

Last Editorial from This Editor

The first time this editor was instructed to write something to fill this slot, at the insistence of the adviser, a sort of total loss for words overcame all thinking facilities.

That editorial was curt, short in comparison to some of the winded ones that have since appeared in this space on page two.

Now faced with writing my final editorial for this paper, the wheels in the mind once again have ceased to turn.

So in this editorial an effort to clear up some matters and also define the aims of the paper as they have been, to those who have by now still not figured out just what it was we were up to.

Among the things we have not sought to do is hurt anyone. These editorials are designed only to call attention to some other sides of given items that members of the college community might not have considered. All the opinions in this slot belong to the editor no matter how often they coincide with the ideas of others.

As for newswriting we have covered those issues that students on our campus want to know about—and should know about—to the best of our ability. And our staff has done a fine job in this difficult area of handling the news objectively with the aid of the adviser.

Among the things we have not attempted to do is to become a giant public-relations press release as that is not the responsibility of the student press and here is a hope that the BANNER will never have to reduce itself to such means in order to come out on a regular basis.

The awards this paper has won in the past two years since it evolved from nonexistence have been most helpful in inspiring us to do better each issue and we hope that these awards will be of inspiration to future BANNER newspaper staffs.

Thanks for supplying us with a never ending source of news, Bennett College.

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Robyn's Nest

Marcia Gillespie Shares Career Highlights, Insights with Banner Columnist

by Robyn-Denise Berryhill

“... over the past six years we've struggled, grown and hopefully matured. But don't get me wrong, we're still not complacent. In fact we never hope to be. We're growing, learning, each and every day. And our challenge remains clear. It's not about being the only Black women's service magazine, it's about being the best...”

Marcia Ann Gillespie;
Editor, "Essence" Magazine
May 1976

In May of 1970, a little over two years after the riots in my native town of Washington, D. C. my chief concerns were whether or not to go to college after high school graduation and if so where, what my then boyfriend was doing on the class trip (which I was unable to attend) and what I was going to wear to the senior Prom. In my circles everyone seemed to be submerged into the pseudoism of the Black power movement. Afros, dashikis, bangles, boycotts and burning bras were vogue. America was introduced to five brothers from Gary, Indiana who sang about love being as easy as ABC and all sort of programs that supposedly granted us identity seemed to spring up everywhere almost by magic.

There's a certain newsstand in D. C. down on 14th and New York Ave. that I still go to 'til this very day because they sell books and periodicals at discount prices. Being a naturally inquisitive Cancerian by nature I will read everything from The Wall

Street Journal to the back of a Rice Krispies box. Seemingly at that time the only Black periodicals sold in that store were "Ebony" and "Jet" and some Black true confession magazines known as "Tan," "Sepia" and "Jive." Well, on one particularly warm day in late April I was rumaging through the store as usual (the sales clerk watching me as if I'd steal everything in the joint). I spotted another magazine with a Black model on the cover with the title "Essence" spread across its exterior in large yellow letters. Its price was 60¢. So I picked up a copy and briefly leafed through its content. One advertisement in particular caught my attention: that of a bald-headed Black model advertising a certain make-up for Black women. Today six years later that make-up, like a lot of other Black images, is no longer in existence. But "Essence" magazine is still alive and well with its Editor-in-Chief Marcia Ann Gillespie.

Born and reared in Rockville Centre, N. Y., Ms. Gillespie took over the editor's position from then Editor-in-Chief Ida Lewis in May of 1971—a little more than six months after coming to work at "Essence" as a managing editor.

Just before my interview with her I pondered greatly over just what I would say to this lady whose column I read and admired monthly; this lady who had already attained what I hopefully aspired to be; this lady whom I later found out raises a pet banana tree, loves books and records—and has quite a collection I might add, and is a gourmet cook who can and does cook for 50 people at a time. What would I say.

When I entered the lounge in the student union she sat poised and relaxed with an eager smile, acknowledging all around her. To her left sat an entourage of colleagues and friends who had made the pilgrimage here to Bennett with her. Upon being introduced my first words were "How are you Miss Gillespie" to which she promptly replied I was to call her Marcia from there after. When my interview began I was joined by a number of students who came to see, be seen and ask questions. A student eventually broke the ice when she stated that she had been an avid reader of "Essence" but

had declined to do so in the past months because the magazine seemed to be lacking something. Marcia quickly asked her just what it was lacking. "I can't exactly say," the student replied, "but it seems to be lacking articles on how to do things, like Cosmopolitan for instance." "Cosmopolitan," Marcia answered, "seems to be designed towards turning out more sensuous women. By that I mean having articles on how to achieve orgasms and expressing sensuality. It seems to me that at "Essence" we have more of an obligation to the Black woman than that; at least we've tried to."

With that I proceeded to ask her a series of questions. "What type of an image were they trying to present? Did she feel that "Essence" was a substantial breakthrough or merely a passing fad like the Black movement seemed to be or like Black movies for example?" "That's so many questions at once," she answered. "Give me a chance to deal with one thing at a time." "In a lot of ways the whole Black movement was beneficial. Without it there may or may not have been an "Essence," I couldn't say. So in some ways it was a good thing. I think that we have always tried to be about raising the awareness level of Black women."

She continued, "I came to "Essence" and I wanted to be editor-in-chief and I gave myself a three-year time period. Okay, it happened. Since that point there are certain other things I would like to do. I would like to write a book but knowing me I will be liking to write that book for six years. I don't have the kind of discipline to take the time from 7 o'clock til midnite to write. I'm not that kind of person. I'd rather go and hang out or read somebody else's book or stare at a wall."

Upon graduation from Lake Forest College in Lake Forest, Ill., Marcia originally wanted to be a historian but with a campus visit from a member of the editorial staff of "Vogue" she "saw instantly that magazine work needs an eclectic person — one who reads a lot and is interested in many things. That person was me."

Asked just what the making of

that magazine we rush to the mailboxes each month for entails, Marcia said, "Each issue is usually planned three months in advance, like for instance we're now working towards our July issue. Generally, we have a staff meeting each week in which each member of the editorial staff is supposed to present at least five new ideas. We talk over themes, graphics and layouts. In July we're supposed to be celebrating the bicentennial so we chose to do a layout on the contributions of Black women to this country. Also we're having an astrologer draw up a chart on the birth of the U.S.A. to maybe have some insight on why we act like we do."

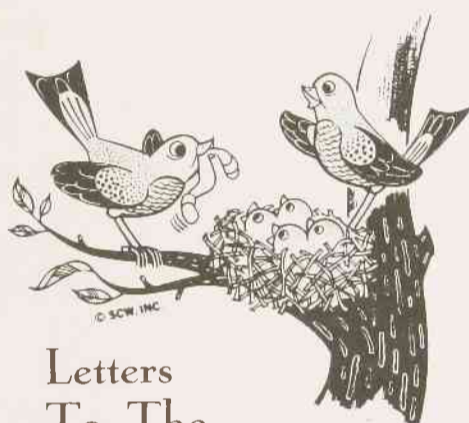
Continuing on, she was quick to point out that "the two main things that sell a magazine are advertising and circulation." "There have been sometimes," she added, "that I have been really disappointed with some of the issues I turned out. But, you learn from your mistakes and hopefully try not to repeat them."

During her college career in the sixties, Marcia spent her Saturdays tutoring children in math and reading. The awareness-seeking of the sixties and her role as student and teacher brought forth "aspects of myself which I had previously sublimated, like my anger at the injustices perpetrated on minorities and my anger at what those injustices did to people. Although I always had a Black identity, it became stronger during those times."

Marcia's first job in journalism was as a researcher with Time, Inc. She explains that the craft "I learned was valuable but I also learned a lesson that was equally as painful. I saw how the white Anglo-Saxon point-of-view colored all aspects of history. As I researched more deeply into the history of Blacks in this country I saw how history is written by those who have the power to say who you are. If you are the majority, you can shape and color history any way you wish."

So as she became more of what she calls a "needler" she was sent upstairs to work with the now defunct "Life" magazine on their four part Black history series. Shortly afterward she returned to

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Letters To The Editor

Dear Editor:

I have two requests to make to this college; one to the administration and the other to the student body.

To the administration I would like to request that some kind of air conditioners be put in the coffee house especially for use during Fun Night, as it gets quite hot and sweaty down there. I know this may seem unreasonable but I hope you don't say that you don't have the money as you had money to put up gates, no parking signs, and even enough money to redecorate or air condition particularly every office around this campus.

My next request is addressed to the student body. It is a very small one... PLEASE PICK UP THE BROKEN PIECES OF GLASS IN THE DINING HALL OR ASK MEMBERS OF THE DINING HALL STAFF TO DO THIS FOR YOU. Many of us walk away from our carelessness that is sometimes a potentially dangerous situation. Remember if you fail to be considerate it is not the dining hall's fault but your blame.

Eunice Franklin

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