

Racist? Who, Me?

Sometimes the pot calls the kettle black, and charges of racism are leveled against an African American. A few of the many black leaders labeled racist are: Malcolm X, Sojourner Truth, the Rev. Al Sharpton, Minister Louis Farrakhan, Huey P. Newton, Bobby Seale and the rest of the Black Panthers, and anybody else resistant to accommodation.

In a March 18 speech, Sister Souljah of the controversial rap group Public Enemy said black men and women could not be racist, because they lacked the power to enforce their will through discrimination and oppression. But many reject this definition, and it is after all, just Sister Souljah's opinion. The Oxford English Second Edition (1989), the standard-bearer for English language dictionaries, defines racism as: "1) The theory that distinctive human characteristics and abilities are determined by race; 2) The belief in the superiority of a particular race leading to prejudice and antagonism towards people of other races, especially those in close proximity, who may be felt as a threat to one's cultural and racial integrity or economic well-being." By these broad standards, blacks could indeed be racist. However, dictionary definitions are not handed down from on high; they are written by people with opinions. It becomes clear what shaky ground this puts us on, because people like presidential candidate Pat Buchanan and Ku Klux Klan members can claim they are not racist by their own definitions (which they already do, no doubt.)

A firmer proposition about blacks' inability to be racist is the notion of self-defense. Blacks are not racist, only angry and naturally defensive, some say. In this country, whites for hundreds of years have treated their darker counterparts as enemies; they enslaved them, killed them wantonly, told lies about them, denied them equal rights, and still victimize them via racial discrimination. As a result, African Americans have taken a defensive posture and outlook, which is quite normal when dealing with a known enemy. The black parents I know refrain from teaching their children hatred of whites, but nevertheless remind them of the discriminatory practices of the recent past so as to prepare and protect their loved ones. Even radical views can be seen as defensive mental frameworks, like those of the 5 Percent Nation of Islam, who believe black people are gods. Yes, this line of thinking puts blacks in a superior position, but one has to evaluate why someone would think this way. Why? Because that someone and his race has been held in an inferior position.

We can only judge racism based on observation, and separating the self-defense actions and attitudes of blacks from their purely racist ones is virtually impossible. So blacks might be racist, but not provably so. The same does not apply to whites, who clearly have no real reason to be defensive in the first place. What has our race done to yours, Mistuh Establishment?

God bless,
Myron B. Pitts

Black Ink

"You don't see a whole race in bondage?"

Editor: Myron B. Pitts
Associate Editor: Jacqueline Charles

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Black Ink, founded in 1969, is the weekly 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, NC 27514. Phone, 933-4336. 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.