

Desegregation dilemmas

Over the years, Black colleges have had to overcome financial problems, declining enrollment and scores of other obstacles. Probably the most recent, and certainly most distressing, is the Department of Education's desegregation efforts. "Nutshell" Magazine recently reported that "Fourteen states—most of them in Southern and border areas—are currently involved in cases and now stand in various stages of investigation, litigation or implementation of Department of Education-approved plans to correct gross racial and funding imbalances."

Desegregation proponents cite many attributes of the proposal. First, the plan will foster a more equal racial ratio on the campuses. By eliminating duplicate programs at nearby Black and white colleges, desegregation advocates will force a student to commute to another school to take advantage of a certain program. When a course in contemporary publishing, for example, is offered only at UNC-G, Bennett and A&T students will have to take the course there and, in the process, gain the advantages of a white college experience. Secondly, it will equalize federal funding, which has traditionally been greater at white colleges. With the ratio of Black and white students more equal, the government would probably give just as much money to a so-called Black school as a white one. Thirdly, the plan could lead to the end of "Black" schools.

The rationale is that if the thrust of the proposal is to balance racial inequalities, a successful enforcement of the program would lead to schools that were Black-white rather than predominantly either.

A close scrutiny of the other side of the issue uncovers many inconsistencies and improbabilities, though. First, of all, by enforcing a desegregation plan, the government infringes upon a student's right to select the college of her or his choice. Often times a student selects a college because of the advantages it offers as all-white or all-Black. This plan eliminates that choice and asks a student to pay for a school that may not be to his liking.

Secondly, by enacting this program, the government forces an unrealistic integration. Forcing students to attend the same

school does not guarantee that these students will interact with each other. There will still be separate sides of the classroom and cafeteria. An inside look at any university will prove this point.

Thirdly, desegregation destroys the identity of both schools. All colleges will begin to have the same kind of population, the same kind of atmosphere. Black colleges will no longer have the social, cultural or academic environment they are known for. Going to school at UNC-G, for instance, will be no different than going to A&T.

A fourth point to examine is the financial aspect. The desegregation plan claims to give more equal funding, but at the same time it heaps many financial burdens on the institution. The plan dazzles its supporters with federal funding, but it also requires that the colleges spend their own money attempting to change their racial images. The cost of brochures (saying that a school with 3% minority enrollment is rapidly changing to a racially balanced institution) falls heavily on the shoulders of the individual school. The proposition is not only expensive but extremely tentative and long-range.

The desegregation plan seems to be just another way to the fight against "separate but equal" schools. Perhaps instead of scratching the idea of a separate but equal school completely, government officials should search further for concrete ways to make schools truly equal. If not, the schools of tomorrow may end up separate but identical. The proposition might then be thought of as a device used solely for the purpose of getting rid of Black schools. Desegregation may well be the federal pencil which erases the foundation of Black achievement that has existed for over a century.

The most significant argument for the plan is that it will enhance the quality of Black institutions. Faculty and students who once avoided Black schools because of their shortcomings might, under this plan, be tempted to the schools they once ignored. The question is, if desegregation becomes a reality, will there be a Black school to enhance?

(Myra J. George)



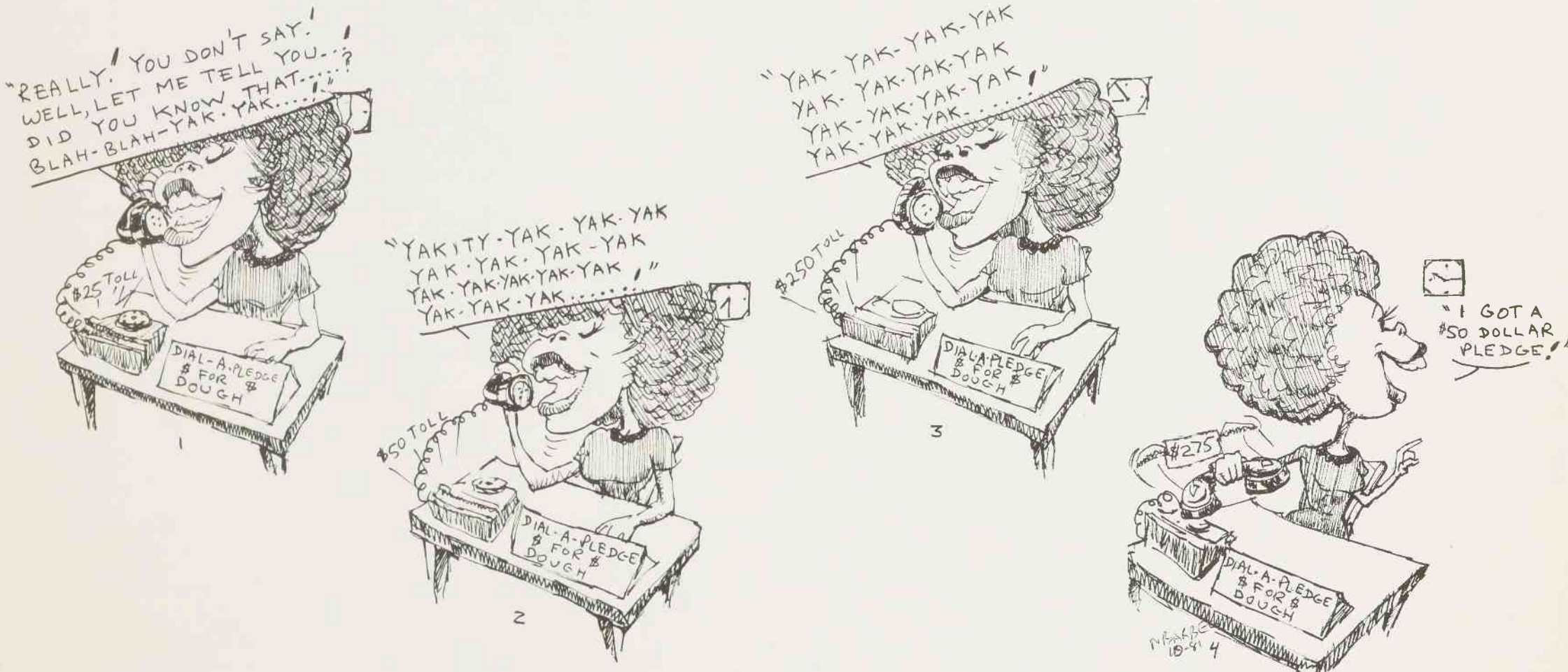
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THE GREAT AMERICAN SMOKEOUT

American Cancer Society

This space contributed by the publisher.



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Letters to the editor:

"I.D." irritates student

To the Editor:

One day Betty Bennett and her roommate Stephanie Student, typical Bennett Belles, thought they'd be smart and go to church. After returning from church, they were feeling really good. They decided to go straight to dinner. On the way to the cafeteria, they realized that they didn't have their I.D.'s.

Betty said, "We'd better go back. You know Rita Rude won't let us in without our I.D.'s."

Said Stephanie, "Today is Sunday. We just came from church, maybe she'll let us in without our I.D.'s."

Betty said, "I think she takes some kind of oath. 'I vow to see I.D. or die.'" The girls approached the glass doors with hopes that they would get in the cafeteria without their I.D.'s.

Rita Rude said, "Ladies, may I see your I.D. please?" With perspiration dripping from their foreheads, Stephanie said, "Miss Rude, we just came back from church. We don't have our I.D.'s with us," and Betty cried, "Please, please let us in to eat."

Well, a miracle happened and Miss Rude permitted them to enter the cafeteria without their I.D.'s.

The line was extremely long. They stood in the line for almost an hour. When they finally reached the trays, the girl in front of Betty took the last one. There was another ten-minute wait. When the trays finally arrived, Betty turned to Stephanie and said, "Hey, I think maybe we're gonna get something to eat."

By the time Betty turned back around, five girls had "jumped" her in line. At this point Betty was very angry, but she kept her cool.

Stephanie said, "Well, at least (See Page 3)