

# A LESSON FROM SPELMAN

How often have we college students been told to enjoy our college days like no others we may ever experience? Yet sometimes when you leave your college home to visit another you may find it difficult to point yourself in the homeward direction because, while away, you've seen a few better ways that might be incorporated into your home scene to make it all the better. But home is so hard to change once people have become accustomed to doing some things a certain way even if some of these things are of a recent origin. And in the mind of any rational person who thinks a given community could use a wee bit of change is also a reservation that maybe you don't have the right to suggest changes to the powers-that-be.

The answer to this last thought is that when people in your community say to you "this campus is on the verge of self-destruction" you have an obligation to disseminate the knowledge you may have to at least let some of the hot air out.

All of this elaboration is prelude to what I want to offer to the campus at large, as plausible solutions to some of the problems students complain of.

Last month I had occasion to visit the "other one"—Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia. Bennett and Spelman are the only colleges for black women in the United States. And aside from the physical differences, which one may guess is the direct result of Spelman's being Rockefeller related, and the size of the student enrollment, which is obviously linked to the fact that physically they are larger than Bennett is, and what it cost to attend Spelman, \$3,100 as opposed to \$2,500 here, there are also some internal difference that make Spelman unbelievably more appealing.

First there is the dining hall set up—no meal tickets. The dardnest thing about our meal tickets is that no one knows where they came from. (Being ignorant sometimes keeps you off the hook around here when students want to place blame.) Anyhow, at Spelman they have a numbers system. I gather that one receives a dining hall number at the opening of each academic year. These numbers are printed on cards and then embossed to keep them from becoming easily damaged or dampened. When one walks into the Spelman dining hall you present your number if asked to or simply state your number as you go by the numbers person. If she recalls your number, no questions are asked. If there are questions, you must show your dining hall number card. At Bennett this could be implemented by typing a different number on 600 strips of paper and sliding this paper behind our college IDs. This system would eliminate the passing of gems from students to the Bennett ticket lady who has to sometimes handle filthy-looking meal tickets.

Next coming into easy view at Spelman is a menu—typed—for that week, so if you don't like what's cooking you may leave at that point. The next point cannot be impressed enough on the person who prepares our menus. There is a certain amount of variety in their meals. For example the salads. Each day one has a choice of two salads. First there is your basic tossed salad which is a daily item; then there is another salad like macaroni, potato, or carrots and raisins. While I visited, the food was delicious; however, I was told that my timing was perfect as a petition had been circulated a day earlier when the food had been for a while in a not-so-delicious state.

Pressing right along, the next big item of business on their campus is the gate situation. Yes, they have gates but the gates are open at all times and they also have little guard houses at their two entrances and unlike the Bennett gates, their gates do not inconvenience Spelman students but only outsiders. The only time a gentleman may drive his car onto their campus is after 12:00 midnight when he is returning a young lady. And I might add that the young man is not allowed the rest of the morning to deposit said young lady. As for those poor Bennett ladies who just like to see the guys driving their mobiles through, it is time we began raising your level of consciousness. Showing off cars is high school and at least by your second semester at college you should begin putting away high school attitudes.

Of course security would not like to have to open and close gates for students to park if there is available space on Union Drive. But let's face some facts. Security, like everyone else on this campus, is here to serve the students. Everyone who works here was hired under the premise that this was his overall purpose. To those security persons who would not like to do this, I shall suggest that they seek other employment if this plan is instituted here.

The Spelman key system is not worthy of mention as many of us Bennett students cannot remember to close the side doors behind ourselves.

Neither are the renovated dorms worthy of mention as when Spelman needs some new facility all they have to do is write a memo (big exaggeration) whereas President Miller has to go out on foot and talk people into investing funds in Bennett (very little exaggeration.) When the funds get here Bennett will probably have some better looking dorms inside than presently exist.

By now you are wondering why the heck I did not attend



Spelman to begin with, or stay there while I was so happy. The answer is very simple. Some people don't need to be at a college even the size of Spelman, which is more than a thousand strong, and some people don't want to be in Atlanta, Georgia year round. And believe it or not Bennett has a bigger reputation for academics than our look-alike. I say this to offend no one but this point was brought home to me by one Spelmanite and several Morehouse men.

As it was easy for me to go to Spelman and see those items on our campus that could be overhauled, I'll bet some Spelmanites could come here and find loads of things that we are doing right that they may be going about in a less than perfect manner.

I for one am not interested in Spelman being the only college for women in the US—I do not want Bennett graduates to become an extinct species. After all, it must be a lonesome feeling when your alma mater doesn't exist anymore, something like not having a home to go back to.

**BENNETT BANNER**  
 Tues., March 23 at 6:30 P.M.  
 in The Student Lounge of  
 The Union.

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## A REVIEW

# A&T's "Fiddler" Mixes Soul Music With Yiddish Accents

by Robyn-Denise Berryhill

The letters on the reverse side of the marquee read, "It's all about tradition." Inside the theatre, more than thirty voices sang about tradition, about custom and conflict, and about change. It's all about "Fiddler on the Roof," presented March 1-6 in the Paul Robeson theater at A & T State University.

"Fiddler on the Roof" takes place in a small Russian village called Anatevka around the turn of the century. It is a tense time because of the oncoming start of the first Russian revolution. Anatevka's residents are humble, hard-working, deeply orthodox Jews struggling to deal with life but finding solace and contentment in their religion and customs. Among these people is Tevye, a milkman, superbly played by Edwin Battle, and his family — Golde, his wife (Fernanda Copeland), and five daughters (whose names all sound alike except for the first letter).

The crux of the story centers around the change of traditional ways and customs and the effect it has on Tevye and his family. It all starts when his oldest daughter Tzeitel (pronounced with a "Z"), played by Tracey Webber, falls in love with Motel (E. Z. Cole) but instead is being forced to marry the wealthy butcher Lazar Wolfe (Bobby Rhinehart) in a union arranged by Yente, the town matchmaker (Sandra Jones).

Naturally, but contrary to custom, Tzeitel protests and after a tearful battle with Tevye convinces him to let her marry her beloved. Subsequently Tzeitel's triumph over daddy prompts the other daughters to follow suit and forgo the matchmaking scene.

Then the conflict really begins. Tevye is forced to cope with other challenges to his traditional way of life and finally to his religion.

When asked why he chose to do a play about Jewish people at an all-black university, Dr. John M. Kilamanjaro, director and chairman of the drama department at A & T said: "Fiddler" is a play that speaks of something everyone can relate to and particularly blacks. It talks about togetherness, about struggles, and problems we all can identify with. It is a musical, yes, and a comedy; but there is a bit of sadness and tragedy so it does have a message. Besides that, I have always liked the music."

During its run on Broadway, aside from winning almost every major award in the theatre, "Fiddler on the Roof" captured and holds to this day the distinction of having been the longest-running play on the New York stage. In addition to this it racked up a sizeable amount of Oscar nominations as a movie in 1972. With such impressive credentials it goes without saying that the play was obviously successful. But one still wonders about the relationship of a traditionally Jewish play and an all-black cast.

For one thing, all-black casts in a production obviously intended for others is nothing new. To cite an example, Otto Preminger in 1954 directed an all-black cast of Bizet's classic opera "Carmen" in a motion picture version called "Carmen Jones". Needless to say after twenty years blacks have been able to star in plays that relate to their own lifestyles. The rallying cries of what is and is not "relevant" seemed to have suddenly gone dim and one likes

to feel that in addition to black plays all theatre can and should be given a try.

Still perhaps the biggest flaw with A & T's "Fiddler" was the tone quality of black voices which were thrown into speaking with strained Yiddish accents. This alone left you wondering if this was a serious production or merely a satire of it. Yente, the matchmaker, had a sort of Pearl Bailey sound to her voice and Golde sounded like Theresa Merritt's "That's My Mama."

And definite vintage soul was evident throughout the entire production. In one of the musical numbers, "If I Were a Rich Man," Edwin Battle as Tevye finger-popped and be-bopped right in time with the music as did some other cast members in "To Life." The trio of ladies who sang "Matchmaker" could easily have passed for Diana Ross and the Supremes in peasant costumes. Lester Pratt in the role of Perchick the revolutionary student sounded as if he were addressing a black power rally all during his part. If he had suddenly said "all power to the people" it wouldn't have been surprising.

However, the play did have it's good moments. E. Z. Cole and Angela Malone as da Hodel turned in excellent performances on "Miracle of Miracles," "Matchmaker," and "Far From the Home I Love." The only fault with the musical accompaniment though was the use of the organ which gave it a rather eerie, skating-rink type of sound.

All in all however, despite its flaws and faults, "Fiddler on the Roof" at A & T was at least worth the time it took to watch.

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