

Mistaking Jungle Fever for Love?

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Chris and Meredith are both juniors at UNC.

Both met on one of those rare occasions when Lenior was so jam-packed that no tables were free. Chris ventured to eat his lunch at one of the 5-foot tables near the exits — you know, the ones strategically designed for those unlucky souls who are forced by the crowd to stand up and eat their Chili-Macs. Meredith, posed with the same dilemma, took a stand at Chris'

Chris and Meredith, both being great conversationalists, started a discussion. She was a music major, he was pre-med. As their chit-chat segued from John Coltrane's "Alabama," to whether or not gangsta' rap degraded women, they found talking to one another surprisingly enjoyable.

Chris had found Meredith attractive almost as soon as she stood before him at the table. Possessing a devastating smile, one subtly apparent dimple on her left cheek and a pleasing figure, Meredith was something to behold. Likewise Meredith thought Chris' sturdy build and sculpted jaw was worth looking over more than once. More importantly, she really enjoyed the conversation that they were having.

But let's press pause on our literary eight-track for a moment....This may seem like just a casual encounter between two UNC students who seem to be moving steadily toward mutual attraction and who knows what else, but these are not just ordinary students.

Something outside the realm of their individual choice is serving as a barrier to this becoming anymore than a random meeting between two souls who may have known each other more intimately had this been another universe. You see, Chris is black and Meredith is white. And you

and I know all too well that, in this society, that makes all the difference in the world.

But should this fact determine whether or not any further advances are made during their lunch hour tet-a-tet? You make the call.

If Chris and Meredith are quick thinkers, they'll be making *the call* too. There's a lot to consider: Parents. Friends. The intuition that "mainstream" society doesn't approve. More parents. More friends. If after these initial apprehensions are dealt with, another not-so-chance

to mind their own business, thank you.

The real dilemma regarding interracial relationships is a sociological one. Two people's business is rarely just their business.

No matter how compatible and otherwise ideal a person may seem to you, if your friends and family view that person negatively there will be tension. In the context of a relationship that crosses color boundaries, this tension takes on a whole new meaning because of the racial baggage our society insists upon

answer may be a cultural one.

When a black man decides to date a white woman the assumption may be that he wants to discard his "blackness" for something he perceives as better — "he's trying to be white."

But when we say "blackness" we aren't talking about the melanin contained in his skin. No, what we mean is that he is trying to discard the set of cultural patterns, associations and beliefs, which are evokative of the term "black." Thus, Chris would, in essence, be rebuffing his blackness by dating Meredith, a white

race that Americans engender almost amusing. On that Carribean island, people of German or English ancestry with hair and skin that is as pale as snow, share a language and a common Jamaican identity with people whose features indicate a wholly African descent.

It is not at all uncommon to see interracial couples strolling down the beaches of Port Antonio hand in hand as lovers.

Admittedly, one is black and the other is white. But they share similarities that dilute the salience of race in their relationship.



Is there anything wrong with this picture? Opinions vary, depending on who you talk to.

encounter is offered and accepted, then the most important question has been answered. Is the prospect of an interracial relationship okay?

For Chris and Meredith the answer is yes. And herein lies the most ignored truism about the value of interracial relationships: If it feels right to the people involved, then it is right for them, and everyone else would do well

carrying.

Rather than your friends or family simply disliking your relationship due to a potentially changeable flaw, he or she is marred by an unchangeable feature that has divided our society since its inception — his or her skin is a different color.

But is it really skin color that lends a negative implication to cross color relationships? A truer

girl.

This assumption that many people hold is unfortunate in that it does not allow for instances where two people, one black and one white, may have common interests and cultural identities.

In Jamaica, the birthplace of reggae and a form of speech that most Americans find intriguing (Patwa), most people of our own age find the preoccupation with

'If it feels right to the people involved, then it is right for them. Everyone else would do well to mind their own business'

accept the fact that these two people may share a great deal in common despite the obvious differences in skin color.

The United States is neither historically nor culturally like Jamaica, yet an important lesson can be learned from the way relationships between the races are handled in that country. Race there is not nearly as important as a shared identity and understanding — things important in any relationship. There are without a doubt people in this country who have similarities that draw them together despite their differing skin colors.

And what of Chris and Meredith? Should they deny an interest in one another simply because he is black and she is white? For all people who believe strongly in the sanctity of individual freedom and the universality of mankind, the answer ought to be a resounding "No." Let love rule. Peace.

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