



"I do not agree with what you have to say, but I'll defend to the death your right to say it." - Voltaire

## Things are not Always Black and White

Samuel Hemingway III

This letter is a rebuttal to an article published in the October 2004 issue of *The Lance* entitled, "Things are not Always Black and White." This information is for all St. Andrews students who left the club fair this fall without knowing about the Black Student Union (BSU), and were disappointed that students needed their skin color to form a union, ask yourself the following: Did I speak with the woman at the BSU booth? Did I ask her any questions? If you didn't then you should have. What is the Black Student Union? What does this organization promote? An important thing to remember, or to become aware of, is that this club does not base its membership on race. It is open to all students enrolled at St. Andrews. If the author of *The Lance* article had asked the above questions, or had been to any Black Student Union meetings, he would have known what this club represents. This club, to the best of its ability, intends to inform people of the struggles and contributions of African Americans. I cannot help but agree with my colleague on certain issues and assumptions, but I disagree with my colleague on his impression of the Black Student Union and his conception of multiculturalism. Why have such a club? The question can be compared to another question: Why do I read? The answer would be to become informed. The name black in the title Black Student Union is by no means a way to separate people. However, the name is centralized on what the club studies and focuses. The club promotes knowledge for the sake of knowledge. I am overjoyed that St. Andrews has such a club.

When I was in High School we didn't have a Black Student Union. The only time I was informed about African Americans was during Black History Month in my church. Three Sundays out of the year I was taught black history. In High School, the only time we learned of blacks was in history class, while studying Pre-civil war and Post-civil war periods, and when we examined the Civil Rights movements, where we only focused on Rosa Parks and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

*"What if a White Student Union was formed?"*

What if a White Student

Union (WSU) was established? Would it be any different from my regular course work that I study daily? Every day I am bombarded with mainstream culture and Euro-centric values. I would be one of the most loyal members of the WSU depending on what it fostered. The author mistakes the club with racial identity, which could have been remedied if he asked questions pertaining to the BSU. The author then begins to focus on multiculturalism, which is the doctrine that several different cultures can co-exist peacefully and equitably in a single country. The author writes, "multiculturalism is bad for America and that race and culture are two mitigating factors". What if this country, or world had only one worldview? The question sparks my memory to George Orwell's book, *1984*. The government of Oceania systematically enforced uniformity, forcing individuals to forsake past history and culture.

*"Our differences are what make us unique but still American."*

Our differences are what make us unique but still American. I love all types of music, however, when a nice slow R&B song grabs my ear, I can't help but get to my feet and dance. To watch the sisters dance at the BSU parties, reminds me of the deep tribal ceremonial dances of Africa.

On the opinion of race, I agree with Alumnus Gilbert Abraham, "Race doesn't exist," and what this means is that in a so-called race you have a variety of complexions. One white male may be pale and another white male may be tan. Hence, to classify them both as the same color (race) would be ideally unfair. I also agree with author Toni Morrison, "Race is the most insignificant information to know about a person". The author of the article, however, writes, "And those with a non-American worldview have as their foundational identity not only in ideas themselves, but in the race of the person who holds them". This open-ended statement implies that racial identity is in collaboration with culture. Race and culture are two very different things, which the author recognizes but doesn't convey. One's beliefs, attitudes, and ideas have nothing to do with

one's race. The act of racism is hatred of someone based on his or her race and race alone. To dislike a person of a particular color because of their opinions, beliefs, and worldviews is not an issue of race, it is an issue of culture. The conflict of worldview is an individual freedom to disagree. To connect one's worldview to one's race is to accept that all people of a race think the same. The author also writes a scenario of racial discrimination. A black atheist requesting a leadership position in a Christian church that is predominately white is a situation worth thinking about. The church refuses the black atheist. Can the black atheist sue the predominately white Christian church on racial discrimination? Suing the church would be justifiable if race was used in the decision-making process only. The author is addressing affirmative action in this last scenario. Remember that affirmative action is a policy that tries to remedy past and present discrimination through means of equal opportunity in education and employment. As I said before, if the predominately white Christian church denied the black atheist employment based upon his race alone, then grounds for a lawsuit are present.

The author writes, "In the multicultural mind's eye, as a black person, they should think black thoughts, which are assumed to be liberal or non-Christian." Here is where the author and I mainly disagree. His conception of multiculturalism is inaccurate. Race has nothing to do with multiculturalism. The appreciation, tolerance, and equity of culture have nothing at all to do with race. People's actions are not a product of their race. If I am a white male who plays basketball like Michael Jordan, am I acting black? Or am I a white male who plays basketball well? If I am a black male who loves wearing Abercrombie and Fitch instead of FUBU and Sean John, am I acting white? Or am I a black male who just loves wearing such attire? The above statement is again a misconception of multiculturalism because it assumes that multiculturalism views all blacks as both liberal and non-Christian. In disagreeing with the author, I find that the above statement is mirrored as a stereotype and prejudgment of blacks. Multiculturalism does not

mean that I think the same way as another black male or female. One black person may believe that ganja (weed) is the coolest thing in the world. Another may believe that it is horrible. One person of a particular race does not represent the entire race. Again, this is not a racial issue. It is one that deals with individual preference.

Even if multiculturalism assumes that black persons have black thoughts, which it doesn't, how in the world were those black thoughts, thought to be non-Christian, especially in America? Remember that before slavery, blacks were thought of as being heathens because they did not worship the same God as their white counterparts, which was one reason for society's acceptance of slavery. Once we were in America, blacks were forced to worship the God of America's forefathers. Thanks to the bent backs and worn out knees of black ancestry, through their prayers and supplication, an end to slavery was created through the thirteenth amendment. To assume black thoughts are non-Christian is laughable. A Judeo-Christian worldview, which is what many African Americans had been forced to accept, is the same worldview that led to reasons for slavery (The "Curse" of Canaan/Ham). This so called "curse" is found in Genesis 9: 20-27 when Noah's son Ham finds him drunk in his tent and sees his fathers' nakedness. What people don't realize is that (a man's nakedness) in those biblical days meant his wife unclothed. You can find the meaning of this in Leviticus 18: 7-8. However, in Leviticus 20: 11, "to uncover a father's nakedness" is to lay with his wife. So, Ham had had intercourse with Noah's wife, his mother. When Noah woke and realized this, he didn't curse Ham or his wife, however, Canaan was cursed, Ham's offspring who are said to be people of dark complexion.

I am not against Christianity by any means. My father is a Missionary Baptist Pastor so I was in church every time the doors opened because I unlocked them. So, to end my rebuttal I would love to invite each and every member of St. Andrews, regardless of race or religion to the Black Student Union meetings. I would also advocate that each student dwell on my and my colleague's comments and develop your own perception of multiculturalism. Racism as