

# Ms. UNC

## Can a Black Queen Really be a Representative of the Entire University?

By Sylvia Glover and Cheritta Pridgen

Each year, students, alumni, faculty and friends gather at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to celebrate homecoming which consists of a week of student activities that ends with the football game held on Saturday.

As we fill the stands, shouting and screaming we are anticipating maybe more than winning the game the crowning of the next Ms. UNC. This time in the game is usually filled with joy and happiness for the winner. However, this feeling has been overshadowed for the past few years by the tension over the controversy of racial background being a factor in the outcome of the election. This is due in part to the issue of the homecoming queen being black.

On Oct. 27, an "Around the Circle" was held in the Sonja Haynes Stone Black Cultural Center that addressed homecoming and the issue of: "Does a black Ms. UNC represent the University as a whole?" There were many strong feelings on the subject of how effectively a black person could represent the school. This school is culturally diverse, so whatever race is crowned as queen, they cannot fully represent all people found at this university.

A homecoming queen should not be viewed by her race, but for what she represents and her character. The University needs a person that can exemplify a positive nature in which she can be a representative so the school's community can be proud.

The issue is that people do not realize that the race controversy reveals the hidden prejudices that people have but do not want to admit.

Ernest Almond, a junior said, "If this campus is as open-minded as it is supposed to be, how does race affect who should win?" However, the problem is that people do not want to admit that they are not as open-minded as they should be.

It is important to have a queen who is academically inclined, but also one that is involved in the community. Recently, there have been changes in the

Carolina Athletic Association process. The GPA requirement has been raised; the proportion of the voting has changed to include 75 percent of the student body and 25 percent of the faculty.

Carol Ben-Davies, a BCC employee, said: "Ms. UNC has been top-notch, since I came (to UNC-CH) in 1995. People do not realize that the past black queens have been women of substance." For instance, Janora McDuffie, Ms. UNC 1998, was senior class vice president as well as a Morehead Scholar. She was not only intelligent, but a leader as well. No one ever stops to think that black queens in the past have been equally or better qualified than their opposition.

Race should not be a factor in the homecoming election. However, there are still many individuals who complain. For those people who feel the need to complain about it, they should take action. There was a majority consensus at the "Around the Circle": If you do not vote, you cannot complain after the fact. Last year only 9 percent of the student body voted. What happened to the rest of the 91 percent of the students? That is the heart of the problem and the answer as to why there has been a black queen. The blacks on campus rally for the support of the candidates and encourage each other to vote.

In light of the question stated earlier, does a black Ms. UNC represent the student body? Absolutely, if she is qualified for the title; and historically she has been. Also, there is no reason why a black woman cannot represent the student body. If race is an important factor in determining who can represent the University there could not be a Ms. UNC because this school has so many ethnic backgrounds represented.

Hence, the quality of the candidate, not her skin color, should be the sole determinant in whether or not she can wear the crown and be a positive image for the University.



Photo by Tiffany Black