

Sex And Love At UNC: The War Continues

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Overall, African-American students at UNC have developed strong ties to each other because of our "relative scarcity" on a predominantly white campus. We have addressed our need to be acknowledged as a powerful presence, we have fought (and are still fighting) to be treated fairly and equally without overt or subtle prejudice and racism and most importantly, we are working to fulfill our needs for greater unity and greater power so that each individual African-American student is able to form his or her own self-identity.

For an individual student to form a self-identity, he or she needs more than fine-tuned academic skills and talents, leadership skills in various organizations, athletic ability and so on. Everyone has a need for companionship, love, support, understanding and true caring from a member of the opposite sex. Having a relationship is an integral part of preparation for long-term relationships after graduation. For one to avoid commitment to a long-term relationship is to deprive himself or herself of a life-shaping, growth-inducing experience.

This is not to say that relationships are necessary for one's existence and that all relationships are wonderful. It is inevitable that hurt feelings and lost loves will happen to most of us at one point or another in our lives. Through it all, relationships help us to grow as individuals and ultimately as a people. Society begins with the originators of life—a man and a woman. This relationship should be cultivated and preserved throughout life. Unfortunately, there seems to be some disillusionment and lack of awareness of this crucial truth among African-American males and females on this campus.

Let's start from the beginning where the core problem is most clearly seen when you walk on the yard around 12:30 p.m.— the infamous ratio. The proportion of African-American females to African-American males is exceedingly high. This becomes even more evident when you go to a weekend jam and you observe groups of five to seven females standing around two or three males or when you see groups of females sitting together at a dance basically isolated within the crowd and looking as if they are trying to find just a few familiar male faces to joke around and socialize with. The bad part is that some of our men take advantage of this bleak situation. According to a female sophomore, "Guys know they are in demand. They play on this, and we don't mind because we want that attention."

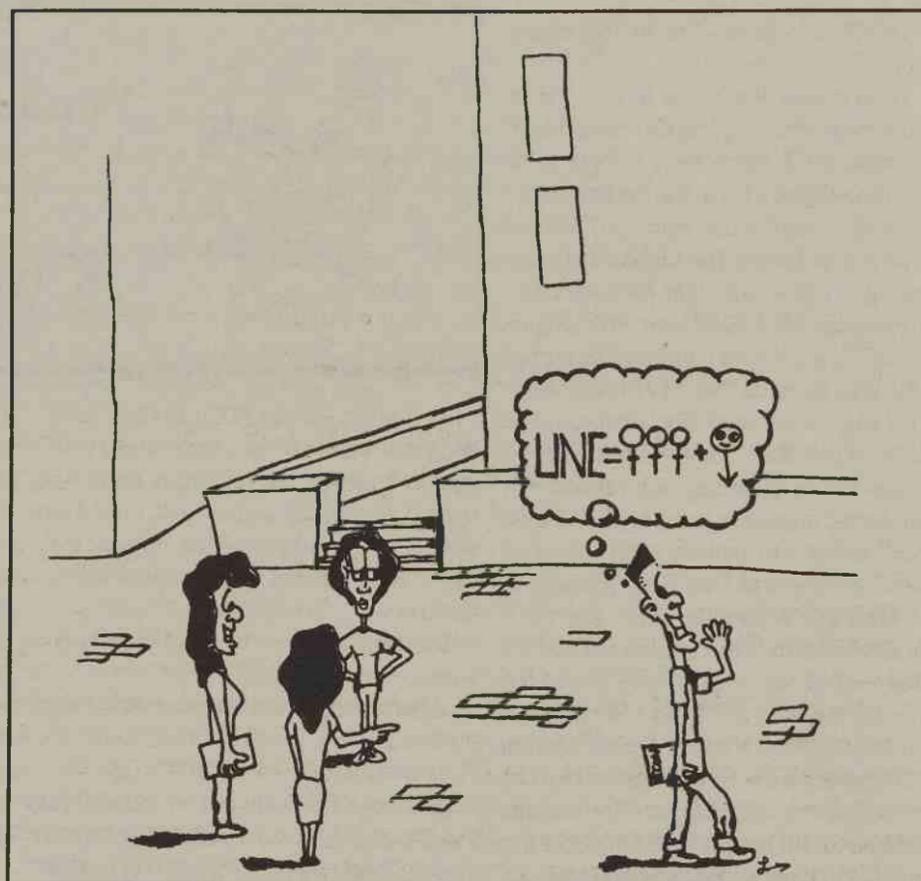
This "phenomena" is all too evident among those males who are automatically "in demand" because of their social status

in the university community—the fraternity brothers and athletes. These males are usually the most popular or sought after because of the organization or clique that they are affiliated with. Too often, many sisters have a preference for these types. Instead of seeking out a companion because of the person that he is, they seek him out because of what he represents and because of the potential popularity of being seen with someone of his social status. This results in a subtle competition among African-American females. They not only compete for a companion from a small population of males, but they also compete for certain males within this small pool, thus excluding the not-so-popular males from what is seen as the best available men.

It also seems like some African-American men are not particularly interested in maintaining a serious relationship with one woman. As one student noted, "As soon as my friend joined [the fraternity], he began to feel like he was missing something by staying with one girl when there were so many other girls on campus. So he ended a two-year relationship. His reasoning—'why spend all my time with one girl when I can have three or four?'"

As evidenced by the above statement, the unbalanced proportion of females to males on this campus has far-reaching consequences on the behavior and thinking of both sexes. This ratio problem, however, is still not a justifiable reason for some of the African-American men to go from woman to woman, nor is it reason enough for females to set their sights on those men who, because of their status, are virtually unattainable because of the stiff competition. As a people, it is necessary for us to get serious about what such attitudes will cost us in the future when we are ready to settle down and start families. We already know that the status of the African-American family in the United States is tenuous at best, so it follows that it is self-defeating to continue jeopardizing the crucial man/woman relationship from which families originate by such divisive behaviors.

Furthermore, African-American students on this campus and as a whole have a tendency to base virtues and looks on complexion. It seems as though there are certain types who gravitate to each other. Those who are considered to be "fine and good-looking" naturally seek out those whose looks are 'comparable' to theirs. Our light-complexioned sisters who have the long, thick wavy hair are automatically seen as "fine" based on those two attributes. Our brown-complexioned sisters are often deemed not as "good-looking." Nothing infuriates a brown-complexioned woman more than the phrase "You're cute for a dark-skinned girl." This asinine statement



encompasses all the myths and beliefs that the eurocentric culture has imbedded into the minds of our people—the lighter you are, the better you are (Simply stated, "if you're light, you're all right, if you're brown, you'll stay around, if you're black, get back"). This is not condemning the long-haired, light-complexioned female for her attributes and neither is it advocating bitter feelings and animosity from her brown-complexioned counterpart, for all African-American women are beautiful. We should all take off our rose-colored glasses and see the dichotomy that exists on this campus between the sisters. Our sisters should unite, instead of divide, lift each other up, instead of putting each other down, progress, instead of regress.

Lastly, but by no means the least important aspect of male/female relations, is sex. Sex is considered to be a normal part of relationships on this campus and everywhere else. But as we all know, sex has its pitfalls as well as its pleasures. With STDs rampant, everyone must use extra caution and discretion when deciding who to become intimate with. Also, where there are a greater number of single people than there are couples, the occurrence of sexual relations with a variety of people is very high. Sadly enough, most sexual encounters do not end in a serious relationship. It doesn't do any good for people to preach "don't have sex until you get married" in that although its honorable, it is a very difficult thing to do in this day and age. The most practical advice is to have sexual relations with only one person and try to make that

relationship work instead of bed-hopping. All too often, males and females fall into a vicious cycle of meeting someone, barely getting to know them for two or three weeks and then begin having sex. The "relationship" eventually ends after a short period of time and the same thing happens over and over again and the persons involved may become labeled as "easy." It is especially hard for African-American females to escape this labeling because of the double standard that continues to exist and because of the infamous ratio where one male can be involved with many females. The female who has needs for companionship and attention sometimes settles for this second-best arrangement.

This second-best arrangement can be alleviated when we as a collective body of young, intelligent, and proud African-American men and women unite. We must realize how much we intensify the infamous ratio problem through taking advantage of it, competing for partners, by using complexion as a basis for determining attractiveness, and by having multiple sexual partners instead of one person. By continuing to aggravate the problem with these behaviors we ultimately prevent ourselves from attaining a positive self-identity through a rewarding relationship, building potential marriages, families, and a brighter future for our people.

The future of the African-American people is inextricably bound to the future of the man/woman relationship.

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