

Farmer & Scott address criticism of BCC rally

Written by Thomas Scott and Michael Farmer

On September 10, 1992, The Daily Tar Heel published a letter that was sent to Chancellor Paul Hardin regarding his stance on a free-standing Black Cultural Center. The letter analyzed the events of the prior three weeks and revealed the hidden truth behind the issue of the BCC. It examined these events in the context of the three major symptoms of racism— isolation, alienation, and anxiety. That particular letter merely addressed a broader scope of racism on this campus. Now, a situation has arisen in relation to the BCC Coalition rally held Friday, Sept. 18. The response that the majority of students on campus gave to this event brought to my attention the presence of yet another phenomenon within the greater phenomenon of white racism.

In an interview the DTH featured concerning the letter to Chancellor Hardin, racism was described as a disease or sickness which has afflicted the Western world. Now, based on the white majority's reaction to the rally, I can definitely see that a greater disease can cause an individual or a society to develop other minor diseases. For example, when a person develops a disease, such as AIDS, his body becomes susceptible to other illnesses. Likewise, when a person is oriented into a racist culture, he develops other complexes as a result of the overall prevailing illness.

This fact seems applicable to the case of the many white students who reacted in anger and disgust towards the Friday night rally. These individuals directed most of their resentment toward the final speaker, Minister Khalid X of the Fruits of Islam, who scintillatingly addressed the role of white America in the oppression of African people. Many of these students internalized the Minister's remarks as a personal attack upon their integrity. Yet, the most highly charged reaction came when the Minister used the term "cracker", or if you will, the straw which broke the camel's back.

By listening to many white students, this word clearly upset them

most profoundly. Although he did not address every white individual at the rally, many white people personally felt offended by this term. On the other hand, the words of Minister Muhammm did not affect every white person who attended the rally. One white student from Pennsylvania said that the term "cracker" had no effect upon him nor had he ever heard the term before. However, from my experience, many white Southerners have a particular aversion to this term.

This point leads to the question: Why do white people, in general, seem unable to listen to blacks talk about the disgraceful legacy that white society has left behind? Also, if these individuals do not regard themselves as oppressors, why can't they listen to black people express their anger at those within their white race who sustain a racist system of oppression. Furthermore, why does the term "cracker" have a profound effect upon white students, especially those from this part of the country? In my opinion, the majority of white students on this campus, particularly white Southerners, suffer from what can be called the *cracker complex*.

Before discussing this mental disorder in detail, a brief history can provide an understanding of the powerful significance of the term, "cracker", to the white majority. During the founding of the American colonies, an overflow of criminals flooded the prisons of the mother country, England. At the same time, England was trying to develop her colonies in the New World. To solve the crowding of penal institutions, England, along with France and Germany, exported into the colonies her undesirables: prostitutes, sodomites, thieves, and desperadoes. During this period, Chief Justice Stokes of the colony of Georgia wrote, "The Southern colonies are overrun with a swarm of men from the eastern parts of Virginia and NORTH CAROLINA, distinguished by the name of *Crackers*. Many of these people are descended from convicts that were transported from Great Britain to Virginia at different times and inherited so much profligacy from their ancestors that they are the most

abandoned set of men on Earth." Stokes understood rather well that these men and women, or, as they called themselves, Crackers, represented a poison to the New World. For it is easy to comprehend the annihilation of Native Americans and the constant inhumanity toward African people in this country as a result of the countless generations that these dreaded men produced.

Curiously, the descendants of these European whores and convicts, particularly in the South, bore the label of cracker as a badge of honor. Today, you would only have to visit many small towns in this state to find that this case still remains. Obviously, these proud individuals were/are too ashamed to confront the reality of their past. Therefore, as in the present day, they strived to degrade others, that is, blacks, to cover their own shameful heritage. Yet, in recent decades, black people converted the term "cracker" into a cruel epitaph against whites as these blacks struggled against oppression. Consequently, in the mindset of white America, the mere utterance of the word "cracker" changed from a call for self-pride into a harsh reminder of a dishonorable legacy of hostility and bloodshed. Thus, the *cracker complex* summarizes the state of anguish and shame that white people suffer at the realization of what their experience has brought to humanity.

Now that I have defined the cracker complex, one question remains: How can an individual identify someone who harbors this emotional disease. At first, the victim develops a sense of anger and frustration. In other words, he appears disenchanted and irritated once the truth behind his ancestry and behavior becomes known. Within the victim arises an inner conflict between accepting the truth or living a legacy of dishonor. As a result, he develops a sense of insecurity of which the signs range from profuse weeping to making empty excuses and showing mere discontent. This sense of anger and frustration can cause the victim to develop the second symptom called denial. In the context of the cracker complex, the victim refuses to ac-

cept the reality of the history of his ethnic group and the detrimental effects that this legacy has created within present events. At the same time, the victim attempts to discredit the validity of ideas and sentiments of those individuals affected by this same legacy. The third symptom of the cracker complex is guilt. In other words, when confronted by the undesirable truth, the victim feels as if he stands under personal attack. Hence, he possesses an open or internal preoccupation with the correctness of his character.

Generally, most victims of the cracker complex choose to accommodate their illness rather than to confront the problem in a direct manner. Thus, their sickness remains uncured. Yet, how do whites accommodate this cracker complex? In one way, they accommodate this sickness through displaced projection. In other words, the victim feels that his own feelings and actions coincide with those whom he has and still oppresses. For example, in the September 21 edition of The Daily Tar Heel, one editor wrote in response to the Coalition rally: "But, for the most part, many whites and blacks went home thinking that they weren't welcome in the BCC movement". Now, the overwhelming majority of blacks stayed through the entire event. Most of the people who left early were white. Yet, this editor tries to project his feelings upon blacks.

Another way that whites accommodate the rhetoric: "But in the two hours before Spike Lee spoke, nothing was said to convince the ambivalent and the fencesitters (that is, the majority of this campus), that they should support the Coalition's goals. Instead, all I heard were screams, accusations, angry words, and ultimatums." This statement definitely indicates that this writer did not listen to what was expressed by the speakers who represent the frustrations and feelings of a considerable number of the black students on this campus. He refused to listen to the truth that was expressed. Has it not already been stated in this article that denial is the second symptom of the cracker complex? Let the answer to that question speak for

itself so that we may continue.

In addition, I consider Mr. Wagner's final statement as my favorite one of all. "White supporters", he states, "of the BCC should not make excuses, explain, or ignore what was said. For in the words of the Talmud, 'Those who show mercy on the cruel, will show cruelty to the merciful.'" This writer seems to imply to whites that they themselves have been merciful for the past 400 years. Mr. Wagner, tell that to the black housekeeper who was raped, with much impunity, by a white man on campus this summer and ignored by the administration and the campus majority. Or, go to Winston-Salem and tell the relatives of the black man, who, this June, was castrated and murdered by four white men, about how merciful white society has been toward African people. Maybe, you would like to discuss this mercy with the numerous masses of black people who have been taxed, deceived, and cheated by this University in the name of growth and expansion. Better yet, Mr. Wagner, talk to the relatives of the 8 million of your fellow Semites who were murdered by this same global system of white supremacy. After all, didn't you know that the prefix of the word *Semite* means half-half African, half white. If you don't believe this fact, *my brother*, you might want to ask yourself why the Pope, at this present day, secretly vows in prayer before a picture of the Black Madonna or the Black Mother of Christ, who was a Semite of the Jewish faith himself. Either Mr. Wagner, a fellow minority, has gained the cracker complex by adaptation, meaning that he has unconsciously convinced himself that he belongs with the white majority or this afore-said quotation lacks history, which is nothing that a free-standing BCC couldn't cure.

Finally, I arrive upon the subject of Mr. John Moody who is our Student Body President, leader of the ill-fated Multicultural Center

see COMPLEX on page 14