

# Endsights:



*At that moment, I felt that one white person actually tried to understand the pain blacks must face daily. For these brief seconds, I was at peace with the world.*

By Chandra McLean  
Staff

I entered through the large wooden door at approximately 3:38 p.m. My seat at the table where I normally sit was taken (as usual) so I had to sit across from Dian. Of course, it didn't bother me at all to sit next to Dian. As a matter of fact, I actually enjoyed it. We talk about so many things in between breaks. I forgot to mention that this location that I am referring to is Davis library (where I work daily for a couple of hours) and Dian is my supervisor.

But back to the story, Dian and I have great conversations. Regardless of the fact that she is a middle-aged caucasian woman and I am a 19-year old black woman, our discussions are absolutely limitless. We talk about issues ranging from Madonna's bleached hair to the controversial statues in front of Davis Library to the Vietnam War. Our talks never cease to amaze me.

Well, this particular day, I was very amazed by our conversation. Our discussion began when I told Dian about my acceptance into the School of Journalism. She was very happy to hear about my accomplishment, and she let me know this by explaining the importance of good language and verbal skills. She explained that when one goes out to get a job, he or she must not only be able to sell themselves by appearance and good posture, but also by being able to conduct themselves correctly during an interview. I nodded in agreement.

Dian and I went on to talk about things such as job acquisitions and my future. I told Dian that I was worried about whether or not I would receive the job that I want above all others—to be a well-versed and distinguished lawyer at a reputable law firm. Dian tilted her head pensively for a moment, as if enveloped in her own thoughts, and then she replied, "It's all about taking risks." I looked at her for a moment, her dark hair falling casually over her forehead. Her eyebrows were raised in a fashion that said to me "look, Chandra, I really mean business." I replied, "What do you mean by it being a risk?"

Knowing already ahead of time what my question would be, she positioned herself comfortably in her chair and organized her thoughts. "You see, Chandra, our system [in America] is made up in a way that if you are white, you know no boundaries- but if you are black, they [whites] try to limit you. Our system is run by old white men with old ideologies about the way things should be who sit back in fancy suits and give orders. "It's wrong, and I know it is wrong," she added, "but that's the way that it is."

Dian went on to say that it does not have to always be that way. "You can go out and get that job that you want at that law firm, and you can go in there with the attitude

that you are better than those whites who are trying to pull you down."

At this remark, I argued that the one major thing that turned me off about firms was that so many of them hire "token blacks," which are normally no more than three in number so that they won't be harassed for not hiring minorities. I explained that I want to be hired for my abilities, not my blackness. Dian answered, "If that is the case, then you get out there and you take that job as a token black. You can work your way up in the company, and with your acquired position, you can bring many other blacks into the company with you. Look at how much can happen with something that at first seemed all wrong. Chandra, this is one of many ways to give your people the help that they need in order to get where they want to go." I replied, "But I have no guarantees that I will move up in the company even if I do accept the job!"

Dian gave me a firm stare, and replied in a low and very slow tone, "That, Chandra, is what I meant by you having to take a risk. There are no promises out there [in the world], yet, there are many possibilities, and if you do not take that job, you will never know what your possibilities could have been. If you are not happy with your mobility at your job, go to another job that is giving you what you want. With a college degree and excellent verbal skills, you have several options, so use them! Learn to exploit the system the way that it is trying to exploit you. Get all that you can while you can, and use it to help other blacks."

Dian began explaining to me about her son who is presently working at a major bank. She told me that he has not even completed college yet, but he has moved up dramatically at the bank in only a short period of time—and is still climbing. Dian ended this scenario by saying, "I told my son that when he is in charge of hiring, and it so happens that he must choose between a white and a minority with equal qualifications, I told him to choose the minority because the minority needs that opportunity. The white applicant can always go elsewhere and find a job much easier. I told him to give that minority the chance. I am tired of seeing our whole economic system ruled solely by old, white men, everyone else needs an equal chance."

I stared at her for a moment without speaking, and then my thoughts began to drift off and become lost in my own personal mental utopia. I envisioned what life in the United States would be like if everyone of every race thought like Dian. At that very moment, While suspended in thought, I was amazed at the anger and frustration that this one woman was emitting regarding the unequal treatment and the injustices of our society. At that moment, I felt that one white person actually tried to understand the pain that blacks must face daily. For those brief seconds, I was at peace and happy with the world.

## Activism: More Than Just A Word

The statues, the defaced Gantt poster, the note on Laura Anderson's car, a racist curriculum, a culturally ignorant administration, an alienating environment—a sample of the issues that African-American students have confronted in this semester alone. Our community has flooded the DTH with letters to the editor, staged study-ins and been very vocal about our discontent and dissatisfaction with UNC's current treatment of African-Americans. But still the feelings of frustration persist. Many African-Americans ask, "What else can we do?" The typical response is, "We need to be more active!!" But before you offer activism as a solution first think about what activism really involves.

Activism means being informed about the issues. The biggest enemy of activism is misinformation. Our predecessors in previous black movements didn't just "get more active" they planned, they researched, they strategized, they organized. The Black Power Movement didn't begin with a few inspiring words from Malcolm X. The seeds were planted years before by thousands of people who committed themselves to consistently fight racial oppression. The key word here is consistently. If misinformed activism doesn't defeat you, inconsistency will. Activism goes beyond declaring a study-in. If a hundred and twenty people make a commitment to stage a study-in, then a hundred and twenty people, not forty, should be involved in the study-in. If two hundred African-Americans are upset about the statues, then two hundred African-Americans should be at a statue forum, not fifteen.

Activism does not begin nor end after a particular event. The Civil Rights Movement didn't start with Rosa Parks and didn't end with the March on Washington. It was a daily movement in the minds and activities of its participants. Martin Luther King Jr., Ella Baker, Fannie Lou Hamer, James Farmers merely facilitated the thoughts and feelings of their people. Likewise, the Black Student Movement, Collegiate Black Caucus, Network for Minority Issues, and Students for the Advancement of Race Relations only organize your thoughts and feelings. If those views are not constant, then neither is the outward manifestation of the activism.

As many of you may know, a manager in Chapel Hill's Rite-Aid recently stated that black hair care products are placed near the cashier for "security reasons." According to the Rite-Aid regional director, chain policy does not dictate this practice. Therefore, we are victims of one person's racist assumptions. Why shop where you are considered a security hazard because your skin is black? The boycott of Rite-Aid is our most recent opportunity to be active. Go beyond not just shopping in Rite-Aid, inform others, call the regional director or the infinitely wise manager of Rite-Aid.

To affect change is going to take a lot more than making our concerns known on campus. Everyone has to give a lot more, The Black Student Movement as an organization is ready and waiting to give more? Are you?— Sabrina Evans, president of the Black Student Movement

