

Assimilators, Pseudo-Negroes, Or Gray, Is It You?

By Joel Winful
Contributor

Hello, my fellow American brothers and sisters of African descent. How many of you out there are Gray, Oreos, Pseudo-Negro, Assimilators, Wanna Be's? Are you an Oreo because you have some white friends? Are you an Oreo because you like Mozart and Sinead O'Connor, Madonna and The Cure; in addition to your standard M.C. Hammer, Janet Jackson and Luther Vandross? Are you Gray because you like to go uptown to Cat's Cradle to catch a reggae band every week or so, but your "really Black" friends don't like reggae, or don't want to spend the money to go? Are you Gray because you live on North Campus and walk to class in a maximum of 4.5 minutes; opposed to South Campus, where all your "really Black" friends catch the 7:50 am but at Chase Cafeteria? Are you Gray because you play Lacrosse, row on the Crew Team, or fence on the Fencing Team; as opposed to playing intramural basketball for Hinton James. Does "really Black" mean limiting yourself to stereotyped activities?

Are you a Pseudo-Negro because of where you are from? By some stroke of misfortune, were you born into a family of middle-class African-Americans? You know, one parent is a teacher and the other works at IBM. Then when your family relocates, IBM helps find you a new house...what, it's in a predominantly white neighborhood?! You would have argued, talked some sense into your parents; they didn't have to live in a \$100,000 house just cause they could afford it! But poor you, you were only seven years old, you had no say in the matter. But isn't economic success and upward mobility one of the dreams of the African-American community? Well, maybe so, but now you're a Pseudo-Negro. Why, because your "really Black" friends say if you're from Atlanta, you should be living in East Point, not Dunwoody, or Marietta, GA. The same thing happens in Boston if you're not from Roxbury, but Burlington, or Cambridge, MA. maybe you're not from the right part of Charlotte; or instead of Raleigh, you're really from Cary, God forbid! What about the fact that you had no say in where you lived, and that your parents income is not your fault.

Nice excuses, but this is still not acceptable, you are not "really Black."

Maybe you are an Assimilator because of the way your voice sounds. Maybe your parents, as a teacher and a businessperson, were not big on talking slang around the house. You didn't hear it from them, and when you would say "Mom, there ain't no more cereal left," she would snap back at you, "There isn't any more cereal." This scenario has continued all your life, so now you don't sound "really Black" either. Your "really Black" friends tell you that you are an Assimilator because you "talk all proper," or "you sound White on the phone."

You may try to be "really Black" all you want to, but to no avail. Your parents may have taught you about African-American history from a young age, and you may have always attended a church with an African-American congregation, but you still don't qualify. You may have come to UNC-CH and taken a double major in Afro-American Studies and Biolog; nope. You might have been extremely active in Anti-apartheid protest movements a few years ago, and a member of the BSM each year; doesn't quite get it! You might have taken alot of your time out to be a Big Buddy to an African-American little boy or girl from Carrboro for the last 3 years. Sorry, civil service, and other attempts to uplift the African-American community do not count.

Unfortunately, many of those you would attempt to convince of your afrocentricity, are ashamed to be "really Black." We've heard it all before, "I'm not really that black...Look, I'm lighter than some white people, girl." Ashamed to be African-American; "I don't know nothin' about Africa...Look, my grandmother is Cherokee, and that Africa stuff was 300 years ago." Some of them don't want no parts of Afro-American; "Homie please, I ain't even sportin' an Afro, you might have to call me a Hightop Fade-American, but I'm not down with the Afro." Brothers and Sisters? Please, don't even try it!

So what's up with that, is the "brother man" really a "brother man" or are we just the "other man?" By the term "other man," I don't mean white, I mean...what are we: non-black, non-white, American masses? Are we just a sorry bunch of non-racial pride havin', checkin' the box marked "other," sell-outs, in African-

American disguises?

What, do you think you are a black person because you know how to get an attitude? Do you think you are a black person because you speak all the hyped, stoopid def, latest slang, when you're on the yard or skippin' Spanish class, coolin' with your boys on the wall, watchin' all the females? Is that how you define being a black person...alright, bet! Maybe it's more important that your social calendar is correct. You get three credits for attending each Great Hall Jam and each step show you go to. If you haven't missed but two Jams or Step Shows after four years, you get your "really Black" merit badge! Or is it all about pledging? Do you want to prove you are Black by pledging 'cause some of your friends say, "yo, you're not really Black till you're Greek!" Look, black fraternities and sororities are good. They tend to bring out a strong sense of racial identity in their members and they help the community with the service projects that they do. Yet, remember, pledging is for some people; these organizations are not the yardsticks of racial pride that the rest of us have to measure up to.

I am making a plea to African-American students at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to relax on this "he/she is gray" name calling business. You are not a member of the "really Blacks" sent here to judge and make up gossip about your fellow African-American classmates. What of those African-American students at traditionally Black colleges that assume that all of the African-American students here at Carolina are gray or Oreos just because we go to school here. Many of us have heard the attacks before from friends, "you're trying to be White, going to that white school." We know they are wrong in their accusations. Sometimes being at a predominantly white college actually brings out your racial identity more, because you are forced to be aware of it constantly and to sometimes defend it as well. So why must we try to tear down our fellow classmates in the same misguided manner?

Who are you to decide what is "really Black?" You probably need to check yourself out as well, if you have been listening to what this article has been saying. If you are a racially proud African-American you will seek to learn about your culture to enhance your knowledge. Also, being proud of your African-American heritage does not mean rejecting all other cultures. You owe it to yourself to understand and benefit from everything out there of some value.

Well, what should be done about those people (and there are some) who really are Wanna Be's? If some African-Americans are ashamed of their racial identity, and tell you that they wish they were White and they try to reject other African-American brothers and sisters, then they have a serious problem called "self hatred." Why not challenge them on their beliefs, try to help and enlighten them if you can. But, if you are just one of those "really Black" perpetrators, then don't even dare to criticize them.

Remember, great minds talk about ideas, average minds talk about events, and small minds talk about people...or something like that; and "a mind is a terrible thing to waste." In other words, you need to worry about your own affairs and stop trying to judge people. Stop gossiping and start studying, before you flunk out of this funky joint.

THINK *Black Ink*...

Black Ink will hold a staff meeting today in room 226 of the Carolina Union at 6:30. All interested UNC students and staff are welcome.

Today!!