

Campus Echo

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A Reflection On Ralph Ellison's Visit

Writer Ralph Ellison visited here recently, and most of what he had to say should have been beneficial to all of us.

Mr. Ellison, whose first novel, "Invisible Man," won the National Book Award for Fiction in 1953, was in Durham for a student sponsored symposium at Duke University. He was invited to speak here by NCC's English Club.

While here, Mr. Ellison declared that his role as a writer is not to "go around making speeches from platforms" for the cause of civil rights. He said that he belongs to several civil rights organizations, contributes money, and supports those who are doing something more directly for the cause.

The present Rutgers University writer-in-residence, who was once a shoeshine boy, a freelance photographer, a jazz musician, and a waiter told a packed Education Building auditorium that the best he could do for the Negro race is "to be a good artist." He said that he will be a good artist when he writes about the reality he knows best; this reality to a large extent, he said, "is the reality of Negro life."

He said he feels that this obligation as an artist "is to discover something about himself and the nature of Negro life to others . . . and to separate those things which are valuable from those which are not . . ."

Mr. Ellison's first and only novel deals with the experience of a Negro male from boy to manhood, but its theme is a universal one—every man's quest for knowledge of self.

Concluding, he warned that we must not let our range be a short one when we think about "Negro life," but rather one which is tied with the "complexity and circumstances of American life—ones identity as an American and as a special part of that American society known as Negro."

These words should have been of benefit to all of us, not only those seeking an artistic means of expression, for they serve to remind of us of what we should do with what we acquire here.

It will be tragic for us to use what we acquire here to become a part of that society of Negroes which has turned its back to and is still rejecting the millions of economic deprived Negroes. We have a unique American origin—slavery, prolonged suffering, and social rejection. It would be wise, alas, for us to explore the creative possibilities inherent in this origin and our folk culture—to evolve a new identity and endow our lives with meaning and purpose.

Congratulations

Though NCC's football Eagles lost their first game of the season here recently, we would, at this time, still deem it apropos to extend a much deserved congratulations to them for their successful team efforts and the prestige they have brought to this college.

At the beginning of the football season, this newspaper's sports column expressed a pessimistic outlook for the Eagles if they did not modernize their offense, The Eagles, on the other hand, were not so disillusioned about their wares and went on to prove that some times tradition is not a big handicap; they have presently won seven games and lost only one.

There are those who contend that it is the job of the football players to have a winning team because they are being paid, via the scholarship route, to do just that. While to an extent they are right, they are not justified in saying that winning is the sole purpose for this college fielding a football team. The scholarships, needless to say, are to help those male students who are adept at the pigskin game use their abilities to carry them through some of the college financial barriers. They also serve to promote team and group efforts on the parts of growing young men, and also to prepare them physically.

NCC does not have, by a very long shot, the financially well-off athletic programs that many of our sister institutions have. The evil system of recruiting has not payed off for us the way it has for others mainly because other schools are able to offer more financially to football players than we can. But Coach Herman Riddick and Company have not, as we so see, let the financial problems be a stumbling block for them, instead, they have taken the available material and made of it one of the best small college teams in the nation.

And the success of the team does not go to one or two individual players. Our team has won because there have been team efforts. No one person can be cited as "Athlete of the Month or Week," instead, laurals must be placed on the team as "team of the year."

Congratulations Eagles! Whether you lose or win in the Turkey Day Classic, you have faired well for the year.

CHARLES E. DAYE Student Court Needs Moral Support

The present Student Government Association administration has proposed and is now proceeding to set up a student court. In order for every student to give the court his moral support, it is necessary for him to be acquainted with it.

The proposed student court will be a judicial body composed primarily of undergraduate students from the population of our student body. The court will hear cases involving student discipline, cases between two or more students and most signifi-

cant, cases between students and school policy, when there has been an infraction of the policy by the student.

In an interview, James Ferguson, SGA President, said: "I want very much to see a student court function on this campus but I am not fully convinced that the students are willing to accept this grave responsibility. 'However,' he continued, 'I am putting forth every effort to see that the court is set up so that our students will be given an opportunity to demonstrate the extent to which they are ready to make strides along the pathway of student self-direction.'"

"If the court," he added, does not function properly and is ill-used by the students, I will be the first one to advocate its dissolution."

"However I do not anticipate that such will be the case," he admitted, "I have mentioned before the great confidence which this year's administration places in the students, and I now call upon the students to vindicate this confidence," he concluded.

Ferguson's words characterize the spirit with which his administration is going about the many tasks that confront it. It is also noteworthy to examine the confidence Ferguson and his administration place in the students. By this, we not only mean that the administration has confidence in the students supporting such a phenomenon, but they will be given responsibility to serve as a part of it; provisions have been made for utilizing a jury composed of 12 undergraduates when a case involves a controversy between two or more students.

While the student court is not set up to be most advantageous to students' petty interests, it is set up to solve many of the ills affecting our college and its students.

If and when the court is set up and is functioning properly, it will be a great stride toward the ultimate and desirable idea of complete student self-direction.

In order for the court to survive, it is necessary for every student to give it his moral support, thereby nurturing a greater interest in and support of it.

To The Editor

'No Fried Hair'

Dear Editor:

It was a pleasure to enjoy Count Basie's Concert without having to sit and look at "Processed" hair. Not one single member of Count Basie's band had his hair "straightened" or "fried."

Though I don't belong to any of the extremist "black nationalists" groups, I still possess some race pride and it appalls me to see many Negro men attempting to copy "white hair" via the straightening comb method.

As a matter of fact, many of Basie's sidemen could have passed for NCC students.

Janet Higginbotham



"Not only is he a lousy watchdog, he wouldn't know an EAGLE from a chicken."

Book Review

'Tree' Good For Juvenile List

In a swift and readable way, this novel traces three perilous yet conventional years of a young Negro boy living in the complex and unsettled environment of a border state in the twenties.

Newt Winger, a talented youth, reaches puberty and finds himself in bewildering Cherokee Flats, Kansas, his "learning tree": Here he experiences happiness with his pals Beansy Fuller, Skunk McDowell, Earl Thompson, and Jappy Duncan; here he experiences love through Arcella Jefferson and his family, especially his mother, Sarah, who tells him, "Some of the people are good and some of them are bad—just like the fruit of a tree. . . . No matter if you go or stay think of Cherokee Flats like that till the day you die—let it be your learning tree."

Here he experiences hate from encountering the likes of Jason Kirky and Bert Sampson; here he experiences violence through his brother-in-law, Clint, and Booker and Marcus Savage; here he experiences fear, mostly of death because he links it with the violent ways persons (Jim Pullen, Captain Tuck and Big Mabel) he knew intimately die; and here he experiences what it is like being lone witness to a murder and then being in an agonizing dilemma of either revealing the real murderer or letting an innocent person suffer for it. In short, here Newt lives.

One is carried through the story at a television-like or movie-like pace. Either the author is thoroughly dipped in and has a sharp recollection of the western ways, or he watches a whole lot of those western

horse operas. The art of the story seems to be sold out for the possibilities of a movie-production contract.

But author Gordon Parks, a talented waiter, bartender, ranch hand, lumberjack, piano player band leader, music composer, semi-pro basketball player newspaper circulation manager, and a successful Life Magazine photographer has written a fine moving story. His first novel deals with life; not of the Negro life per se, but of human passions.

As for the significance of its contents, *Tree* is late. It should have been written at the time the author has it ending; then perhaps Americans, black and white, could have emerged from the bleakness of America's economic depression of the '30s with a better understanding of each other. But it was not written then, it is recently written, and it is welcomed.

Though it will not survive as a literary classic, it will be remembered as a document of this socially complexed America.

Tree, finally, should be placed on all juvenile reading lists so when teacher calls to Johnny to read *Tom Sawyer* and *Huck Finn*, she will quickly add, ". . . and don't forget Newt Winger (*The Learning Tree*)!" We recommend you do the same.

Letters

The editor of the Campus Echo will gladly accept letters and any topic from students and other members of the college community.

Letters must be free from libel, in good taste, and limited to 300-500 words. They should

be typed, double space, if possible.

All letters become the property of the Campus Echo and may be published unless the writer requests otherwise. Unsigned letters are not solicited and will not be printed.