

A Repeat

Student activism and racial unrest on t

By Karen Greene
Ink Staff Writer

"When we look at UNC, we see an institution which leeches off the community. And as long as UNC is UNC and continues to be a racist institution, we will condemn it for what it is."

These are not the words of The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Black Cultural Center activists like Michelle Thomas, Black Student Movement president, nor are they the words of Tim Smith, Jimmy Hitchcock or John Bradley, leaders of the outspoken Black Awareness Council.

These words were spoken by then-BSM president Jimmy McRae on Nov. 19, 1971.

"We have a tradition of student activism on this campus," says Rosalind Fuse-Hall, a 1980 graduate and current Associate Dean of Student Counseling. "I think protesting wakes the sleeping giant by calling administrative attention to the needs of the black community."

But why, after 45 years of integration, are UNC's black students voicing the same frustrations and fighting the same battles as their predecessors of the '60s, '70s and '80s?

The late sixties and early seventies were a heyday for student activism, especially for the campus of UNC, which saw workers' strikes, building takeovers and the firebombing of the Institute of Pharmacy.

Today's activism is a kinder, gentler, brand, but the demands, the complaints and the opaque walls of the color line remain the same.

"When you look at old issues of Black Ink (the official newspaper of the BSM)," said Carol Brown, a senior biology major, "you find some of the problems and demands they had in the sixties are—almost verbatim—the same ones we have now. As far as I'm concerned, we haven't come far at all."

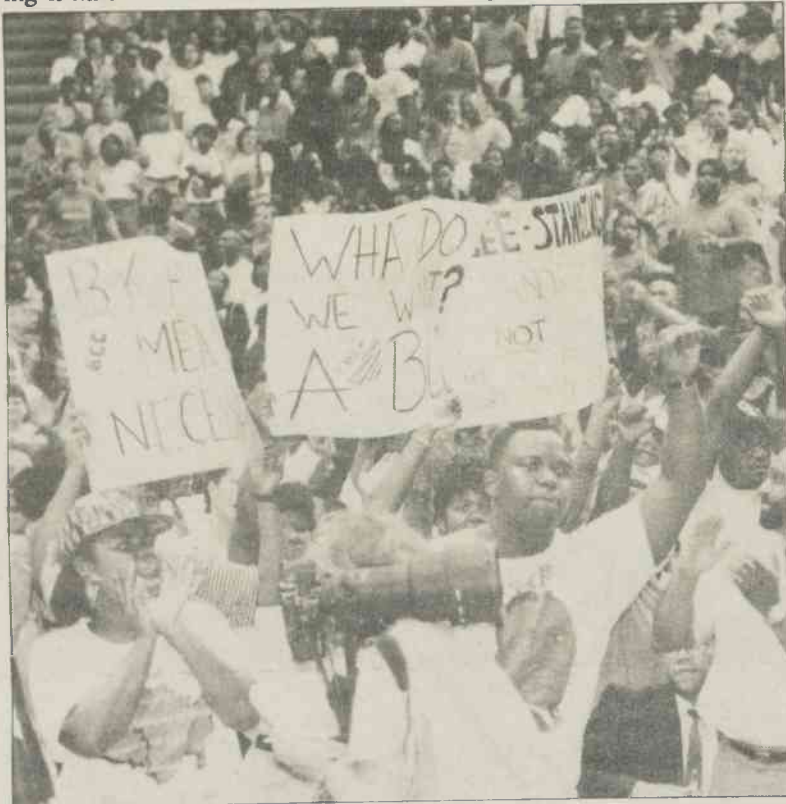
Both black and white students at the University speak of a tense racial climate on the campus.

"I think it's a lot more intense

than people realize," said Bruce Roberts, senior. "It's not just about the BCC, it's on a day to day basis. I don't think it's the administration or the professors that's making it hard for the black students,

tors is not limited to UNC. North Carolina State University, Duke University, and several other institutions nationwide have been riddled with racial unrest.

Despite the 21 percent increase



A renewed spirit of protest exploded at the Spike Lee rally in September.

though."

Malcolm Turner, a senior business major, Morehead Scholar and one of three UNC nominees for the Rhodes Scholarship disagrees. "The tension goes even further than the students," he said.

"I've had a number of professors who I think expected a lower level of performance in their class from me because of my race. I've always had to be more aggressive in showing them that I was capable and that I set extremely high goals for myself academically."

Brown, a Pogue scholar and member of Phi Beta Kappa has sensed similar attitudes. "It's as if the professors automatically assume that our work will be inferior because they don't think we have the background to fully comprehend the subject matter," she said.

The ongoing clash between black students and university administra-

in enrollment of historically black colleges and universities, a vast majority of the top 10 percent of black students opt to go to predominantly white institutions.

A 1991 study, conducted by Chalmer E. Thompson and Bruce R. Fretz reported that black students, based on a case study of a southern, state-supported, predominantly white universities, were less satisfied than whites with the quality of their education, and felt greater tension and hostility in their environment.

"I don't see where there's racism on a day to day basis," said Katie Caldwell, a UNC sophomore. "But I imagine that it's harder for the black students because they're on the receiving end."

Brown agreed. "Being black in America makes us more sensitive to race than whites are, simply because they've been raised in a soci-

ety that tells them they are superior."

The study said the tension stunted intellectual and social growth on the part of black students, because they develop a high tolerance for racism. It also said black students at predominantly black institutions experienced more growth than ones at predominantly white institutions.

Dean Fuse-Hall, however expressed a different opinion. "I always said I went to UNC but I lived at A&T," she said. "We only had about 800 black students here, but I don't feel like I missed out on the 'black experience' at all."

"Most of my involvement was with black folk. We had a set time when we all ate dinner, Black Ink came out regularly. We had the Ebony/Readers Onyx Theater, we even had our own yearbook one year. It was a great time to be here."

That same division of "black activities" and "white activities" exists today. John Atkeson, a member of Chi Psi fraternity, said, "There's hardly any interaction with the black and white Greeks. The effort has been made, but even with our fraternity being integrated—we

have a number of minority members—it's still considered a "white organization."

The lack of attention toward black student needs, has fueled the free-standing BCC debate. While supporters of the center cite the university's lack of sensitivity to the cultural distinction of black students, opponents say a free-standing building would promote separatism.

Some have even suggested that if black students want a separation of black culture, they should go to a black college. "We can have it here, too," said Dean Fuse-Hall. "This is a state-supported institution, and as long as we pay taxes, we have the

right to be here.

"Even if we weren't here, the University would have an obligation to have an African American Studies Department or a Black Cultural Center."

Harold Woodard, a class of 1978 graduate and UNC's Assistant Dean of Student Counseling, agrees. "I don't believe in the American cultural melting pot," he said. "If this country is to be likened to a stew, then the ingredients are distinct ethnic cultures. What they call 'American culture' is just the sauce."

Johnnie Southerland, class of 1981 said, "Cultures are preserved within the confines of being an American for all ethnic groups. The administrators need to realize that African Americans aren't going anywhere."

Instead, Brown said the administration is guilty of treating black students as if they were not there. "We end up feeling like we don't have a place here," she said.

Chalmer and Fretz's study also indicated that blacks identify less with their university than their white counterparts. The black student population at UNC, however has had a tradition of making their pres-



Look familiar? Blacks qu
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