

Columnist Joe Hobbs

# Blacks Face Search For Concealed Identity

Today's black man has been brought up in a world that demands that he be successful. This world, however, has placed a stipulation on that success. The stipulation is that in order to succeed he must forget his blackness and become white in his actions and conduct. It also necessitates turning his back on his less fortunate black brother. For a long time the trend was for the black man to become the white-black man. You may feel that this is distant and far in the past, but I can remember times during my high school years when attending an all black school that Negro teachers would stand before Negro students and demand that they not act like Negroes. The Negro teachers felt that the students could forget all of their socialization and become something they were not.

The black man began to realize that the members of his race that were able to integrate effectively were those who acted white, accepted what he was told and let others make his decisions for him. Finally, the black man began to examine himself, his past, present and future and felt a closeness to an undefined cultural heritage. This cultural heritage, whatever it might be, was all of a sudden too important for him to give up for

the life and ways of the white world wrote the history from which he was consistently excluded. Every time he picked up a magazine to examine beauty, it was white, television programs were white and most serious of all the bit of education that he was able to receive was white. The world about the black man was in effect trying to white-wash him. Nevertheless, the black man came to his senses just in time to see what was happening to him.

The black man now feels the necessity to make the world come to grips with the realizations of his past and present. But before the world can do this, the black man himself has to realize his own identity, culture and capabilities.

Since the world is slow about change, the black man feels that he should find his own heritage and write his own history. He feels a burning need to instill a sense of racial pride and accomplishment into a suffering people. The black man for the first time must begin loving blackness and placing the welfare of a deserving brother before all else. He has to institute a cultural unity in order to assert the principles of the Black American. No longer can a small group of blacks move forward while leaving the mass majority behind. Movement now must be as a unit (all for one and one for all). Every effort must

be directed to helping disadvantaged blacks. The black man has to find a social, political, and economic stability and equality for his race. Until these are achieved integration will never be fully effective. We must remember that integration takes place among equals.

No longer is the dream of the black college student to live in the exclusive part of town in an extravagant home, separating himself from his black brothers. He now sees new directions for his education—that is, to examine the past and discover the black culture, establish a black philosophy for today and lend a hand to his black brother. With these concepts, the black man completes the framework of his cultural unit.

The cry now is for each black man to examine himself and the world about him. After this analysis he would utilize his powers to the fullest extent to make this world better for black people, thus making it better as a whole. The black man does not want to pressure cultural integration for fear his culture will merely be absorbed and lose its significance. Therefore, the black man desires cultural integration only when he has proven the strength of his cultural heritage to himself. Then, and only then will the world stand back and marvel at a glorious black past, present and future and accept it as the asset

that it has always been.

The black student is crying for relevance in his school. He does not want an education that will prepare him to meet an all-white or all-black world. What he wants is an education that prepares him to meet reality, that is, a black and white world with all of its problems. The black student, however, is not willing to wait for the history books to be rewritten, rather he has taken it upon himself to help blacks and interested whites to meet reality. This is what the Black America series is doing here at Mercer. It has taken an undone job of the University and its teaching about a forgotten but glorious people and their struggles and problems.

Mercer is quite fortunate. Recently her Black Student Alliance committed itself to the task of discovering and revitalizing the history and culture of the black race. This group pledges to supplement Mercer's standard education with the ideals of a real world by way of open forums, debates, discussion groups, and theatrical presentations. The job of the Black Alliance is to make black students aware so that they can spread this awareness throughout the total community.

When the black man finally achieves his goal, it will not only be a victory for the black man but a victory for the whole world.

# Faculty Forum

Edward W. Corson

For a student of a man in his role as a wielder of words, nothing could have been more revealing than the Tuesday night lecture on "Black Novelists" by a Negro (his word) professor.

The lecture's organization was strangely amorphous. It was a blob of anecdotes, taken mostly from a to-be-published novel of the speaker's, about "Bad whites I have outwitted," "good whites I have known," and "how my parents managed to be dignified (yes, and have a telephone) although black in Birmingham."

Stereotype intervened, too: "the speaker is, talks and think middle-class; he does not feel bitter toward all whites on principle; therefore he is an Uncle Tom and everything he says is Whitewashed and means White is Right." Stereotype has spoken.

Impatience with complex ways of speech and points of view was a third factor. The questioners had not got behind the speaker's old-fashioned forms of expression and careful qualifications to his intended meanings, which assumed anything but a simplistic "White is Right" view of black-white relations.

Inexperience with literature entered too. Apparently my colleagues and I have failed to convey an adequate understanding of What Literature Is. There is, after all, a difference between protesting powerfully on paper and conveying protest through literature. Each must be evaluated differently; one cannot be compared to the other.

Above all, the speaker did not deal with these four blocks of communication. Student ideology, stereotype, impatience and inexperience are factors any and every teacher of literature must speak to, through, and around whether he is teaching Doctor Faustus or The Invisible Man whether he blacks or to whites or both. Instead of adjusting to them the speaker continued to defend his way of life and his view of Whitey. He did so in terms having entirely different meanings to his black hearers, in their context, from

an appreciation for life itself, something I fail to find in many Mercer students. The army was forced to demand our obedience, but it never interfered with our thoughts. My advice to you future leaders is, "Relax boys, don't sweat the brass bolt."

John D. Carey

the meaning which they had for him, in his.

How does acceptance speak to frustration? How does experience speak to innocence? How do old scars speak to fresh wounds? How does caution speak to daring? The speaker apparently didn't know. I'd like to know. Does anybody know? In the end, both sides in a dialogue need to quit playing fixed roles, need to quit seeing stereotypes, and need to talk a common language.

This didn't happen Tuesday in Room 314, Student Center. Is it happening in the classroom or in the Snack Bar? I hope, for all our sakes, that it is at least beginning to happen.

The speaker, heard between the lines, was evidently seeking to provide an antidote for an over-reaction, to open minds closed by rage. I think he was trying to say something like this:

"Black literature is, after all, human literature. As literature, it has to be judged by the same criteria as white literature, yellow literature, or what have you. Its value as an expression of Black anger, or frustration, or hope, is not necessarily correlated with its value as literature." (So far I agree.)

"Black literature will do nothing except talk to itself, it will do nothing to change white attitudes, unless the Black writer uses competently the tested techniques of literary art, and presents a balanced, mature, and complex view of both black and white." (My white heart says yes, but my sense of reality says "it ain't necessarily so.")

He was trying to say this—but he didn't say it. Why? Because his style wasn't his audience's style; the How swallowed up the What.

The students who spoke up during the question period had apparently heard another speech. It went like this:

"Black novels are not as good as white novels. White people are really not racist at all. Black people really haven't suffered all that much. If you'll just be nice, polite Negro and study hard, you have just as good a chance as any white to be happy and make lots of money."

Why did they hear that, and not what the lecturer thought he was saying? Let me guess—since I'm not black, and not a full-time student, I can't assume I know. But here goes.

Ideology got in the way, to begin with: "Black people and white people are utterly different; the so-called universal standards of literary merit are actually white standards and have no claim on the black." So goes ideology.

# Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

One of the first rules for credible journalism is to shape opinion according to the facts, not shape the facts to fit opinion. This is the glaring flaw of the article by columnist Ron Childs, "Freedom? No, Captain". Regardless of one's feelings as to the subject matter, it is frightening to note that the basis for Mr. Childs' whole argument was a gross misstatement of fact: "A group of fourteen soldiers recently received sentences up to sixteen years for singing 'We Shall Overcome' in protest for stockade conditions."

The truth of the matter is that the sentences were for mutiny and willful disobedience of an order. It would be most interesting if we could have a breakdown of how many of the 30,000 dead in Vietnam died because an individual decided to rebel against authority and resort to his "constitutional rights." A good number died because they disobeyed an order at a crucial moment or that someone else disobeyed an order.

The men Mr. Childs is defending were in trouble to begin with or they would not have been in the stockade. Anyone familiar with the military would realize that these men would have accomplished much more with a letter to the Inspector General's office. Every U.S. military base in the world has one, and believe me, G.I.'s appreciate the protection of the

I, G.I. military base in the world had one, and believe me, G.I.'s appreciate the protection of the I.G.

This letter comes from a Vietnam veteran who is as anti-military as Mr. Childs, but the military is too vulnerable to be attacked with false charges and distortions. This is not only bad journalism, but reflects on the scared privilege of being able to attempt to publicly recruit converts to a cause. The credibility of "The Mercer Cluster" certainly received a black eye with the printing of Mr. Childs' column.

Randall C. Sorenson.

Dear Editor:

Mr. Ron Childs should be commended for his recent column titled "Freedom, No, Captain." Except for the slight misunderstanding of why those sixteen prisoners were court-martialed, Mr. Childs succeeded in his criticism for the U.S. Army. His questioning of military secrecy in dealing with procedural objections and his support of man's intrinsic right of self-thought are exceptionally noteworthy. These subjects are especially pertinent to those unfortunate males who are "fair game" for their local draft board. My purpose is to further the discussion, in hopes of relieving some of the anxieties and fears prompted by an irresponsible opinion.

"Is it impossible for the army to bend just a little, or would its militaristic reputation be

trashed?" Sadly accepting the fact that armies are a present day evil, the answer is yes. Most soldiers who openly object to army procedures usually commit an act of disobedience. This cannot be tolerated. Who wants to be bounced out of bed at 4 A.M., scrub floors, polish boots, peel 300 onions, pick up cigarette butts, crawl in the mud, or plunge a dagger into another man's throat? No normal man. The army is in a poor position to offer choices and make bargains. Obedience is a necessity. This is a difficult pill for the raw recruit to swallow. Most "radical" dissenters make their displeasure known during the first three weeks of their basic training. Those who endure the hardships of this training eventually realize the importance of obedience when they become a member of an army unit. Everything depends upon teamwork, cooperation, and strict adherence to procedures. Dissension here would very likely result in chaos and loss of life. Obedience is the only deterrent to such a disaster. The fact that a soldier must learn to obey orders probably does not soothe many nerves of the Mercer Campus. But, is obedience such a bad character trait?

"The army must not try to force one to think like the army, for this is denying a man of his natural rights." The army only forces a man to act in accordance with standard procedures.

Barracks, tents, bunkers, and foxholes, have been used as places for discussions. Not necessarily restricted to wine and women, these conversations are often worthwhile and constructive. Whites come to know blacks, and vice versa. The laborer learns that the college kid is not just a young punk, and the college kid may benefit from the laborer's informal education. Baptists, Catholics, Jews, and atheists are mixed together. Physically they are soldiers; mentally they are free to interact. This favorite army pastime often results in the elimination of prejudices and a better understanding between the participants, something I was shocked to find lacking in this "free" civilian society.

I, too, conclude my article with a message for Mercer's proud Second Lieutenant graduates: Having served four and one-half years in the U.S. Army, and having risen from a Private to a Captain, I speak with experience, not newspaper clipping opinion. My decorations include the Silver Star, three Bronze Stars for valor, the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry, and the Purple Heart. They mean nothing now, except that they remind me of the most rewarding period of my life. My unit was a paratroop reconnaissance company, a motley conglomeration of obedient, yet free-thinking men.

In those difficult times we learned who we were and what we wanted out of life. We gained

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