

# Housekeeper Says Protest Causes Tension, Spying

Recently, UNC's housekeepers brought their grievances to the University community via the campus media. Their outspoken leader, Marsha Tinnen, a housekeeper in the School of Social Work, explained her colleagues' current situation to Ink Staff Writer Tiffany Ashhurst on Thursday.

**BLACK INK:** What position are the housekeepers in now?

**TINNEN:** We are halfway to the Step 3 grievance and we will be more familiar with the specifics once (housekeepers and University officials) talk about more legal action.

**INK:** What were the most influential tactics that made the University officials take notice?

**TINNEN:** By letting them know that we are not going to give up.

**INK:** What were some of the (concessions) that University officials agreed to grant you?

**TINNEN:** Chancellor Hardin said in the newspaper (The Daily Tar Heel) that he was going to send a lobbyist to the General Assembly to lobby for more pay. But, I haven't seen any action taken. The University itself has to deal with the

fair treatment and the education of the housekeepers, but they have not commented about that.

**INK:** Have you thought of any new ways to try and get the grievances resolved?

**TINNEN:** Through the students, we are able to do more. Also, 35 more housekeepers are willing to help with the fight. They can help us with various things and help take the pressure off. The housekeepers and students can split up into different groups and focus on different aspects of the grievances. Some can research the money part while others can research the education part. That way we can get more done.

**INK:** What are the other organizations involved?

**TINNEN:** We have support from the Chapel Hill-Carrboro NAACP, Students for the Advancement of Race Relations, the Black Student Movement, Campus Y, Feminist Alliance, State Employees Association of North Carolina-District 35, Student Environmental Action Coalition, and the executive branch of Student Government.

**INK:** How was the (Jan. 22) rally?

**TINNEN:** The rally went well, and everyone said we did well. At the rally, we submitted the step 3 grievance. Laurie T. Charest, associate vice-chancellor of human resources, was there, but before we finished she left. We wanted to give the grievance to her but had to give it to the secretary.

**INK:** How are the housekeeper's supervisors reacting to the situation?

**TINNEN:** They don't like the situation at all. They don't like the fact that we are carrying out our plans.

**INK:** Has there been more tension as a result of what's happened?

**TINNEN:** There has been a lot more tension. Supervisors will do silly things like write people up for no good reason. Now that they are aware of who is involved in the grievances, they try to spy on us. They are always snooping and telling things to each other about us. One time I went to the Campus Y on break time and the supervisors knew where I was. It's none of their business where I go on my break time. They say and do these things to intimidate us. While others act like nothing has ever happened.



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**INK:** Of all the grievances, which are the most important if you couldn't have all the grievances met?

**TINNEN:** The most important are the pay wages; and we want them to do something about our "Mickey Mouse" supervisors. Then it would be better.

**INK:** What do you see as far as the future of the housekeepers are concerned?

**TINNEN:** We need to get through the step 3 grievance so we can get things laid down better. I want the University officials to come down on our supervisors hard so they can really see what's happening around them. Those supervisors have blinders on. We would also like students and housekeepers to pair up so they can keep in touch with each other and write down documentation of the things that have happened. This way more students can be involved.

## Media Issues:

### Despite What TV Tells You, Drugs Are Not a Black Thing

One of the missions of the Carolina Association of Black Journalists has been to explore and address those concerns and issues that may be of particular interest to the minority community. A concern that frequently gains our attention is the portrayal of minorities in the news.

A well-known columnist once heard a child raise the question, "Are blacks the only ones who use drugs?" What would prompt a child, who would seem more apt to ask questions like, "Mommy will you buy me this...?", to pose such a question? The answer is simple. Since children spend a great deal of time watching television, they are likely, in between cartoon

shows, to see a report on the growing drug problem existing in our country. Because children often see on television drug usage in the black community, they are prone to believe that black people are the only ones who use and push drugs.

This couldn't be further from the truth. Drug usage is an ailment of all races, but there seems to be an overwhelming desire for the media to focus on the among blacks community. Sorry to disappoint you America, but this time it's not just a "black thing." If a child is led to question whether or not drugs are an exclusively black concern, then there is obviously something wrong with popular news coverage.

When children see unbalanced coverage on their TV sets, it affects the way they view the rest of the black community. The black drug users they see on television may become for them a representation of all blacks. Our children must be made aware of the fact that drugs are a problem everywhere, and that other people in addition to blacks need help in solving it. The news media need to place less emphasis on the drug crisis as it relates to blacks, and focus more on the drug war as it affects society.

There is another portrayal of blacks that is common in news coverage. We can all recall seeing a breaking news story on television

during which the reporter solicits comments from an eyewitness or a neighbor. Why do stations often choose a brother who cannot articulate well?

"We seen 'dem, they be doin' dat all de time!" That's embarrassing! Although reporters don't always know beforehand if a person possesses proper language skills (and sometimes my people, we don't always show that we do) they do have the technology to edit later. The reporter's goal should not be to insult those who cannot speak "proper English." The point is that the people in the news media need to be more conscious of the sound bites they choose because they are sometimes damaging to

the image of the black community.

What should we do to remedy these obvious problems? First of all, there needs to be more blacks in the newsroom who will be able to catch these problems before the public is given the news. Second, reporters need to be more sensitive of their portrayal of blacks and of the lasting impression that their images can leave. If these steps are taken, our children will begin to see a more positive reflection of blacks in society.

The Media Issues writer was Melchee Tate