

Self-pride is more than a label

Ever since I heard that the Reverend Jesse Jackson is trying to have the black American label changed to African-American, I have been trying to decide if it should be changed. Right now I have not taken any particular stand on the issue, because in analyzing both sides of the argument, I have come upon some valid points which should be considered carefully before deciding.

On the pro side, it seems to me that changing the label to African-American will help our society to get away from identifying people, particularly minorities such as ourselves, by our skin color. Black Americans are the only race of people who have the color of their skin as their label of identification. And more often than not, the term "black" in the black American label is not even capitalized. Also, even though minority groups, such as ourselves, tend to call everyone else who is not a minority, "whites", they more commonly refer to themselves as "Caucasians."

Also, the change of label could be considered another movement towards self-pride, which is essentially how we became labeled as black Americans. In the 1970s, a Black Power movement took place, and black became beautiful. To show our pride, we began displaying the black pride colors, red, black, and green, and calling ourselves "black Americans." Now, Rev. Jackson and others feel that it is time for another change. A change to a name that reflects the pride of our African heritage and not the color of our skin. A change to show that we have not forgotten our roots.

On the con side of the argument, changing our name once again might reflect a sense of confusion on our part as to our identity. In the 1960s we were "coloreds"; in the 1970s we became "blacks"; and now in the 1980s and 90s,

we're African-Americans. It does seem if we change our identity every 10 years or so, it could make others wonder if we really do know who and what we are and want to be.

There is also another point which was recently brought to my attention. Would a "white" person born in an African country, who then later became a U.S. citizen, also be considered an African-American? If so, then the term "black" would inevitably appear once again at the beginning of the African-American label to distinguish us from a "white" African. Then, we would be right back where we are now, using skin color as the main basis of identity.

So, is it better to change our label from black American to African-American? The African-American label represents our pride in our heritage without reference to our skin color. Yet the label black American uses skin color as its foundation. It answers the two main questions of our identity — who we are: black and what we are: black — in one word. So is it really all that important to get away from skin color identifications? If it is, is it possible? It seems to me that no matter what we are called, the term "black" will always appear before our name, since it is the easiest way for non-minorities to identify and distinguish us from themselves.

So, in the end, where do I stand on this issue? I still do not have a particular stand. However, I do feel that our society needs to eliminate identity by skin color. But whether or not a label change will eliminate that habit, I don't know. However, I do know that whatever I am labeled, although my feet are firmly "planted" on American soil, my heart is firmly "rooted" in my African heritage. (Yvette N. Freeman)

First Lady's graduation visit ignites debate

Welcome, Mrs. Bush

Opinion
by Cheryl Floyd

Is there some law in the constitutions of black colleges that says that anyone who comes to speak must be black? I think not.

I heard the announcement that Barbara Bush will be the commencement speaker, and every ounce of my black consciousness rebelled to ask, "Why Barbara Bush?" That, though, was only an initial reaction which lasted for almost two whole minutes.

Aside from the very obvious reason that Mrs. Bush will bring limitless and very welcome national attention to this great institution, there are a few other good reasons that we should consider.

First of all, Barbara Bush is a supporter of women's colleges which is what Bennett is—at least that has been the consensus during self-study. No matter what ethnic background she claims heritage to, she is "for" Bennett College and should be neither overlooked nor turned away because of the color of her skin. Sound familiar?

To those of my Bennett sisters whose complaints rest on the fact that this very prominent guest is white and to those who have already presumed that the first fact is evidence of prejudice, I submit that she is already your enemy and that there is even a reason for her to speak to you. When has a person in combat (and since I hear rumors of a petition, someone is fighting something, if not someone else) ever been fortunate enough to hear the words spoken by an enemy to the enemy's supporters? When else could a person get into his enemy's

mind? Hardly ever!

Have we, the "Talented Tenth," become so narrow-minded in our black consciousness that we choose to limit ourselves rather than expand in every possible direction simply because the method of expansion in a particular direction depends on a person with a different skin color? If so, I hope this is no indication of what our generation of this pool of talented black people—black women—is to become.

The minds of black people have already had limits placed on them by other shallow people (yes, I do mean from other races) who determine what we cannot become, do, see, feel, touch or smell. We don't need to place the same limits on our own minds. It makes us just as shallow.

Barbara Bush is not the first white person that you, fellow Belles, have had to deal with, and she certainly will not be the last. You deal with whites everyday when/if you go to classes, in the stores that you love to shop in and probably on the job, if you are a working Belle.

I'd like to remind everyone that Bennett College is our home, and a place we should be proud of. I have grown to love our school, president, faculty, staff, administration and my Bennett sisters. Why wouldn't I want to share these wonderfully unique things with anybody in the world? Whites need the same exposure to black culture as some blacks do.

These grounds were good enough for Bob Jordan to walk last semester, and the classrooms were good enough for Diana Embley to learn in. Why not Barbara Bush?

opinion
by Joycelynn Hodges

What's all this fuss about the 1989 commencement speaker being the wife of President George Bush, First Lady Barbara Bush?

Everyone seems to think that it is such an honor. For whom, the graduating seniors? I don't think so. Mrs. Bush may be a prominent figure in America, but where does she stand in black America? Mrs. Bush speaking to the Belles is like the wife of South African Prime Minister Botha speaking to the seniors of North Carolina A&T State University.

When the senior class was asked whom we wanted for a commencement speaker, we all gave our choices. Then a list was read on who had been invited as a speaker. This list included names like Camille Cosby, Coretta Scott King and Oprah Winfrey, to name a few. Yes, Mrs. Bush's name was also on the list, but it was also stated that it was very unlikely that she would accept.

Speaker is disappointing

I think that at that point Mrs. Bush had already accepted. What ever happened to democracy and the right to vote? I understand that some of the other choices did not accept, but there could have been others. Yolanda King, daughter of the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., said that A&T was the first black school to ever invite her to speak. Amazing, isn't it?

What I took as a slap in the face was the fact that all we have ever heard about for the past two years is that we are striving to become successful black women, "phenomenal black women." If this is the motto of Bennett College, how can the First Lady tell me how to become this type of woman?

While it is true that the baccalaureate speaker is Dr. Willie Barrow, CEO of Operation P.U.S.H., it is a disappointment that the commencement speaker is Mrs. George Bush.

And what about all of the work being done on the campus? Why is it that Bennett

never takes pride in itself until a diplomatic figure comes to the school? The same thing happened during the inauguration week. Who are the new fences for, us or Mrs. Bush? Have you noticed all of the extra security officers? We have always needed them.

While it is true that Mrs. Bush will cause great publicity and attention to Bennett, how long do you suppose this will last? During the commencement, all attention is going to be on Mrs. Bush, but after talking to some members of the senior class, it is safe to say that their attention will not be focused on her, but on the high number of security here on campus and what they do as she speaks.

What those in charge fail to realize is that the class of 1989 is not naive and we know that we were swindled. There has always been an emphasis on listening to the student body and their concerns, but in this case the senior class concerns have been ignored.

Pfeiffer cats are remembered; BEEP praises Belles

To the editor:

On October 25, 1988, Pfeiffer Hall suffered the loss of five newborn kittens. These newborn kittens belonged to Molly. Who is Molly, you are probably wondering? Molly is Pfeiffer Hall's adopted cat who is black and white and walks around Bennett's campus very proudly, very gracefully and very queenly. Now she walks in sorrow, in grief and in mourning. Why?

Someone has chosen to take the responsibility to call the Humane Society, a decision that was wrong. As a result, her kittens have been taken away forever. Pfeiffer Hall cared for Molly even before finding out that she was pregnant. Molly trusted us like she trusted no others because she knew that we loved her and that we would let no harm come to her or her then-unborn babies.

After the kittens were born, they were treated like angels. They were precious not only to Molly but to each young lady who contributed to her well-being.

It absolutely breaks our hearts to know that someone could be so cruel, so jealous (which is what we believe was the case) to do such an awful thing out of spite.

We go around talking about

sisterhood. Well, I'm sorry no sister of mine would do such a thing no matter how much resentment she felt towards me. It's going to take a lot more from a lot of people to prove this sisterhood we talk and sing about.

The ladies of Pfeiffer Hall all seem to agree that we have been betrayed by our own, and it's really sad. A lot was learned from this one small incident. We all need to examine ourselves and see just what sisterhood means. I would also suggest looking up the definition of friendship because that's where it all starts.

If you find that you can't be a friend, then you might as well forget about being a sister. It just won't happen. It might help if you keep this little thought instilled in your mind: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you! You can't go wrong with anyone or anything as long as you follow this thought. If this does not work for you, then what you need to remember is that what goes around comes around. What you sow, you will most definitely reap (and you always reap much more than you sow). So please for your own sake, be careful!

Aye-sha Brock
and the ladies of Pfeiffer Hall

Dear Dr. Scott:

Comments received so far from members of the Black Executive Exchange Program confirm my observations: Bennett College's program was a memorable experience!

The Bennett Belles were warm, inquiring, active listeners, receptive and reciprocal. We all learned from each other. The program as arranged by Jean Humphries and Julia Covington appeared well planned. The outcome was successful.

I commend you for the leadership you provide to faculty, administrators and students. I thank you for your loyal support of BEEP. I wish you continued success.

Renee Du Jean
Director

Videos—from 1

third place, \$2500. The contest, requiring no entry fees, opened April 1 with Sept. 1 the deadline for all submissions.

Entries will be judged by ATAS panels for (1) overall excellence of conception and execution and (2) for impact, accuracy and effectiveness. Academy officials point out that the contest is designed for a format that would be appropriate for broadcasting including use on talk shows.

The Bennett Banner

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