



Feeding into Stereotypes

Getting an education is as 'real' as it gets for many students

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These individuals are loud or rude for no particular reason, unable to read, write, or perform basic math and find nothing wrong with being ill prepared. They seem not to know what is appropriate behavior whether around friends, teachers, the elderly or children. Wearing \$150 sneakers and then complaining about having to pay for a \$25 book out-of-pocket. Barely coming to class and when they do, they are normally unprepared and have the nerve to blame the professor after receiving a low grade.

Unfortunately, being uneducated is a well-known stereotype of minorities and for some reason or another, uneducated minorities are considered "real." Terms like "acting white" and "uppity" are still used by people of color to describe their educated counterparts.

But it is really the educated colored man or woman who is "real." These individuals who pursue this idea of "real" actually believe that being uneducated is keeping them true to their culture. What these "real" people fail to realize is that they are usually nothing

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more than functional illiterates. They are too quick to leave the pursuit of necessary social reform on the shoulders of educated people in order to be accepted into their peer groups.

No one person can change what so many minorities go through. It can only be accomplished with a combined effort. The most any person, returning to their home town, can do is assist those that are already assisting themselves in improving their lives. At some point, one needs to take responsibility for their inactions. The multitude of successful African-Americans should serve as proof that anyone can change for the better. The fact that some decide to ignore this makes no sense. This form of "real" can lead to a life of welfare, prison, poverty, or an inability to properly provide for a family.

How can this perception of "real" be a thing of pride and a representation of being true to ancestry? Slavery is part of the history of many races and cultures. It was a very lucrative business and according to some historians, even people of color participated in the selling and buying of slaves. The fact that slavery is in one's past does not justify not taking advantage of the numerous opportunities currently available. Pick up a history book and read how people

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of color were people of economic progress, how they conducted business for gold, silver, spices and other items of value. People of color have a history filled with evidence

of intelligence and prosperity. To navigate ships one had to be knowledgeable in astronomy. In order to conduct business transactions they had to be capable of reading, writing and performing arithmetic. They were accountants, engineers and architects.

This notion of "real" that embraces one being uneducated, disrespectful, using obscene language for all to hear, and other self-degrading behavior is ridiculous. Choosing not to better yourself means one will forever be dependent on someone else for survival. Leaving one with little to no power to dictate how one lives. It will leave individuals open to abuse and a permanent status as a second class citizen. Instead of believing education is for those who are "acting white", "uppity" or for the few that are considered "smart", understand this, humans are intelligent creatures by nature. When individuals, regardless of race or economic status, nurture their mind all is possible. Most smart people are ordinary folks who, through hard work, dedication and trial and error expanded their intellect. Be "real" with yourself, stop this foolishness of comparing education to "acting white" and make yours a priority.