

Solid Transition

that he must truly believe in it, for look at the variety of skin tones among blacks in America today. There have been statements issued by many white slave owners who hoped to "better" the African American people by raping our black women, often in the presence of black men, forcing his white sperm into Mother Africa. And yet his utter hypocrisy led to thousands of lynching of black men over the real or fantasized rape of white women.

It would appear, then, that whites would like to reap the benefits of black people and culture, but would like you to keep your hands out of their cookie jar. This, inevitably, led many of us to think the white America is better. Put more loosely, some confused brothers and sisters believed "white is right."

Thus we have those among us whose goal is to be accepted by whites, and that usually means giving up all that is Afrocentric and embracing all that is Eurocentric. This initiates the

demise of the proud sons and daughters of Africa and the birth of the shuffling, doddering Uncle Toms and Aunt Tomasina's.

But history has proven that the white man's Protestant Work Ethic does not apply to the African American. Blacks have worked hard, from slavery to sharecropping to this very day. Yet the promise of the fulfillment of the American Dream are discovered to be empty, devoid of content, as the cold hand of American reality slaps the black man's face.

Yes, blacks do work hard! Come home with me and I'll show you a place where twenty to thirty black men, young and old, stand huddled in the cold, small hours of the morning next to a dirty wooden sign which reads, "Laborer's Wanted." Stand with me and watch the white construction foreman drive up in his truck, get out, examining the potential workers. Watch the black men stand erect, chest pushed out, trying to look as strong and sturdy as physically possible. Watch the white man pick his men and load them into the back of the truck,

like animals. Watch the other black men as the truck rolls away, heads hung low in disappointment, but waving, knowing that tomorrow they will be up again and ready work.

Stereotypes are so hard to break because their is a grain of truth in them all. You can always point to one example and say, "See! I told you they were like this." And sometimes, it is easier to live under the guise of a stereotype than to reach out for freedom and self-determination. But we must be strong enough to be who we are and proud enough to show it without insecurity. Eldridge Cleaver wrote about this in his work, *Soul on Ice*. One can hear the humanity within him cry out when he writes "We shall have our manhood. We shall have it or well shall level this world in an attempt to gain it."

How does this apply to you, college freshman? Well, at a liberal white institution such as Carolina, it is so easy to get caught up in the atmosphere, so easy to get drawn in, so easy to forget who you are. Because success seems to fall unto your white schoolmate, it may be tempting to adopt his Eurocentric world view. For some, this sort of self-delusion seems to work for them. They are called "oreo's", "grey", and many other things, but clearly their success is at the expense of other blacks. They are the ones who are embraced because they are not threatening, because they are "different" or "not like the others." However, the costs of self delusion is the heavy burden which weighs on the conscious, a burden which each of these individuals must bear. For some, the burden becomes crushing and castrating, and to heavy to carry.

Please! Do not feel as though you must assimilate into the White Cultural Center called UNC-Chapel Hill. Feel free to be what you want to be, to do what you want to do. Embrace self-determination, for without it, you will wander aimlessly, a stranger to yourself. Let us view the melting pot theory in an Afrocentric light like the Rev. Jesse Jackson. We, along with the other nationalities, mix like a stew in America. But the ingredients, although blending together, still retain some of their distinct, original flavors and characteristics. The cubes of meat, still brown, retain the flavor of

Welcome
Class of 1995!

meat. The carrots, still orange, retain their Vitamin A. The pieces of tomato, albeit a little bit softer, still retain their redness and acidic bite. The potatoes, not so firm anymore, still are starchy as ever. We, the ingredients, blend and come up with a wonderfully exciting cultural mix, yet we can still recognize the source of each cultural tidbit. Again, I turn to Baldwin, for said it best when he wrote: "The black and the white deeply need each other here if we are to become a nation—if we are really, that is, to achieve our identity, our maturity, as men and women." Let them not carve Europe upon your African Masks.

For the Young Ladies

I could not finish this article without saying a few words to the females. Ladies, we all know how few young, upwardly mobile black men there are out there. More importantly, I would think, is that you ladies outnumber us men at Carolina many times over. Therefore, you may feel a little bit lonely because there simply are not enough good men to go around. You may see certain brothers dating light-skinned or white women exclusively, and that may get you down (or it may not depending on your complexion!). But do not allow these confused brothers to dictate your emotions. Do not let these confused brothers to force you to adopt Eurocentric beliefs, styles and gestures. Be yourself and the rest will follow. An excerpt from Virginia Williams speaks directly to this issue and I would like to share it with you: "Black woman in a

blonde wig. 'So tired. Been trying for over 400 years to meet white standards of beauty, to match black with blonde, black with white. Prisoned in by too tight girdles, too tight bras, too tight shoes. So tired!...So tired of trying to press my fleshy lips into thin lines, to change the color of my skin from dark to light, to capture the Atlantic Ocean coolness in my smile. So tired!' So tired...until one day, in feminine fury—and black rebellion—she snatched the wig from her wooly head, screaming 'damnit!' and hurled it into the greedy flames. And further fed them with her bleaches and creams, false eyelashes, too tight lipsticks, too tight shoes, bras and girdles. Alas, passion spent, she stood unclad in ebony splendor, soft full lips, natural hair, the sun of Africa in her smile. And she was tired no more." Get the picture?

Final Words

My fingers now ache from typing so much, but I feel as though I have given you all a little bit more than what you came in with. I have so much more I want to say, but I think I'll save it for another article on another day. By the way, did you notice that I never mentioned anything about school and adjusting to the rigors of college coursework? I did not want to take on too much this time. But just remember why you are here at Carolina. And if you do not know why, let me give you a little hint: TOGETHER AN EDUCATION!

Thanks for bearing with me on this long meditation. Good luck and again, welcome to Carolina!

