

"A Classic Example of a Date..."

Rape.

Many Americans are rolling the word around on their tongues these days in light of recent trials involving William Kennedy Smith and Mike Tyson. Perhaps the blinding glare of camera flashes and media hype has robbed a few of their ability to see important issues, but some of the discourse has been somewhat unsettling. People, as they are wont to do, have wasted their energies exchanging verbal blows on plenty of fake topics, while ignoring the key issues.

This month's media flavor is ex-boxing champ Tyson who was convicted for raping an 18-year-old beauty contestant. Oddly, the primary area of debate seems to be whether or not Tyson raped the woman. Was she a legitimate victim, or just a revengeful woman scorned? This is a typical example of a non-issue. Presumably, only two people on the planet know what happened in Tyson's hotel room that fateful night, and they have told conflicting tales; at this point, "debate" should logically end for the rest of us. This American tendency to endlessly argue the unprovable also found vent during the Clarence Thomas confirmation hearings and the Smith trial as well.

A more important matter concerns U.S. attitudes about rape and its numerous, daily victims. Specifically, more people need to address the outlandish notion that a woman is somehow responsible for her own rape if she leads a certain lifestyle or behaves in a particular manner. Even some women have questioned the legitimacy of a rape charge leveled by a woman that would accompany a lusty athlete to his hotel room in the early morning. Here again surfaces a pseudo-issue. If Tyson did commit the violent crime of rape, he is totally wrong and she is 100 percent in the clear — regardless of what she was wearing, where she was at the time, and what kind of sexual overtures she might have made. If a person does not give consent, and another person chooses to ignore this refusal, it is rape every time.

The few conclusions I did draw from the Tyson trial are seemingly contradictory and unsatisfying, which make them all the more valid to me. Life is never black and white:

- 1) Tyson stood little chance of escaping conviction, guilty or not. In the minds of many Americans, women received the short end of the stick in full public view twice not long before his trial: Thomas became a Supreme Court justice despite the sexual harassment charges of Anita Hill, and Smith was declared innocent of all rape charges. The jury could not have been oblivious to the wave of public sentiment.
- 2) The jurors could not have known whether Tyson raped the woman.
- 3) Tyson, as a legal rapist, should receive a sentence appropriate to the crime. Punishment should be harsh.
- 4) Most people think a woman is at least partly to blame for being raped.
- 5) In this great country, the victim is almost always blamed...at least subtly.

God Bless,
Myron B. Pitts

Black Ink

"The essence of freedom is understanding"

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Inside Black Ink

Tuesday, February 18, 1992

Cover Story

REALIZING BLACK POWER

A University senior sees apathy as the major hindrance to the creation of an effective African-American voting bloc and the production of black leaders. But he has a plan. Page 8.

THE BICENTENNIAL WILL LARGELY BYPASS THE BCC...

...but the Student Bicentennial Committee is not to blame, says chairman Kevin Moran. However, he does not favor a free-standing Black Cultural Center either. Page 3.

OPINION

- The Media Issues Committee of the Carolina Association of Black Journalists explains their endorsement of Peter Wallsten, candidate for Daily Tar Heel editor. Page 4.
- Has the 6-to-1 ratio given UNC men a false sense of security? A humorous look from a familiar columnist. Page 4.
- One student tells of his experience before, during and immediately after the thrilling Tar Heel victory over the top-ranked Dookies. Page 5.

HOPE AND STRUGGLE

Cory Blue, a senior, is directing the play, "BLK Love Song," the story about the trials of a young black husband and wife. Page 6.

SAY IT AIN'T SO

Are we really just tokens at this predominantly-white university? Two participants in the recent Martin Luther King, Jr. Oratorical Contest give quite different answers. Page 7.

NEWS

- A diverse group tasted a bit of Asian culture during the New Year's celebration...the lunar New Year, that is. Page 10.
- In terms of a free-standing Black Cultural Center, the Black Student Movement president thinks it past time for bargaining; he wants agitation. Page 10.
- Faye Wattleton, the president of Planned Parenthood, said making abortions illegal will hit poor women the hardest. Page 12.
- Richard Epps, the first black student body president, may once again sit on the University Board of Trustees. Page 12.

RETURN OF RAP TRACKS

Sir Mix-A-Lot surprises and WC and the MAAD CIRCLE, from the Ice Cube school, amazes, Page 15.

OH BOY, WONDERBOY

As evidenced by his latest shocker, criticism has clearly failed to unnerve the caped columnist. Page 16.

About the Cover

According to UNC senior Charles McNair, black students need to exercise their right to vote -- on campus and nationwide. In addition, prospective black leaders for the future must begin training right now, and he has just the program to help them. See story, page 8.

Black Ink, founded in 1969, is the newspaper of the Black Student Movement at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. It is published Mondays during the academic year and does not discriminate on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, religion, race, ethnic origin or handicap. All manuscripts, letters, photos, illustrations and other materials submitted are welcome and must be signed. The Black Ink office is located in Suite 108-D of the Student Union. Mailing address, CB# 5210 Student Union, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, N.C. 27514. Phone 962-4336. One year subscription in U.S. and possessions, \$20.00. Single copy, \$1.00 (Make checks payable to Black Ink). Any announcement or advertisement to be printed must be submitted the Wednesday before any publication date. Black Ink is published completely by university students on the SCAPEGOAT desktop publishing system and printed by Village Printing Company.