

# The Student As Slave

Chained by tradition, shackled by regimentation and tortured with grades, the student is a slave.

The comparison of today's collegian to yesterday's downtrodden black is discussed by Jerry Farber, professor of English at California State at Los Angeles. His article, "The Student As Nigger," reprinted in NCSU's *Technician*, in graphically and, at times, brutally, makes his point. In its unedited form, the article might prove offensive to some; therefore, to insure everyone's consideration of the message, rather than the style, we have omitted profanity and topics unrelated to our own campus.

Meredith too fosters the academic slave mentality. Like slaves, Meredith students know their place. They know they have only three class cuts per semester until they reach junior standing, eligibility or Dean's List privileges. They see the same restriction on chapel absence but without merit exceptions. They know they must take a burden of required courses to the exclusion of more stimulating elective choices.

While student government machinery is complex, student voices are actually small. Though student participation on long range committees and department self-studies is a step toward academic emancipation, significant freedom is absent from final decisions. The faculty and administration select courses; the students choose a May Queen. The faculty propose dissent and champion open minded discussion;

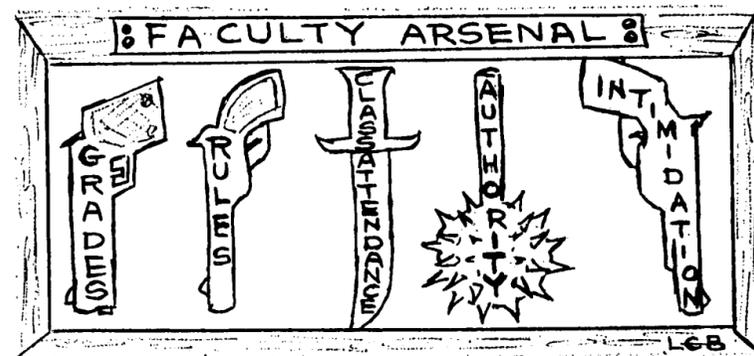
the students may meet the challenge, but realize on the quiz they must regurgitate the professor's opinion to earn the A.

The student picture seems dismal, even at Meredith, until one recognizes that, unlike others in the slave condition, we are not lost in the shuffle of IBM cards and the impersonality of a larger university. When other students complain professors are more interested in research or consultation with industry, Meredith girls realize the sincere interest in the individual which, as a whole, the faculty exhibits.

We are satisfied with the existing personal attention of the relationship, yet we protest the trivialities. We protest the weapons used by the faculty — the arsenal of grades, rules and authority which intimidate and instill a system of fear. Instead of fear, there should be a mutual respect. The good professor need not resort to the red pencil to insure class attendance; he makes his class time so valuable and interesting that the student loses the desire to cut.

How does the student escape servitude? Meredith would not benefit by physical riot or rebellion, but a mental one is needed of each individual. A total re-evaluation of aims and purposes of the small liberal arts college and a more bilateral respect for faculty and students could assure the community atmosphere, freed from the bondage of slavery.

SAJ and MOC



## Letters to the Editor

### IN REBUTTAL

Dear Editor:

We protest. We protest the shifting of blame from the entire student body to the freshman class. We refer, of course, to the recent letter carried by this paper which claimed the guilt of the class of '72 in chapel disorder. The noise, the discourtesy, the unrest displayed in almost every chapel session is not entirely the fault of the underclassmen. It is the fault — fault? — of the whole student body. Yet is it really a fault? Perhaps. We suggest, however, that the fault lies in Meredith's chapel program. We suggest that the noise in chapel is our namby-pamby effort to rebel against the system. We suggest that required chapel is a crock.

We contend that the vast majority of chapel programs hold no interest for the students. We are forced — yes, forced — to spend hours of dissatisfaction, boredom and repressed rebellion every semester. Moreover, chapel programs apparently hold a very minimum of interest for faculty and administration — the powers which demand our bodily attendance at all but three of these "sessions" every semester. This fact illustrates two major points — the quality of the programs, and the unwillingness of the supremacy to participate in what they force us to participate in.

Our "trial period" of chapel attendance by honor did not work. Some may say it failed because of our lack of honor. We say it failed because the students could care less about chapel. We don't want it, on the honor system or on the dictator system. We just don't want it.

Finally, we contend that student behavior or misbehavior, whichever you prefer — will not improve so long as we are forced to attend chapel. This is our conclusion, but it should be an obvious one without this letter. The results, too, should be obvious. But, good luck. Complacency has gotten no results. We're up for a little involvement.

Most sincerely,  
Cindy Griffith, Betty King,  
Peggy Timmerman, Emily Dellinger,  
Anne Pretlow

### DRAMA DANCE

Dear Student Body:

I have just returned from the Second Touch Worship Celebration. It is hard for me to settle down to write this letter. Dancing, shouting, and singing seem much more appropriate. However, what I want to say must be said now, and it has a direct relationship to the message of the celebration.

I think you students are neglecting one of the best chances to explore relationships, find out your "thing" and do it, investigate "the world," and enlarge your creative powers, by failing to use the potential of a dramatic program on campus.

The drama program is designed to be student controlled. The budget for it is administered by a student. It would support more activity.

The possibilities are endless. As a member of such a group you might decide to give a formal

drama, a reader's theatre production, sponsor visiting artists, sponsor trips to other campuses, publish student recommendations or condemnations of Raleigh entertainment programs, make short films, write and produce a play and do audience participation drama.

A worthwhile play house should serve as a "brain bank" for almost any activity on campus. There should be girls who would love to paint with light to assist in the lighting of all lectures, shows and productions on campus. An artist might want to try her hand at designing a set. Singers and dancers could see to it that they had a chance to perform. Novice writers may need a chance to hear their works read or see them performed. Struggling students of theology, psychology or philosophy should have a chance to study a character or a set of ideas by living with it as one does when preparing a dramatic performance. Girls interested in elementary education should at least have an opportunity to investigate play production problems or creative dramatics. Budding sociologists or psychologists might want to explore the benefits of role playing or psychodrama. The limits would be imposed only by the imagination of the participants.

From a personal point of view, I must say that I stay busy even without a very active dramatics program. However, I feel frustrated because I have enthusiasm and a willingness to assist in the building of a pertinent, exciting program of dramatic activities. But I can no longer drag a dead horse around. Actually, I am exaggerating a bit. The horse is not completely dead, only lame. There are some dramatic activities on campus now and then but, if I may make a comparison here, (and I already have), a dramatics program should be a race horse straining at the starting gate and not a potential candidate for cat food. I love what drama means too much to see it limp along. I never could stand to see anything in pain.

I know that spring semester is hectic; so is fall semester. But — you find time to do what you want to do!!! Do not wait for a more opportune moment. It will never come.

Now is the time, if you want the opportunity to participate in any way in a meaningful dramatics program, to tell me of your interest so that a date can be found to plan toward future activities. If there is no response to this letter, it may be that I shall feel forced to present the problem to the administration. Dead branches (and lame horses) are usually removed. Do not misunderstand me. The case I am presenting is not a personal one involving my position on the faculty. (I would only make a very small portion of low quality glue anyway.) The case is for a student program. It could mean the closing of a program that has the potential of bridging the gap sometimes mentioned between class and the life situation, a program that could be student directed — the type of program for which some other campuses are rebelling.

Ever so sincerely,  
Mrs. Ruth Ann Phillips,

"The Student as Nigger"  
By JERRY FARBER  
Los Angeles Free Press  
March 6, 1967

Reprinted from the Technician

Students are niggers. When you get that straight, our schools begin to make sense. . . .

The faculty and administrators decide what courses will be offered; . . . (a student) calls a faculty member "Sir" or "Doctor" or "Professor" — and he smiles and shuffles some as he stands outside the professor's office waiting for permission to enter. The faculty tell him what courses to take (in my department, English, even electives have to be approved by a faculty member); they tell him what to read, what to write, and frequently where to set the margins on his typewriter. They tell him what's true and what isn't. Some teachers insist that they encourage dissent but they're almost always jiving and every student knows it. Tell the man what he wants to hear or he'll fail (you). . . .

When a teacher says "jump," students jump. I know of one professor who refused to take up class time for exams and required students to show up for tests at 6:30 in the morning. And they did. . . .

Even more discouraging than this Auschwitz approach to education is the fact that the students take it. They haven't gone through twelve years of public school for nothing. They've learned one thing and perhaps only one thing during those twelve years. They've forgotten their algebra. They're hopelessly vague about chemistry and physics. They've grown to fear and resent literature. They write like they follow orders! Freshman come up to me with an essay and ask if I want it folded and whether their name should be in the upper right

hand corner. And I want to cry and kiss them and caress their poor tortured heads.

Students don't ask that orders make sense. They give up expecting things to make sense long before they leave elementary school. Things are true because the teacher says they are true. At a very early age we all learn to accept "Two truths," as did certain medieval churchmen. Outside of class, things are true to your tongue, your fingers, your stomach, your heart. Inside class, things are true by reason of authority. And that's just fine because you don't care anyway. . . .

The important thing is to please. . . . Back in kindergarten, you found out that teachers only love children who stand in nice straight lines. And that's where it's been at ever since. Nothing changes except to get worse. School becomes more and more obviously a prison. . . .

What school amounts to, then, for white and black kids alike, is a 12-year course in how to be slaves. What else could explain what I see in a freshman class. They've got that slave mentality; obliging and ingratiating on the surface but hostile and resistant underneath. . . .

The teachers I know best are college professors. Outside the classroom and taken as a group, their most striking characteristic is timidity. . . .

For one thing little education takes place in the schools. How could it? You can't educate slaves; you can only train them. Or, to use an even uglier and more timely word, you can only program them. . . .

I like to folk dance. Like other novices, I've gone to the intersection or to the Museum and laid out good money in order to learn how to dance. No grades, no prerequisites, they just turn you on to dancing. That's education. Now

look at what happens in college. A friend of mine, Milt, recently finished a folk dance class.

For his final he had to learn things like this: "The Irish are known for their wit and imagination, qualities reflected in their dances, which include the jog, the reel and the hornpipe." And then the teacher graded him, A, B, C, D, or F, while he danced in front of her. That's not education. That's not even training. That's an abomination on the face of the earth. Its especially ironic because Milt took that dance class trying to get out of the academic rut.

He took crafts for the same reason. Great, right? Get your hands in some clay? Make something? Then the teacher announced that a 20-page term paper would be required with footnotes.

Students don't get emancipated when they graduate. As a matter of fact, we don't let them graduate until they've demonstrated their willingness — over 16 years — to remain slaves. And for important jobs, like teaching, we make them go through more years, just to make sure. What I am getting at is that we're all more or less niggers and slaves, teachers and students alike. This is a fact you want to start with in trying to understand wider social phenomena, say, politics, in our country and in other countries. . . .

Students, like black people, have immense unused power. They could, theoretically, insist on participating in their own education. They could make academic freedom bilateral. They could teach their teachers to thrive on love and admiration, rather than fear and respect, and to lay down their weapons. Students could discover community. . . .