

Social media fuels dialogue on race

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As students at NCSSM, we are no strangers to discussions about race and ethnicity. We live on a small yet diverse campus with students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, and many have observed conflicts regarding these identities.

However, at many colleges across the nation, these racial conflicts are more prevalent and arguably more serious.

From protests in response to racial tensions at the University of Missouri and Yale University to the painting of the message "Black Lives Matter" on the James B. Duke statue in front of the Chapel at Duke University, racial conflict is prevalent on a national and local scale on college campuses.

Social media has amplified these issues through its personalization of news stories to the average individual.

Like many teenagers living in the 21st century, I read most news online from trending topics on Twitter and Facebook as well as the infamous BuzzFeed.

The problem with consuming news through these social media outlets and not through conventional news sources is that a startling amount of the "news" comes directly from the source of a conflict.

From videos on YouTube of racist songs sung by fraternity members at the University of Oklahoma to threatening anonymous messages on the social media platform Yik-Yak at various college campus

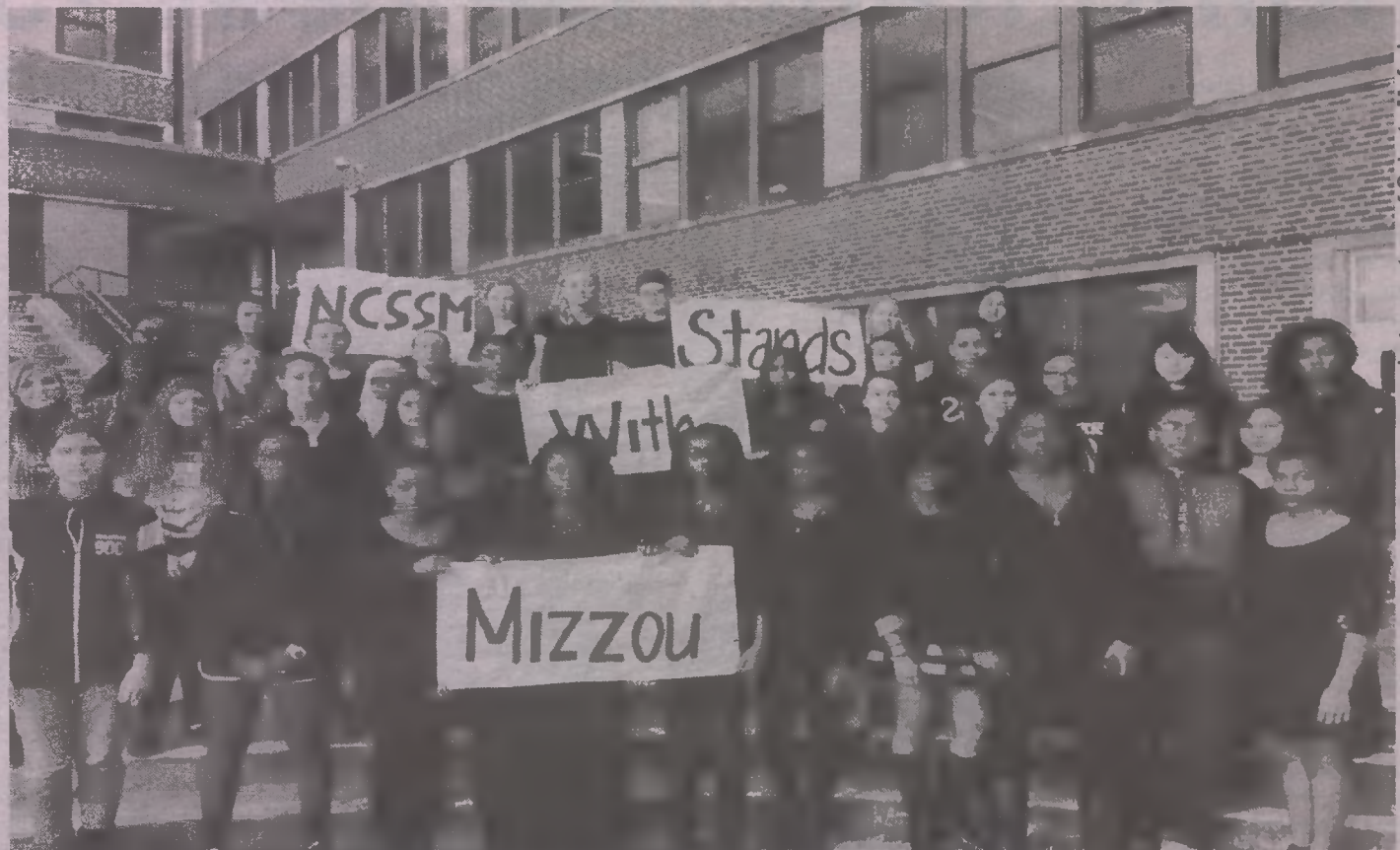


photo courtesy of Celeste McFarlane

NCSSM students demonstrate in support of protestors at the University of Missouri.

throughout the US, college students are more up-to-date than ever, but not necessarily as well informed.

Technology allows students to watch racial tensions as they happen in real life and experience the shock value of events as if they are actually present at the location, but it does not remove bias or strong opinions as experienced news outlets often attempt to do.

Technology also allows students, who are the biggest consumers of social media, to voice their opinions in response to events and conflicts.

Today, if I wanted to know the opinions of students

who live in the Durham area regarding racial slurs used at Duke University, I only need to check Yik-Yak and read the hundreds of voices who have differing opinions on the subject.

Racial conflict has become a two-way conversation at college campuses, with students commenting their thoughts about the situation and sometimes adding fuel to the fire.

This might explain, in part, why many recent racial tensions have erupted specifically on college campuses.

A college environment, similar to NCSSM, contains

many students with differing opinions and perspectives in close proximity.

Throw in racial matters (a topic that will forever be trending, controversial, and never unanimous) and the ability to vocalize these strong opinions through social media and protests, and suddenly it's only a matter of time before racial tensions emerge.

In-person protests are typically well-intentioned, as we live in a time and age where racism is no longer appropriate or acceptable and should be questioned and removed.

The safety of students on a campus is the utmost priority, and racial tensions often put students in harm's way.

However, the tensions on social media are another problem altogether.

After all, it's harder to protect students from threatening words on a computer screen.

As the senior class approaches the difficult choice of where to attend school in the far, these racial tensions and conversations on college campuses are something we should all keep in the back of our minds.

Ask Charlie!

"There's a guy that I like a lot right now, and I want to make a move and ask him out, but I have no idea how. Every time I try, I chicken out. How can I overcome this?" -Hopelessly In Love

Dear Hopelessly in Love, great question. This is a very relevant dilemma in today's society for teenagers. It is indeed difficult.

You don't want to seem like you're trying, but you also don't want to look like you're uninterested. Most of all, you don't want to appear desperate. I suggest you do some background reading first in books by Nicholas Sparks and magazines such as Cosmopolitan.

Nobody understands the teenage boy mind better than middle-aged romance writers and fashionista journalists.

Who knows? After your successful attempts at seducing teenage boys, you might even become enough of an expert to write your own banal romance novella to entrance the next generation of impressionable teenagers.

After your background studies, it is important to scout out your competition to make sure that when you do ask him out, you run unopposed.

You can do this by casually stalking all the people he interacts with on a daily basis via Facebook or Instagram.

The key word is casually, so be careful not to like some girl's picture from 45 weeks ago; such a fatal mistake might set back your plans a week or two.

If you happen to discover his username and password to any of his social media accounts, it is best to immediately log onto his profiles and block everyone that could be seen as a competitor.

As Charles Darwin says, "Survival of the fittest." Now, you are ready to brainstorm some ideas to ask him out! Don't be wishy-washy or shy. Be confident! He should be honored to go out with you.

In fact, you are probably doing him a huge favor. Studies have shown that you're most likely saving him from a drab and repetitive weekend of Starcraft, Minecraft, and Kraft

Macaroni.

So when in doubt, just ask! To ensure a successful outcome, it is best to ask him in a public area when he is surrounded by his friends and family.

That way, when he says yes, you can all celebrate together like the one big happy family you are. Putting him on the spot will force him to realize how much he cares for you, and no doubt begin a beautiful relationship that will stand the test of time.

With that said, the most important step is not in the asking, but in seeing if he is really worthy of your time. If you don't know him that well, I suggest you approach the problem from a clinically proven psychological perspective, namely Dr. Arthur Aaron's "36 questions to make a stranger fall in love with you" quiz.

Lastly, don't be afraid or upset if you are not successful at first. As Cosmopolitan says, "if you're sad, add more lipstick and attack".

Happy Hunting!
- Charlie



photo courtesy of Cosmopolitan