



If a BCC at UNC is finally approved, where will it be built?

BCC Needed To Achieve Cultural Democracy

BCC earmarks Black History Month to educate campus on need for a permanent and adequate site

By Margo Crawford
Contributor

The Black Cultural Center (BCC) at UNC has contributed to setting the tone for the University to embrace diversity in campus culture and the curriculum. The BCC recognizes African-American culture as part of intellectual, artistic, and creative development. The BCC has "aroused" the campus community to understand that learning to value diversity is everybody's responsibility.

BCC's greatest strength is its ability to program for the full campus, allowing African-American students to see themselves regularly in the culture of the campus and giving all students the opportunity to participate in black cultural programs. Social relationships among different racial groups will be altered from dialogue among these groups around African-American cultural issues. We must recognize and accept the fact that most of the history of minorities, especially African-Americans, has been

omitted or distorted by scholarship. These omissions must be corrected and the BCC plays a major role in this work.

In 1933, in *The Mis-education of the Negro*, Carter G. Woodson, known as the father of black history in the 20th Century, concluded that the education system had failed

son refuted racist scholarship and accused academia of teaching blacks to be inferior. He agreed with W.E.B. DuBois, who claimed the education system was detrimental to black students. He wrote in the 1930s: "Race prejudice in the U.S. today is such that most Negroes cannot receive a proper

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the black community because the history of African people was not taught in schools. This omission allowed many racist assumptions and distortions to root in scholarship, namely that African people were subordinate, menial, culturally deprived and even subhuman. These assumptions paved the way for U.B. Phillips, Burgess, and other scholars dictating historiography and writing volumes explaining how good slavery was for Africans, claiming that it exposed Africans to civilization!

But this is not the historical position of black scholars. Wood-

son refuted racist scholarship and accused academia of teaching blacks to be inferior. He agreed with W.E.B. DuBois, who claimed the education system was detrimental to black students. He wrote in the 1930s: "Race prejudice in the U.S. today is such that most Negroes cannot receive a proper

education in white institutions. In many public school systems in the North, Negroes are admitted and tolerated but they are not educated; they are crucified."

Obviously, some, but not all, of the "crucifying" has stopped. While we have made some advances in civil rights and achieved some integration, we have made fewer advances in achieving cultural democracy.

The BCC encourages cultural democracy — a climate where African-Americans and others can create new ideas and new images from their cultural baggage as they

contribute to campus community development. Likewise, BCC activities encourage African-American students to work avidly toward closing the gap that exists between the masses of their people and rising black intellectuals such as themselves. Students must know, however, that culture grows mainly from the masses. "The Negro is considered artistically, creatively, and culturally inferior," wrote Harold Cruse in 1967. BCC programs strive to alter such theses by keeping everybody in touch with cultural issues related to the black experience. Hip-hop culture, for example, is fun and entertainment, but it contains much more than that.

The Black Cultural Center has as its highest priority the establishment of an adequate, permanent facility. The University needs a Black Cultural Center to give leadership that will democratize the diverse cultures on our campus. African-American students must be encouraged to develop critiques on their culture: critiques and research that will enhance the University as it takes its

place in the 21st Century as a university that earns an "A" in achieving diversity.

Rising African-American intellectuals must provide leadership to their culture on this campus and in the world. To become educated, and not miseducated, an African-American intellectual must know the history of African-Americans and be encouraged to question everything. If Columbus "discovered" America, for example, who "discovered" Europe? How have blacks influenced Southern culture? If black theater is considered "real art," then why have we omitted it from our drama programs for so many decades? Which of the many languages we use is the "best" language? If there is no such thing, then when do we use Too Short's language? Besides pointing out our stereotypes, what do we know about African-American culture? What do we need to know to achieve cultural democracy at UNC?

Margo Crawford is the Director of the Black Cultural Center

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The Human Rights Committee is accepting applications for 1991 Co-Chairpersons. No previous experience is required.

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