

THE BENNETT BANNER

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Challenge of Individuality

"Who so would be a man must be a nonconformist. He who would gather immortal psalms must not be hindered by the name of goodness. Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind . . . What I must do is all that concerns me, not what the people think . . . It is easy to live after our own, but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude". . .

The words of Ralph W. Emerson so vividly reflect the qualities of a state "so noble" in mankind, the virtue of individuality. But have we today lost this basic quality? If not, then to what extent has it been modified?

There is in the world today, a prevalence of conformity. A "mass seduction" of persons into a common line of thought, a particular mode of behavior and a certain line of expression. When then is there a place for individuality? What space does it occupy in our evaluation of qualities? Are we losing the most important aspect of our democracy — Freedom of expression and belief?

It is an important realization that "I" am separate from all others, that my chief aim in life is not the same as all others and neither can it be satisfied by the same course that others may take.

Do we ever stop to think before we become a member of the bandwagon? Is this really what I want? Is this really what I believe in? Do we merely accept the views of others and follow in their general direction?

It is quite true that to stand alone will, at times, mean social exile or complete isolation from the "popular group," but is it not better to stand alone for a cause in which you believe and which you can justify than to follow "the main stream" and act just because others are?

This, however, does not reflect a pessimistic attitude for this is an unfair judgment which avoids the weighing of all sides of a situation. It does imply, however, a bit of skepticism, a bit of realization of one's own uniqueness, and, above all, an understanding of one's self as a separate entity. This entity is capable of making her own decisions and thus guiding her behavior into channels most beneficial to the betterment of her person.

—FRANCES CAMPBELL

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Unreadiness?

Many of us have become disturbed about the recent indictments being made against Negro institutions, their students and teachers. Author Louis E. Lomax and many others have advanced the theory that the Negro student today is not academically or intellectually prepared to take advantage of the very opportunities that he is striving to obtain. The move for equal rights and opportunities has been greatly accelerated because of the efforts of the college students; yet, the point is made that they themselves often are not able to benefit from their efforts.

Regardless of the speculation as to whether or not this accusation is justified, there have been incidents in which discrimination barriers were lowered and there were found no qualified Negro applicants. Perhaps this is true only in a few cases, but even this few is too many. We have not as yet reached the point where all people are accepted on individual merit and it is still necessary for a selected few to "prove" the worthiness of the masses.

Who's to blame for this unreadiness — administration, instructors, or students themselves? All of these must bear

THE INQUIRING REPORTER

Question: What do you think about Birmingham and its racial problems?

Respondents: Three Bennett students from Birmingham, Alabama.

Barbara Pharris, sophomore clinical psychology major. "My feelings about the racial situation in Birmingham are the same as those of any Negro. Knowing that I am a member of a minority group, and due to the color of my skin, I am denied the opportunities granted those persons of lighter skin pigmentation. This situation is particularly acute in my home state. Realizing the tension and unrest that exists in Birmingham, plus the knowledge of my relatives and friends living within this band of tension, sometimes causes a feeling of sorrow and depression.



"The pressure and tension that is present in Birmingham is similar to that in Cambridge, Maryland and elsewhere throughout the United States where Negroes are rising against their oppressors. When one wants to attain a certain height, he strives with all physical and mental faculties to achieve this position. Such characterizes the Negro's struggle.

"My greatest hope is that the day will come when Americans, not only Alabamans, can see each other as men, women and children, not as black or white."

Dorothy Butler, sophomore, pre-law major. "I feel both pity and contempt for the white southerners of Alabama. I pity them, first of all, because they are too ignorant to realize that their prejudices and stereotype visions of the Negro are slowly destroying the principles upon which this country was founded.



"Secondly they have no reasons which I consider valid for oppos-

ing integration. They are merely fighting because the Negro's skin is black and because the most "honorable" Governor Wallace says that "there will be no integration in the state of Alabama.

"I have contempt for them because of the misery and unhappiness they have brought to my race. The ultimate result of their barbarous and cowardly action has snuffed out the lives of four innocent children further making the whole country and the world aware of the ugliness of discrimination."

Laura Coleman, senior, elementary education major. "Nestled in a valley is a seemingly quiet city named Birmingham, Alabama. Observing the city from its surrounding mountains one may think that this is a valley of contentment and happiness. This, however, is far from the truth. Birmingham is a city encased in fear and tension; one that is really very hard to describe.



"People in this city have become very edgy due to the recent racial problems. It is not safe to go out at night, all business should be transacted in the daylight. Police protection is not adequate.

"Birmingham is known as the 'Steel Center of the South'. Because of this it has a different socio-economic group than that of some leading southern cities. Many citizens who work in the steel plants have not received adequate education, thus heightening the racial problems.

"The businessmen are just realizing the seriousness of the racial problem in Birmingham. When more people on this level speak out in favor of racial harmony, half of the battle will be won. I am told that the tension in this city is easing. I really hope that it is."

a share of the responsibility. It must be realized that the days of the double standard in education are drawing to a close and graduates will be expected to compete on national levels and will be judged according to national norms. An institution is failing its students when it graduates inferior persons.

On our campus there are too many intellectually apathetic students. In too many instances, there is lack of the pursuit of knowledge as an end in itself. There are too many "degree-seekers" and too few students. Perhaps this is due to the fact that many young women are still under the erroneous impression that because woman's primary role involves home and family care, she needs only the barest minimum of education.

This is a nineteenth century concept of the female role. On our shoulders will rest the responsibility of raising a generation that will have to compete as never before and will have to meet unlimited demands. Can we prepare them if we ourselves are inferior?

Perhaps no one is more aware of the importance of a good job, money, and security than is the Negro in America. For so long he has had to struggle against unlimited odds to secure these comforts. But should these be goals within themselves or should they be necessary stepping stones to more idealistic and spiritually rewarding goals? Man must not find ultimate satisfaction in material comforts but obtaining these, must search beyond for higher and more noble rewards. Striving for these noble attainments is the essence of the good life.

It is our responsibility to prove our readiness and to eliminate even the few cases of unpreparedness. However, in order to improve, we must recognize our deficiencies and not try to hide them. Sit-ins, kneel-ins, and wade-ins are useful and effective devices, but along with these we must also try study-ins!

—SHEILA C. BRINKLEY

LET'S HAVE A TALK

Is the fact that you don't have a new dress for every dance important to you? Is the fact that you do not have at least five boys interested in you important? Is the fact that you are not doing your best academic work important to you?

These questions may seem to be silly at first glance but in truth they represent to some extent the basic value system found here on campus. It seems to me that we as students should examine ourselves and find out exactly what is important to us. In these critical times we as young Negro students should have some very definite value standards if we are to be successful in our lifetime.

Many of us do not seem to realize that our values are shaped by our everyday actions. I am sure that if we realized this fact many of the annoying habits that have become characteristic of our campus would disappear. Rumor and idle gossip have been reborn—the next time you enter the chapel take a look—Miss Idle Gossip is buried—let's keep her that way.

When you walk out of the library without checking out a book properly, what do you call it? I call it stealing. When you use the side doors after 8:00 p.m. do you realize that you may be exposing your fellow sisters to danger from "the man in the street?" When you "neck" with your current flame for two or three hours, ask yourself what do you know about this person—you may be surprised with the answer. Remember girls, the parlors were designed for your use.

Let's be considerate of our sisters by cutting down on the noise. There is no need to hear the noise from the dormitory when standing on the outside.

I am sure that if we realize that these habits and characteristics are easy to form but hard to break, we will be less anxious to acquire them. Let's remember that as individuals our parents, relatives and friends are looking at us and as Negroes, society is looking at us. Respectfully,

Jo Laurence Richardson

RECORD CORNER

Hey there, record collectors and album lovers! For the next eight issues, come and swing with us in the Record Corner. We have a sampling of classical, popular, and that good old rock and roll, so stick around. We may mention your favorites!

On the classical scene this month, pianist Clifford Curzon paints the romantic ecstasy of the Brahms Sonata in F Minor and the dark, sweet sounds of his two Intermezzi in a beautiful blending of tones. On the London label for you violin fans (M.T.) Jascha Heifetz performs the brilliant Beethoven Violin Sonatas in their entirety. His exquisite rendering of these pieces is precise and imaginative. A must for all campus "long-hairs."

Popularly speaking, the exceptional Julie London "torches it" heavily on her latest LP called Julie's Golden Greats. "Cry Me a River" is one of the best on this album. As for the folk music buffs, Johnny Cash in his album, The Best of Johnny Cash comes on Strong, with the vibrant force of his powerful personality.

We all know that Ray Charles is "Busted". As for the new scene, Ruby and The Romantics have a ballad with a way-out guitar, called "Young Wings Can Fly." It should go far.