

# Discussion Group Helps Black Males Adjust At UNC

By Charles McNair  
Staff

Networking with white students in "white" settings for future contact references; unity among African-American students at UNC; the implicit absorption by blacks of the inferiority concept; isolation of the black student in the classroom; and self-segregation—these are all topics relative and pressing to today's black male student at UNC. These are also some of the topics brought to light at an informal discussion group "for and about black male students at UNC-CH."

Brothers, now in its second year, is where the black male student can go and voice his opinion, let out anxieties and fears, and become unified with other black males who may not otherwise be a part of his "social circle." It is also a place where he may go to get information, form new ideas, give and get advice and, in so doing, become culturally enriched. It is not a group of genius eggheads brainstorming for the solution to world peace, but regular people who try to make sense of their world and the world around them by communicating.

Dr. Clifford H. Charles, counselor and coordinator of minority student programs, facilitates the discussions. Attending the first meeting of the school year on Sept. 6, I was disappointed by the lack of participants. At the beginning of the meeting, I was the only one there apart from Dr. Charles. As the minutes rolled by, people began to show up so that by the end of the session 5 people were present. "Last year when we met in Chase, we had as few as two people and as many as about 12," stated Dr. Charles, citing that lack of or little publicizing has hindered the group's growth. With only five people there though, I was surprised at how well the group allowed for varying opinions, the frankness of the individuals (i.e. The Gospel According to fill in your name), and the mutual respect afforded to all. "We offer a safe and confidential environment so that you can say what you want without reservations. Confidentiality is a must," explained Charles as everyone took a vow not to attach any names to anything that was said that night.

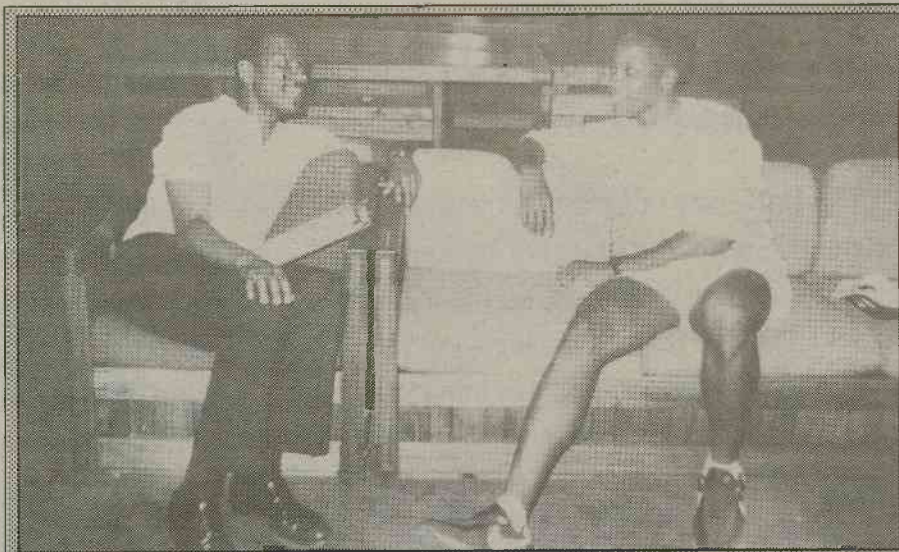
When asked how he found out about the group, Andre Tippens, a junior business major from Charlotte, N.C. replied, "I saw a flyer that said 'Discussion group for black males at UNC.' I thought I would come to this discussion group to see what type of issues were being discussed. Hopefully, I could obtain some useful information that would help me grow as a black male on this campus." When asked what did he think Brothers could contribute to the black community as well as to the University as a whole, Tippens said, "Brothers teaches you not to be ignorant of your culture. It teaches you to love your culture and to love yourself. Brothers contributes to the diversity of the University in the essence that it supports the heightening of cultural and self awareness. And in order to make a cultural contribution attributing to the diversity of anything, you must first know your own."

Dr. Charles has a definite vision for Brothers.

"We're starting off small; we intend to get big. We're trying to develop a community and in order to develop a community you must make sacrifices." The 'you' refers to you my brothers. Dr. Charles also has specific goals for Brothers. "Brothers is here to provide social support for today's black male. It is here to provide cultural affirmation because not many positive reflections of blacks exist on campus except on the courts or on the field. And it is here to increase education and awareness about issues relevant to black people such as AIDS, sex, drugs and alcohol, stress management, and identity." Occasionally, there will be guest speakers from the university or Triangle area featured at the meetings.

Brothers meets every Thursday, 6-7:30 p.m. in the 1st floor lounge of Ehringhaus. Yes, I know that you usually eat during that time. Yes, I know

that the walk in inconvenient. Yes, I know that you are usually studying during that time or that you have other things to do at that time. But if we are to develop a unified community of black males here at UNC, sacrifices are needed—are required. Brothers, I strongly urge you to check out the group formed solely to help meet your personal and social needs as a black male. At a predominantly white university where "racism" is on the lips of almost every black person, is ignoring such a resource created to promote self-worthiness and cultural awareness any less horrible than racism itself? Think about it.



Charles McNair/Black Ink  
Dr. Clifford H. Charles, counselor and coordinator of minority student programs, talks with a student at a Brothers meeting



Akinwale N'Gal Wright/Black Ink

On behalf of the Brothers of the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., Sly Surles presents a quiz file to Dean Fuse-Hall and the Office of Student Counseling.

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