

An open letter to Blaine Macke

Dear Blaine.

I read a copy of your editorial "BSM Pressure" which appeared in the UNC Journalist. Needless to say, I was shocked and deeply grieved by your opinions. Knowing you from past experiences, I feel particularly moved to reply to all the charges that you made against the BSM. It is my sincere hope that you read this and ultimately reconsider your position.

To begin with, I would like to state that the BSM is the sum total of the Black student populace at Carolina and generally reflects this body's stance. In the past when considerable numbers of Black students were into developing political awareness and involvement, the BSM was likewise. Presently most are interested in making their experiences at Carolina both meaningful and livable. The BSM has again adjusted itself to the student body and mirrors its concerns.

As you stated in the article, there does exist differences of opinions and tactics as to what needs should be stressed. However, there also exists a common goal—the uplifting of the Black community into a dignified and respected place in American society. You further state that if the students were "to find their own way" they would reject the BSM.

I disagree. I feel that in most instances, they would endorse it. It is my firm belief that no one, knowledgeable of the realities of his/her Black heritage and experience of recent years can forsake the necessity for solid Black organizations to give voice to their needs, pains, and thoughts. They will further realize that independent action as an individual may be quite satisfying personally, but all too often fails the test of time, because of the existence of no structure/institution to insure continuous pressure.

This applies to the efforts of Black students. There is no reason in the world, why you and those after you should have to go through the hell of alienation, discrimination and constant pressure to justify my/our existence at Carolina, as I did. The BSM is designed to seek to remove these crucial problems and keep them removed for future students. The organization is six years old and has a continuum of survival, growth, improvements, failures and successes which are passed on to future students in their legacy. You further go on to state, the majority of Black students now come from integrated schools and because of this, the BSM no longer serves a purpose in orienting them to whites. I disagree.

BSM as home base

Prior to Carolina, students interacted with white only on a daily 8-3:30 basis. Here at Carolina, they don't return home every evening, but remain in a white environ, either with white roommates or under the white oriented auspices of dorms. Staying away from home creates problems for everyone. But when the problem is compounded with

the novel experience of being completely immersed in a white setting which most of us saw, but kept at a distance in high school, real adjustment problems develop.

The BSM can and does provide the absent home base. It represents the Black community, which has been left behind. It provides all the outlets for expression and involvement that home provided—love, companionship, contention, problems and conflicts.

And even more germane to the point, is the fact that most Black students are oriented to whites at Carolina by their peers, who do things sanctioned, unsanctioned, and completely unknown to BSM leadership. I believe that you have really over-exaggerated your criticism when you attach to the BSM great conformity enforcing powers among Black freshmen. The question of whether or not a student is ostracized is decided by his peers, not by any order from the BSM.

Next you stated that the BSM gives the impression that without it nothing exists. As ridiculous as you seem to find this, you should consider all the offerings of the BSM—especially the cultural groups. Without the BSM it is extremely doubtful that these groups and events would take place.

Things do not happen in a vacuum, which is exactly what you would have without the BSM. The University in the past, and I'll wager in the present, offered no standing program or real interest in removing the alienation that Black students feel at Carolina. And furthermore, you must know by now that the University takes a dim view of large numbers of Black students grouping together to do anything. Black individuals they can personally understand, like, and deal with, but not groups which look so much like the threatening masses.

Your implication that the BSM totally saturates the incoming freshmen with slanted views of campus life in "Black Notes," I find totally unwarranted. Especially when I remember that the booklet is printed and distributed by the University office of Special assistant to the Dean.

I am certain that they have no intention of upgrading the BSM, or revealing Black life at Carolina as unsatisfying. If you check very carefully you will find that BSM input into the booklet, on an organizational basis, is quite limited.

Parties are not bribes

Equally misinformed was your implication that the BSM strives to use social functions as bribes to insure Black freshmen support. Such is not the case. The sponsoring of parties by the BSM on a more regular basis is in response to all the hassle and hell that individuals were catching on campus for giving parties.

In as much as the BSM is all about services for its membership the move was made to fill the gap left by the suppression of social function by dorm rules on usage of social lounges, and the problem of

off-campus trouble-makers.

Addressing myself to your bombast of the Black Ink and the Weekly Ink as being propaganda tools, again you have over-exaggerated your criticism. The news and articles of the Black Ink and Weekly Ink are written by your fellow students on what they feel to be relevant issues and events. To label them as propaganda writers is sheer nonsense, when one considers the variety and different attitudes of the writing staff.

Propaganda calls for concentrated effort and directed aim. At no time was this the case with the Inks. Indeed, the policies of the Ink staffs have been (much to my personal dissatisfaction) to invite all to write and be written about, even though they may have done nothing previously to warrant such attention.

Just as objectionable was your charge that the Inks contain inflammatory rhetoric. Really now Blaine, you sound so much like a paranoid white person who sees Blacks asserting themselves and casting white people in a less favorable light. There is nothing inflammatory about facing the facts that Black people are constantly battling uphill.

Simple wants are not met or granted unless a struggle occurs. The university bureaucracy contains considerable elements of a bygone era who wind naught but ill. They are in the system and can give us hell. We have no recourse, but to battle back.

Racism not a myth

In connection with this, you seem to feel that racism at UNC is a myth. Apparently you have not examined either the University or Chapel Hill community surroundings, well. The effects and manifestations of racism are quite prevalent: no Black administrators, embarrassingly few Black professors, decreasing numbers of Black students, scarce as hen's teeth Black graduate students—especially in such crucial departments as dental, medical and law schools, abuse of Black maids and janitors, exploitation of cheap local Black labor and dismissal of them when the university has no further use for them, continued abuse and insults at the hand of local downtown merchants (Golden West, Carolina Grill and Western End of Franklin Street), silence from authorities when racist incidents are reported at the hands of instructors and campus police, and countless other incidents.

But you still maintain that there is an over inflated image of suppression of Black people on campus and surrounding Chapel Hill/Carrboro community. Are you mad!!!! In the face of all these incidents, no one, including you, should doubt the need for the BSM's political voice.

As for the devotion of considerable coverage of the struggles of Black people the world over, I ask you "Why Not?" Especially when we are constantly bombarded with news of events in Europe. The BSM can not help it if the struggle of Black people

throughout the world oftentimes involves conflict with white people or the white power structure.

BSM did not make or shape world events. South Africa is a reality. Continued Portuguese control of areas in Africa that are longing to be free, is a reality. United States support for the white powers in error is a reality. Are we supposed to turn our backs on the struggles of our fellow Black brothers and sisters (let alone their existence as part of humanity!!!! No!!!! Hell No!! Blacks across the whole world should know and deal with these events/struggles on some level whether in mental recognition or physical involvement.

And you ask why considerable coverage is not given to other areas. We have no need to. Other areas receive at least 10 minutes of every news daily broadcasts. I applaud the BSM in its efforts to awaken Black students to the wide world—especially the African continent. A Euro-Americanized concept of the world we already have.

You then attack the BSM for applying face to face pressure on Black students to make them vote and support its function. I maintain that BSM strives to make Black freshmen and other students aware of the forces and issues around and involving them. Mass suffering of Black students from commonly held ailments such as alienation, depression, and a sense of futility which white dominated environs often give or create is inexcusable when students can organize effectively to give voice to their plight and move to correct it. While some play the "Uncle Tom" name calling and correspondingly dismissing this or that student because of this fact, I can offer no defense. I have in the past been guilty of this inclination.

But I will say that I find it very hard to like or respect a person who constantly denies his heritage and very existence by constantly compromising his integrity and exhibiting a sickening willingness to sell me and his people down the river for social/political/economic gain. To see people cringe before others because of feelings of inferiority, due ultimately to their skin color, which I share, infuriates me.

You further object to the BSM placing considerable emphasis on the freshman populace. Doesn't it make good sense when one considers that they are the largest single grouping of Black students. They are new and do not realize what has gone down before. The organization can hardly hope to progress, if up to nearly one half of its potentially active members do not know what is going on.

Demands for more funds on the part of the BSM is far from baseless. The Choir, Opeyo Dancers, Drama Group, Ebony Readers, Black Ink, Weekly Ink, Upendo and all other BSM sponsored activities should be funded and funded well. In as much as Black students enable Carolina to receive considerable amounts of federal funds, as well as all the back taxes that Black generations have invested in this

school before we were allowed to attend it, the BSM should be the first to be funded.

In branding the BSM detrimental to the advancement of good human relations, you make a very tragic charge that will play right into the hands of those who wish Black people ill will, and insist that Blacks, wherever and whenever organized, will only stir up human emotion and disturb the peace. Such charge has been leveled against the NAACP, SCLC, CORE, Black Panthers, SNCC and every other organization that has worked for the betterment of our people.

UNC limits growth

As for your final charge that the BSM limits the growth of Black Students, I maintain very strong opposition. If anything the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill limits and under-develops the intellectual growth of many of its students—especially Blacks who are passed off as being generally mediocre in talent and intellect.

Very few can match my involvement within the BSM. I endorsed it my freshman year. All though I had quite a few very different ideas at times, I continued to be involved because I recognized its potential and importance. At no time did it limit my personal development, rather it enhanced my growth, gave me a base, a sure anchor upon which I could venture forth into the swirling world of conflicts and consternation that was Carolina. Through it I heightened my perceptions of life and the world around me. And most importantly, I began to have confidence in my ability to grasp concepts, write/communicate ideas, and stand on my own thoughts. Without this outlet I doubt very seriously whether my intellectual/personal growth would have been as great, if at all.

I do not consider myself an outstanding person of overpowering intellect but rather like the average Black student at Carolina. If I could grow through my experiences with the BSM then why can't others? I brand your charges of narrowing the minds of students as a particularly vicious distortion of the truth.

In closing, I would like to say that throughout your article, there were elements of truth, but you quite wrongly tacked the blame on the BSM. The BSM does not make the Black students at Carolina, but rather they make it. If you see provincial attitudes being displayed on campus it is up to you to work to change them. You will not accomplish this by attacking the wrong agent (and I might add in a most grievously wrong manner—a white tabloid that is circulated mainly among whites and not the Black student populace). You should direct more attention to the strengths of Black students at Carolina, and understand from whence they come—the individual student, and ultimately how they can be changed—through the BSM.

In Unity, Under
and Liberal
Larry Wade