

# The Wrong Strategy At The Wrong Time

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Contributor

A negative act is a lesson. It teaches and accentuates the positive. Often there is great damage done; a chance that it will be repeated. The placement of the statues in front of Davis library was a negative act which has taken a lot of effort to respond to positively. These statues served as a reminder to African-Americans that there are certain places for them in American society and that all the legislation in the world can not change the minds of even the most "well-meaning" white people. Women were reminded of the "importance" of having a man in their life. Asians were reminded of their astounding achievement of being the "model minority." The University of North Carolina was reminded that we still have a long way to go before this campus lives up to its "liberal" reputation. Certainly liberal is a relative label; Chapel Hill is relatively liberal when compared to N.C. State, or Chapel Hill students are seen wearing "liberal" clothing (\$90.00

Birkenstocks, a tie-dye shirt) and talking politically correct language (a steadfast concern about global warming or marine mammals often comes through).

Well this liberal campus certainly showed a lot of its true color when Julia Balk's "The Student Body" was placed in front of Davis Library. White students wrote eloquent and not-so-eloquent letters about the "evolution" of the African-American woman, the superior, and well-respected athletic skills of African-American men, the oversensitivity of the "minorities," the "unfair" portrayal of thin, white men (What A Riot.), and assault by angry, anti-semitic, protestors. There was a petition, many meetings, television cameras, national coverage, an attempt by the College Republicans to place the statues in a partisan framework, angry faculty, a daily protest and now a statue has been damaged.

Sometime over the evening of January 11, "Darnell" was knocked off his dais. The basketball that helped define his existence is gone. He now points pathetically at the

Davis library like a martyr identifying his killer. The other figures ignore him. The sister is too busy balancing a book on her head to help the brother out—"She's got poise and grace though— doesn't she Molly Sue?," a confused spectator yells. The "Student Body" goes on while brothers like Darnell drop like flies, join a prison system with more black people in it than that of South Africa, get shot at in the Persian Gulf or wait in the unemployment line.

Whether the anger it took to knock the statue down was justified or not has been debated ad nauseum. However, as a student who has been involved in the statue

protest, I can only regret the fact that someone did this at a time when the statue issue was 99% resolved. Few things of value in life are accomplished individually. A diverse collection of students from our campus had worked hard to effectively articulate our feel-

ings to a snowblind campus, and a divided nation. An administration plagued by the evils of bureaucracy (protocol, hierarchy, hypocrisy and homogeneity) had decided that it was going to do the right thing and was working hard at finding a solution. Perhaps it wasn't soon enough for some people.

The destruction of the artwork is a clearcut violation of the law whether it's the first amendment or a student code statute on vandalism. It ruins the opportunity for the university to celebrate an ability to handle one of its many problems in the area of diversity. It undermines an important example

of different students working together. This was a negative act. This negative act does have its lessons though. 1). The University of North Carolina will never again be an institution solely for white men. 2). The decision-making processes need to reflect the diver-

sity of the campus (and this does not mean the appointment of "safe" AHANA peoples to positions of influence). 3). People who hold signs in front of a statue and wait patiently for results are harmless; to call these people radical is to lie to yourself. Of course it is easy to celebrate the disappearance of the basketball but 4). Which is better? Forcefully taking it down? or Forcing someone to admit they were wrong and forcing that person to take it down? 5). Sure we can raise hell, but is the destruction of art an *africentered* approach to a problem created by eurocentric thought? 6). African-American men do so much more than entertain and if we're motivated and educated we're capable of *anything*.

As African-Americans we are familiar with the statement that "There is a time and a place for everything." African-Americans who are truly serious about progress know the appropriate time and strategy for action. This was the wrong strategy at the wrong time.

## Cover Story



Akinwale N'Gal Wright/Black Ink