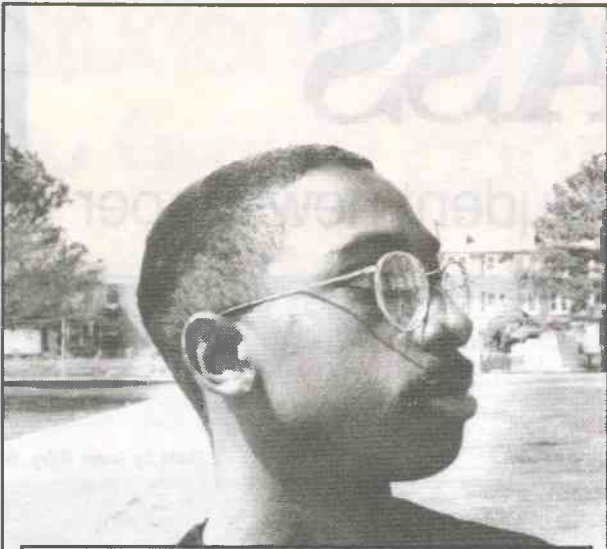


Photos by Jamie Jordan

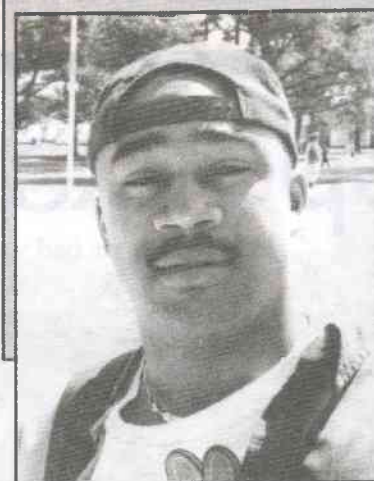
Talk of ECSU:

What is your opinion of the University's plan to add a foreign language requirement to the GE curriculum?



**Ray Epps, Sophomore
Garysburg, N.C.**

We shouldn't need it because you should already have a foreign language from high school. It should be your choice to take it.



**Wallace Gibbs, Junior
Hyde County, N.C.**

I don't feel it's necessary. We have enough requirements as it is out here. It should be an elective.

**Anthony Mason,
Sophomore
Henrico, N.C.**

We need it to broaden our horizons and to make us more adaptable.



**Yvonne Blount, Junior
West New York, N. J.**

With all the types of people we come across we need a foreign language but it should not be required. It should be up to the individual.



GUEST COLUMN

Jamal's challenge: To feel loved, worthy

By Lavenia Dameron

Jamal, my best friend, is a young black man who is on this quest for truth and purpose. He is a typical black male, born into the hip-hop generation, a young "gansta," who wears his pants sagging. Jamal, 18, lives in a predominantly black, crime-ridden community in Elizabeth City. Like many young African-Americans, his personal life reflects the ills of society.

Jamal remembers being spoiled with everything except love when he was a child. When he needed a hug, he would get a hand full of quarters for video games or candy. A child cannot grow into a stable person without feeling loved or being taught how to love. He was the last son out of nine children, all over ten years older than he. His mother found herself trapped in a dysfunctional cycle, raising her children alone and doing whatever it took to keep food on the table and clothes on their backs. Sometimes her choices weren't morally correct but she survived the years without having Jamal and his siblings separated by the state. Most of Jamal's family history is a

mystery to him. He has heard from friends of the family that his father shot his mother several times while she was pregnant with him. He has never confirmed this fact with his mother but the scars that form a circle around her naval add credence to this story.

Three of his sisters live with him and his mother, along with their nine children. They are unemployed, uninspired, and dependant upon the Department of Social Services. Their house is old but comfortable, filled with the laughter of children, the groans of complaining mothers, and the sighs of an old woman. There are no fathers mentioned. No one is ever encouraged or disciplined properly. Growing up in this type of environment has affected every aspect of Jamal's life.

With so many people living in one house, it is difficult to maintain order in the middle of chaos. It is difficult to make sure everyone is wearing their own underwear, sleeping on their side of the bed, every single crumb is off the floor, and that every sticky handprint is wiped from the glass door that

swings back and forth in the wind. Ironically, Jamal is a neat freak. He never leaves the house until the bed is made, the dishes are done, or his clothes are put away.

Attending school in Pasquotank county was no picnic for Jamal. He never had one of those perfect teachers you see on after-school specials. He spent more time on in-school-suspension than he did in the classrooms, usually for disruptive behavior. He remembers dealing drugs to several of his teachers. His hero was never Superman, or the Lone Ranger. Instead, he would hang around "shot houses" listening to old men talk about old wars and women.

Jamal has a great deal of intelligence, survivor instincts and the potential to be a strong black man. Despite his background, he wants what everyone else wants: enough money to live a comfortable life, a family, a house like or better than his neighbors', to give his children opportunities he never had. He wants something out of life, but he needs to believe in himself. He needs to be loved, to be admired, to feel appreciated, needed and worthy.

My role in Jamal's life is simple. I am his friend, his guide, his teacher, his role model, and his inspiration. I am the motivating unit in the scenes of his life. I respect him. I encourage him. I give him those things he missed when he was growing up. I give him the confidence he needs to better himself. I keep him away from the street corners and the people who doubt him. Because of my influence, he wants to further his education, to own his own business, his own home. Once he was satisfied with the cards that life had dealt him but now he realizes that as a black man he has a responsibility to himself and to his race, to control his environment instead of allowing it to control him.

African-Americans who don't acknowledge or take the time to learn about their past will never understand the reasons for black-on-black crime, poverty, and disillusioned youths. Now that Jamal views the world differently, maybe he will be viewed differently. He is not a statistic, a loser, or a failure. He has simply been misunderstood.