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In Perspective

Racism — a powerless word of the past

The word "racism" has lost its power. It is only a shadow of what it once was. This single word embodied 200 years of subjugation, conferred inferiority, back-of-the-bus mentality and white lies. It represented the rage and pain of a people and the shame of a nation. In the 60s and 70s it was a clarion call to action. Now it is simply a word drawing on past strength.

As racism has become less evident people have tended to sweep the troubling issue of race relations under the rug. People have become complacent and comfortable in a time of relative civil peace not known in the 60s or 70s.

In many minds racism has become a thing of the past. An ugly scar that has begun to disappear. Yes, it still evokes memories of lynchings, torn families, out and out discrimination and instances of social injustice. However, these scenarios are not personally familiar to us anymore. These are our grandparents' truths, our forefathers' lives. Lives that we view through jaded eyes with a bittersweet reverence for the past.

Their experiences with bigoted perversion and discrimination was a common bond. It united them.

Our firsthand experience with such said racism is limited to a minority of our generation. Many of us have never been called "Nigger" except by those of our own color. Thus, the issue of racism is not always, if at all, paramount in our lives. The word "racism" has lost its power with us.

So we go day to day without giving it much thought. That is until racism rears its head in our own personal lives. Then we become outraged and ready to act. Also, ready to criticize those who do not rush to support our cause, all the while pointing to the selfless cooperation evidenced in the 60s.

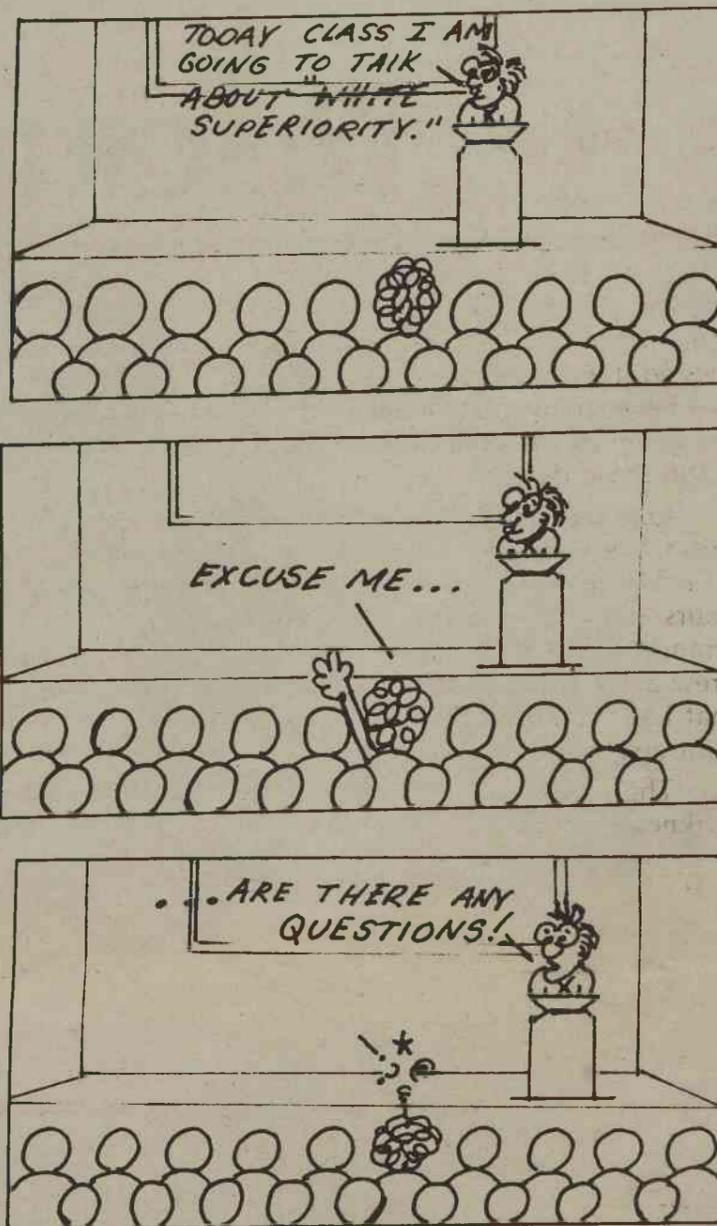
There is a need for more. Racism as an institution may fade and become barely noticeable, but it will never disappear. The attitudes fostered during the time when Jim Crow was the law of the land will persist. To be satisfied now with the current state of race-relations does not do credit to the struggles and hopes of our fathers.

It has been scarcely twenty years since college campuses became racially integrated. It has been scarcely two decades since black men, women and children were hosed down and set upon by police dogs while marching for their civil rights, and barely two years since the police shooting of a black youth led to rioting in Miami. To simply relax and welcome a time of relative civil peace is to let die the dream Martin Luther King, Jr. envisioned for us all.

It is true that many blacks now enjoy a position in society that their grandparents could only hope for. And though the black middle class has made some significant gains, Blacks on the whole still tend to have less educationally, economically, and socially in comparison to whites. Something persists in the institutions of America that inhibits the progress that these more "liberal" times should yield. All is still not equal.

Even here at the University of North Carolina there is an obvious gap between the blacks and whites socially. There is still a need for more tenured black and female faculty. There is still a definite need for more curriculum that deals with the ethnic histories that comprise a significant and essential part of America's history. There is still much to be done.

People need to revitalize their stand on civil rights. Do not let the fight fall only to those who are committed enough to march for more black and women faculty. It is not enough to be willing to act only when an issue directly affects you on a personal level. Don't believe for a moment that racism as a healed wound. The efforts of our fathers and grandfathers were not for themselves. They only hoped that through their concern and perseverance the subsequent generations would be that much better off. That much more able to carry on.



RITA COLSON

Feedback

I enjoyed your article spotlighting Wolita Belvet, a new member of the Varsity Cheerleading squad. Obviously she is a talented young lady who will bring fresh and exciting ideas to the squad.

Even though I enjoyed the article, I was disappointed you did not spotlight, or mention the names of the three other blacks on the squad. In future publications of THE BLACK INK I hope to see articles spotlighting other black members of the Varsity cheerleading squad.

Sincerely  
Nicole C. Singletary

Editor's note:  
The BLACK INK welcomes letters to the editor. All letters should be submitted typed. We reserve the right to edit.



LEON BATES  
pianist

Sunday, Sept. 25  
4:00 pm  
Memorial Hall

Reserved seat tickets  
at Union Box Office  
962-1449

**BLACK INK**  
If blackness can be converted into words and pictures, we intend to do it



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