

Black Ink Celebrates Twenty Years Of Journalism

By Victor E. Blue
Editor-in-Chief

Twenty years ago, amid the social and racial turmoil of the sixties, it began.

During a period when the Black student community had gained a foothold as a segregated South Campus colony; when civil rights' activist Jesse Jackson donned an afro; when UNC's Charlie Scott waged periodic hardcourt battles with John Roche and a lily-white South Carolina basketball team; when inner city riots were more rule than exception, *Black Ink* was born.

The "official newspaper of UNC's Black Student Movement" began in 1969 as the tabloid offspring of an earlier BSM newsletter. The first issue was published in November 1969. Like all Black publications, the Ink started out as a protest paper. Cureton Johnson, the first editor, directed the paper's operations, wrote most of its articles and even took some of its photographs.

"If at all possible," Johnson said, the "BSM's new newspa-

per would be printed in black letters on black background. In essence, Black Ink will do its best to represent the wave of Neo-Pan-Africanism."

The second issue, published and distributed in December of 1969, came on the heels of a successful UNC food workers' strike. The headline streamer read "African People See Every Day as a 'Black Monday' For

prompted UNC's Student Government to freeze the newspaper's funds, so a third issue for 1969-70 failed to appear.

In its early stages, the pages of Black Ink were filled with revolutionary ardor by launching verbal attacks at "The Man". Although Ink did offer some news and feature stories, much of its content was concerned with "telling the man where to go and

engineer of the drastic improvement in the paper's technical and physical renaissance was Valerie Batts (1972-73). Under Batts, Ink became a regular publication and achieved seven regular distribution dates during that school year. "Valerie set standards for Black Ink," Johnson said. "She made the Ink come out so often that the people in Student Graphics couldn't get used to it. They were used to us coming out every blue moon."

The editors that followed Batts, Emma Pullen (1973-74), Mae Israel (1974-75), and Tonya Widemon (1975-76), all maintained the quality of the paper.

In 1975, under the editorship of Tonya Widemon, UNC's Student Government froze the paper's funds again and the Ink was only published five times. "If she'd had the financial support and staff support that she deserved," one editor said, "she would have been the best editor we've ever had."

Instead, that honor must go to
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Cureton Johnson

Liberation." A larger staff was gathered for work on the second issue that made the quality and content "more desirable". Johnson said, "The paper was well received on campus where it was sold for anything from a dime to 25 cents." In the Black community, it was given free.

The paper's militancy and advocacy in the food workers' strike

how to get there" as editor Allen Mask did in his columns from 1970 to 1971.

As the years progressed, the Ink became increasingly more professional, staffing more journalism majors. Yet, the Ink did not lose its militant editorial voice.

According to former editor Allen Johnson (1976-1978), the

Letters To The Editor

To the Editor:

Several UNC Students were sent to the Black Congressional Caucus in Washington, D.C. on Sept. 13-16. To quote from the Daily Tar Heel, "the students include African-American studies majors, members of the BCC planning committee, and students who have demonstrated

black leadership on campus." There was one AFAM major, one person from the BCC planning committee, and three who hold leadership positions in open campus organizations. Since this only equals five, who were the rest?

Let's look at a concrete definition of the word "leader". Ac-

cording to the Oxford-American Dictionary, a leader is a person who has the principal part in the head of a group and whose example is followed. With this definition in mind, I wonder what the selection process was (since this definition was obviously ignored) and what criteria was used. Being an RA does not make you a leader, Winning a pageant does not make you a leader. Reciting Black poetry does not make you a leader. Having a great GPA does not make you a leader. Granted all of these things are positive and great for a resume, but for a leadership conference, I think not.

Out of the thirteen students sent to Washington, eight are in Black Greek organizations. Percentage-wise, this is not demonstrative of the Black leaders on campus since the majority of students who hold viable positions (Student Congress members, officers in the BSM, Student Government) are not in Black Greek organizations. In essence, the Greek students who were sent were eight leaders of each other. To break it down further, of the eight students, seven were of a brother/sister organization. I began to think it may have been a Black Greek Caucus, with a special invitation sent to Alpha Phi Alpha and
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The Black Ink

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