

In Defense of a Black Cultural Center

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So the question has been posed: "What is the purpose of having a free-standing Black Cultural Center?" Personally, I see the purpose, but I accept the fact that maybe my opinion is biased since I happen to be an African-American. However, I've asked myself on several occasions, "Would this even be a question if the word Asian, Jewish, or Native American were to replace the word Black? I could be wrong, but I think the answer to my question would be 'no.'

Some how the connotation of the word 'black' has become dirty in our society, especially when it's used to describe the advancements of people of color. Everyone is taught to be proud of who they are, and to preserve their heritage. It seems to be okay for every other racial and ethnic group to celebrate its history and its culture, but it's wrong and discriminatory for black people to do the same thing.

Black people have suffered through slavery, Jim Crow laws and unequal opportunity in both the work place and academic institutions. In regards to our own university, it was slave labor that built this campus and laid the stone walls that UNC is acclaimed for.

The purpose of having a free-standing BCC is to celebrate not only black culture, but American culture as well. This is something that every student at Carolina, regardless of race or ethnicity can benefit from. Contributions and achievements made by African-Americans have shaped our world

and our culture into what it is today. The blood plasma we donate at blood drives, the air conditioners that cool our homes and even the traffic lights we pause at are all things that have been made possible by African-Americans. Why can't we celebrate these achievements and the black people who made them possible, rather than constantly try to deny them of their significance and pretend they never existed?

The mission of the BCC is to educate all people and to hopefully provide cultural experiences for all students at UNC. Never once have the doors of the current Black Cultural Center (located on the first floor of the Frank Porter Graham Student Union for those of you who don't know) been closed to any individual based on race, color or creed.

I think individuals need to be more open-minded and not assume that a free-standing BCC would cause segregation and dissension on our campus. I believe that if there were an Asian Cultural Center on campus, no one would question whether it will cause segregation. In fact, students would be praised for their efforts to celebrate their Asian heritage.

The BCC is not meant to be a threat to any one person or group at UNC. It's supposed to be a facility in which any person can learn more about the culture and contributions of black people. Rather than constantly criticizing the BCC, more people need to come inside and learn what it is really all about. Maybe then, they will realize that their ignorance has kept them from exploring not only black culture, but their own culture as well.