCA's culture, but maintain and reinforce it as a vital source in shaping American tradition.

Letters to the Editor

Funding

Dear Editor,
Your March 16 editorial on a proposed new entrance for the campus touched on many other projects that continue to be high priority for UNCA: the new Highsmith Center, needed building improvements, new sidewalks and bike paths, additional parking and the like. The editorial seemed to assume that what is gained for one project detracts from others. The truth is

that funding for these projects must come from various different sources. Most of the university's funding comes from legislative appropriations — tax dollars that the people's elected representatives authorize us to spend. When they authorize an expenditure, it is for a specific purpose. For example, we cannot spend dollars authorized for operating expenses — salaries, utilities, supplies, and the like — to pay for "capital" items like buildings. And vice versa. Nor can dollars authorized for a specific capital project be

spent for a different capital project. If we had funding appropriated for a classroom building, for example, we could not spend it for a residence hall. In the case of the entrance road, the university is making an effort to obtain some special assistance through the North Carolina Department of Transportation (DOT). Whether DOT will ultimately be able to provide help or not is still to be determined, but one thing is for certain — any funding the university can obtain from

this special source will not take away from other critical projects such as Highsmith. University funding priorities are a legitimate topic for debate. But members of the campus community should recognize that the university cannot wait for the funding of projects to fall into a neat, ideal sequence. It is essential to work on many different priorities at the same time.

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Special assistant to the chancellor

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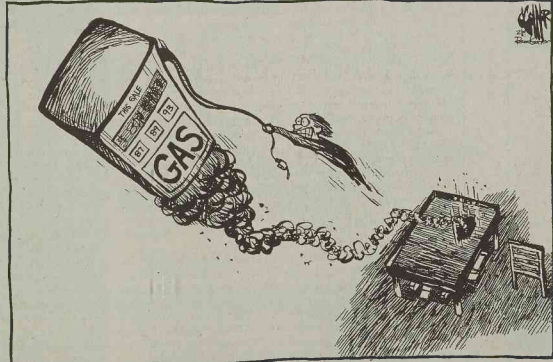
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