

# EDITORIAL

## Shall We Overcome

January 19 dawned cold and wet. About 50 people braved the weather and marched from Thorpe Hall to Hobb's Park in Elizabeth City. These dedicated marchers were commemorating the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. These marchers did not let the rain and cold get in the way of their march to honor King and all he stood for. The march was a spontaneous gesture after the official march had been cancelled.

I think we need to fight against racism as much now as others did in the past—even in the rain. Racism and prejudice don't take vacations—can we afford to relax our efforts at stamping them out?

I believe that people who want equality for all races need to fight injustice all the time. It shouldn't take a federal holiday to get people to do something. However, a holiday does offer an opportunity for people to get involved—even if only for one day. Cancelling the march took away a chance for people to get involved.

I admire those who marched

despite the bad weather and the cancellation. They showed true dedication to an ideal and to the memory of King. Their marching showed that some people see the need for change and action.

What is disappointing is that there were only about 50 people that participated in the march. Have we so quickly forgotten how bad things were just 20 years ago? Are we starting to think the job is done and we don't need to do anything? Has a little bit of success softened us to the point where we are starting to say, "I've got my piece of the pie, let someone else fight injustice." Attitudes like this are dangerous and allow and encourage racism.

We need more dedication like the 50 marchers showed to ensure a more equal world. A holiday is not needed to fight for human dignity and worth—but dedication and work is. The battle is a daily one—and if recent attitudes are an indication of a growing trend of indifference—one I'm afraid we are in danger of losing.

## Black History Month recognizes achievements

Throughout America's history, black people have contributed significantly to the overall development and progress of this country. In virtually every field, sometimes against tremendous odds, blacks have been the precursors of numerous discoveries and advancements in science, the arts, entertainment, politics and sports; often coaxed by the adage "necessity is the mother of invention." Like all pioneers, black leaders have visualized, conceived, and produced vital contributions to the ever-changing American society.

by Joe Holley  
Staff Writer

To many younger people, the abundance of blacks in the areas of sports and entertainment (especially music)

has eclipsed other remarkable achievements of our ancestors and contemporaries. Often the wide publicity and popularity of such people has led younger people to aspire to be sports or music superstars, looking up to the popular players and entertainers as their only role models. Not that this is bad, but it can stop a young person from striving for a more realistic goal.

Black History Month is needed because the heritage and history of blacks is glossed over in most public school history curriculums. Unless a course in Black History is offered, students are exposed to only the most outstanding aspects of the legacy of blacks in America. Therefore, many students are misinformed or uninformed about the role of blacks in

America's history.

Because of this lack of information, many black college students are not completely aware of the truly proud heritage they have. Blacks have to undertake the responsibility of understanding their role in the history of this country beyond music and sports.

To segregate black achievements and label them "Black History" is unfortunate. Perhaps a better label would be "Blacks in American history." Nevertheless, it is an honor to have a month in which to acknowledge the contributions of Blacks in history. We should use this month to honor the contributions of black men and women and place them in the proper perspective of American and world history.

## Prejudice: Alive and Kicking

by Krystal Simpson  
Staff Writer

With the Martin Luther King holiday celebrations so close behind, memories of the past were rekindled in the hearts and minds of many people.

Many residents of this community remember the days of "whites only" establishments and the bitter rivalry caused by skin color. Segregation was an accepted way of life. I decided to phone my aunt and have her elaborate on some of her past experiences.

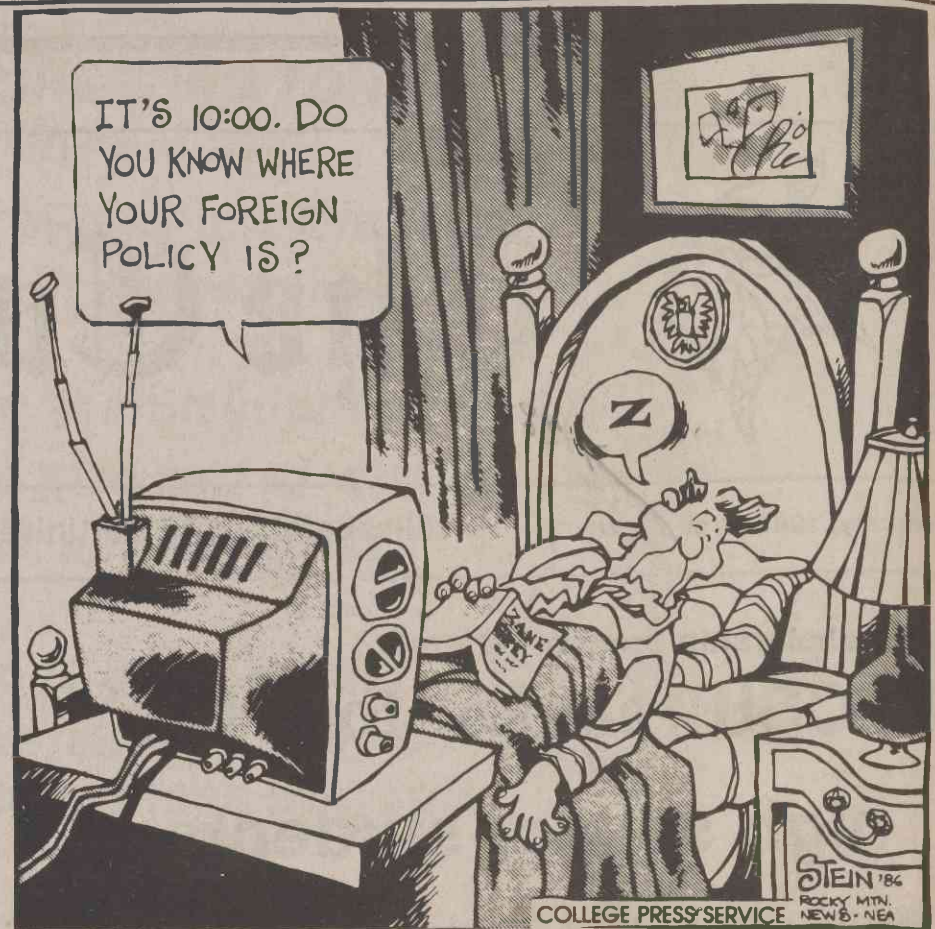
"I remember the first day public school was integrated here," said my 33-year-old aunt, who is a former Elizabeth City resident but now lives in Washington, D.C. "It was 1970. It was so odd, I was a senior in high school. The tension was so thick it seemed as if one could cut it with a knife. I did not know whether

or not I wanted to be in school with whites. I was happy that we could at least seem to be equal, but it was so scary and Rosa Parks, who refused to give her bus seat up to a white man, entered my mind. I had read about her in school. I said to myself 'I wonder how she would feel today.' I guess overall I was proud to be black."

My most vivid memory of racism occurred on a Thursday at a football game when another student called me a 'nigger' because I would not vote her way. My mind went wild but I did not utter a sound. Tensions were already mounting because Roots was being aired on television. I told a friend what was said and soon the word was out that this particular student did not like blacks. Black students began to harass her. Because she was harassed, she reported me as being responsible for the incident. I was called to the principal's office, reprimanded and proceedings for expulsion began. I was even asked to apologize

to her. I responded to the principal's demand by asking him, 'If I called you a 'honky' who would apologize, you or new. I remember anticipating the day when blacks and whites would walk the halls and attend classes together. me?' I was not expelled and the incident was not mentioned again. But I remember it as if it happened yesterday. I even see her occasionally and she has never apologized to me."

Prejudice is ever present in today's society. The media is having a literal field day on the apparent resurfacing of racial prejudice. The incidents in recent months are many and everyday the toll reaches new levels. You read of the Howard Beach incident in New York, where three black teenagers were jumped and beaten; of Forsythe County, Ga., a community where no blacks reside; of Pitt County, N.C. where there were protests for the nonobservance of Martin Luther King's birthday as a national holiday; of Time Magazine's



## Are college presses free ?

Editor's note: January was designated as Freedom of the Campus Student Press Month.

What exactly should a college newspaper be and what are its rights and responsibilities? Should it be an arm of the school's administration? Not as far as I know. Should it be a public relations tool for the administration, alumni or other special interest groups on campus? I don't think so. A student newspaper is first and foremost a newspaper, run by students for the purpose of training future journalists in as realistic a setting as possible.

According to a nationwide study by Ivan Holmes, professor of journalism at the University of Arkansas, many administrators, alumni, SGA president's, and other members of the school hierarchy do not know the purpose of a college newspaper. Many newspaper advisors, editors and reporters don't know either. They do not know their rights so they give in to pressures from certain groups and allow censorship. Outside interests often persuade advi-

sors and editors to print self-promoting stories.

Nationally, most college publications depend on university funding for their existence. Staffs are often fearful of "biting the hand that feeds them"—or pays the printer. Often, stories are not printed or are changed to watered-down public relations "fluff."

Holmes suggests that student advisors and editors should learn the free press rights that are guaranteed to the student press by the U.S. Constitution. He also suggests that professional journalists defend the free press rights of student journalists. Holmes further suggests that groups which address student press issues should become more centralized and coordinated. Holmes says, "A national foundation should be established to help the college student press fight censorship by publicizing such attempts, by educating all parties, and by offering financial and legal assistance to beleaguered student journalists."

Aspiring journalists should be able to cover pertinent topics, regardless of possible repercussions. Just as you can't

learn to swim from reading a book, you cannot learn to write in the classroom. The irony here is that the institution which should foster freedom of thought and academic inquiry, sometimes squelches creativity. How is an aspiring young Tom Wolfe going to learn to function as a reporter if he is not given the chance to think for himself?

Freedom of the college press does not give students a license to print anything they want. With freedom comes responsibility. Student reporters and editors need to practice the tenets of responsible journalism. A student newspaper is not an "underground" newspaper out to get the administration, nor is it a sensational paper trying to invent stories and create controversy.

A college newspaper is simply what the name says it is—a newspaper, run by students for the purpose of training future journalists. A student reporter's job is to print the news—good or bad; and to provide editorial comments and informed opinions on many issues.

### Dear Readers,

Letters to the editor are also welcomed. If you have a concern do something about it, write us. Just remember, that your letter must be signed and we do reserve the right to edit all material.

Send your stories, letters, comments or ideas to: The Compass, P.O. Box 815, Elizabeth City State University, Elizabeth City, NC 27909.

We would like to hear from you. Let us know what you think of the paper. If you think we should do something differently, tell us. Any comments on what you think the paper should include are welcome. The Compass is for the students and we won't know how to better serve you without your feedback.

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## The Compass

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