

According
to the
Freshmen . . .
My First Semester at UNC



By Ndidi Okeagu

Many African-American women are familiar with the poem, "Phenomenal Woman" by Maya Angelou. Reading it makes you just look in the mirror and smile. At that time you are the "Phenomenal Woman" Angelou depicts despite your own perceptions. Full lips, brown skin, broad nose and big hips are all associated with African-American women. Unfortunately, these characteristics sometimes get more attention than our own inner features or achievements. Yet with such songs as "Independent Women" by Grammy award recipients, Destiny's Child, we are uplifted to accomplish our dreams, succeed in school, and truly become every woman despite any stereotypes. Yes, we are beautiful; we are intelligent, and simply phenomenal. Getting accepted into one of the best schools proves that. As seniors in high school, most of us had GPAs over a 4.0 and were involved in several extra-curricular activities. Some of us were athletes, student body presidents and homecoming queens. Some of us were all of the above and still involved in church and the community.

Well, that is the past! We are no longer high school seniors and we no longer get first priority. We are simply freshmen. When we go to the BSM meetings, we scarcely 'represent' when everyone throws up their class number. Most of us are not as popular as we once were in our high school years. We are faced with the reality of staying up all night to do that lab report or cram for that exam. We slowly begin to realize that it is difficult to balance academics, extra-curricular activities and a social life. Yet we still persevere because we are beautiful, intelligent and simply phenomenal.

Let me again take you back to our senior year in high school. Remember, when men truly "swarmed around us like honeybees?" Maybe that's an exaggeration. However, remember when boys always tried to holla for your phone number and would always stop and stare when you walked past? For females like myself, remember the sad selection of boys in your high school and how you just hoped for a change in college?

Well, let me bring you back to reality once again. We

attend one of the greatest universities. Yet it's a school where the male to female ratio of 4/6 sucks! As African-Americans we are already the minority at this school. So the availability of African American men is truly low and even lower subtracting the ones with girlfriends, the ones who consider themselves 'playas', the ones who don't consider themselves black, the ones who are not attracted to girls and those conceited brothas. Even though we are beautiful, intelligent and phenomenal, it seems like the belief of finding our future mate is not conceivable right now.

As I talked to some female freshmen, they were instantly aware of this ratio in their own classes. You would expect this ratio to improve in AFAM classes. Ironically, in my Afri 40, I can count the number of black men on one hand. It is sad, but it is reality. Some of us realize the pathetic ratio, but Samantha Fils-Aime, a freshman at UNC-CH said, "I had no expectations and I am just focusing on my education." Some of us are apathetic because we have been blessed with a phenomenal man or recognize the main reason we attend UNC-CH is to receive an education.

For my fellow females who represent the class of '05, throw it up, as we almost end a semester and begin another. Sit back, relax, and just...

Remember when you were a senior in your high school
You walked the halls with your head high, chest up, knowing who ruled.

It was not the freshmen, sophomores, or juniors
It was all about you
Then reality sets in and you realize that is just the past
You are faced with issues that are coming way too fast
Papers, exams, and making that 'A'
Is your main concern each and every day

You try to look the best you can
But then your appearance starts slipping as easily as sand

You are no longer home but in a new diverse atmosphere
Where at times it seems hard to adjust but you still persevere

But at times when you feel lonely and you feel you can't measure up
There is a message that will help you get right back on top

Look in the mirror and see
the inner and outer beauty God placed on me,
I may not have a man
but that does not determine who and what I am
My beauty is more than my elegant brown skin
There is something much finer that lies deep within

I have hopes
I have dreams
I have aspirations
And I will overcome each obstacle with faith and determination
You see I might not have long hair or be the perfect size
But I have something better; it deals with self-pride
Pride in knowing that I am a freshman
But especially knowing I am a woman

-Ndidi Okeagu