

# UNC-- Not A Productive Climate For People Of Color

By Laura Anderson  
Contributor

What the hell is going on? I'm sure that I am not the only one who feels frustrated. Please bear with me; this is going to be somewhat of a stress reliever. But this will not be in vain—I hope that everyone will gain some insight into what can be done to alleviate some of these problems.

Overall, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is not a productive climate for people of color (I use the term 'people of color' as a way to include, Blacks—of American, African and Caribbean descent. We *must* remember that we have brothers and sisters that are all over this world—including South Africa, Latin America and Europe.). I do realize that this is a very broad statement, nevertheless, it is a fact.

Let me expand on my point.

"The Student Body" first comes to mind. Unfortunately, what we are going through now is a retroactive review process that should have happened oohh, I'd say about 5 years ago?! The administration was too close-minded to see that those structures (I will not label them as art) would be offensive to a large portion of UNC. Measures have been taken now to raise the awareness of the administration. Protests, study-ins, lone protestors, petitions, meetings with the Chancellor, forums— what else are concerned students supposed to do? In addition, it is not just the students that want the statues moved, but professors, alumni and area residents. I was serving my shift as a lone protestor this past Thursday when an older, White gentleman approached me and said, "I'm glad you are out here. I feel that these statues have already been here too long. When I was here as an undergraduate and graduate student in the late 1970's and early 1980's, this university was the most racist in the country—as far as its policies, curriculum and administrators. I come back here to visit often, and I feel as if nothing has changed." I responded to him, "Write a letter to the Chancellor to let him know how you feel." The gentleman answered back, "He's the most racist of them all." The Carolina alumnus just walked away. Mind you I am sitting here with my mouth open wishing I had a tape recorder. He walked towards the library doors and made a beeline back to me. The gentleman returned to say, "But you know who is doing the most damage to this University." I asked, "Who?" He responded, "The bitch.... Susan Ehringhaus," and walked away. As I sat there, I had to think that there must be so many people who feel this way.

Another issue that illustrates the lack of multicultural understanding on this campus is the curriculum. In order to graduate from

this institution one must pass a swim test and attend an Honor System seminar—but there is no requirement for learning about people who are different from yourself. What is going to happen when some of these close-minded people gain some kind of power in this world? Can you imagine the effect that an individual can have once they attain some level of leverage or power over another person? For example, an English major can receive a degree without ever reading Langston Hughes, Toni Mor-

(Blacks) are a security threat. But other (White) hair care products are placed on the far end of the store's wall. Does this mean that those who purchase White hair care products do *not* pose a problem for security. If *all* of the merchandise in Rite-Aid is magnetically tagged to beep as someone walks through the door with it, then there is no need to have such obviously racist measures in the procedure which Rite-Aid uses to stack their shelves.

My last topic to gripe about is that ra-

*"Continue to protest the statues to get them moved. Ask your teachers why they do not educate the class about the great Blacks that have contributed to history, science and the arts...Do not be apathetic or ambivalent."*

rison or Chinua Achebe. What a crime! The only way someone can be exposed to such prolific authors is to take the initiative to read them on their own or a class designed specifically for literature of people of color. Such classics should be part of any literature syllabus— there needs to be major reform.

Still another point-- why can't Blacks wear anything they want? You should not followed, frisked or arrested because you are wearing a bulky coat. Many Black males have been approached in various Harris Teeter Supermarkets and around the campus because the police officers and security guards immediately find them suspicious. Does the University community realize exactly how humiliating this is? To be prejudged by your appearance alone. In addition to this, the manager of the Rite-Aid on Franklin Street claims that Black hair care products are placed by the cashier's area because the people that purchase them

is not limited to the boundaries of this campus. Well, of course, you might say. But please bear with me. As you all know, a note was left was on my car stating, "We will not have another nigger Queen." That was during Homecoming, but a couple of weeks later I come home and find my car with a flat tire. No nails, no slashes, but the stem was pulled off the tire. Mind you, in order to get to the stem of my tire, one must remove the hubcap. Obviously, this was no accident; I reported the incident to all of the proper authorities and fixed the tire. Okay, maybe it was a fluke. L.L. Cool J and I say, "We don't think so." But even recently, trouble still abounds. My friend walks to my car to drive to Winston-Salem for a very important interview and what does he find? A flat tire. This time caused by a knife. Fortunately, we acted quickly and my friend got to his interview on time.

To drive this point home, I shall let you read a letter that was mailed to me.

Dear Laura:

Congratulations on becoming our new Homecoming Queen. Hope you get a chance to come often.

I'm certainly sorry you feel the way about race that you do as most white people like blacks if they could know them better. They find many blacks distant & unfriendly. Also certain customs puzzle them such as blacks always riding 8 or 9 to the car, the cluster of various dolls and paraphernalia hanging from the rear view mirror is also a puzzle to whites.

Perhaps you and I could get to know each other better and you could explain these things to me. Your name Laura is a common name but some black girls seem to have names of uncertain origins such as Bolusia, Orlinia, Ariporteen etc.

Hoping that we can become better acquainted Please write soon.

Sincerely,  
Helen Wales  
2400 Dartmouth Lane  
Elm City NC 27893

You can imagine my reaction! Believe me, she will be educated. It amazes me that a person would have the guts to write a letter and send it to me.

By now, you can see what role we must play in trying to change all of this. We must take decisive action in order to put such troubling issues as these to an end. Continue to protest the statues to get them moved. Ask your teachers why they do not educate the class about the great Blacks that have contributed to history, science, literature and the arts. Wear whatever you want, and if "authorities" try to harass you, get their full name, badge number and file a report. A week or two later follow up and make sure that your report was received and action taken. Boycott Rite-Aid until this racial discrimination is ended. Report all incidents to the proper authorities, agencies and the Black Student Movement. Do not be apathetic or ambivalent. Get involved because you can make a difference as an individual— but an even more powerful impact can be made if we all work together.

Think Black Ink... On Monday, January 14

Our First Issue In The New Year!!!