

Letters to

WASPS was racist

On Feb. 7, we were among the audience at The Theatre, Winters College to view a play WASPS by Aristophanes, produced by The Company. While we concede that the play appeared to be an attempt at cynical humor, we failed to be cynically amused at the references to blacks in the play. This is not a review of the play, but a protest against the treatment of blacks in the play.

It was dehumanizing to see the black man and woman portrayed by two white students painted in black face with large white mouths, extending to the nose and extremely large, plastic, black feet, with bright red toes. We are not saying that we recognise us in them, we are saying

that we recognised the analogy. We are black and they were painted black. We did not find the reference to whippings of black slaves at all funny: "all that slave skin all over the place; it was the talk of the town for days." At this statement, the audience roared hilariously.

African people know and are well aware that white racism exists in the West Indies, United States, Africa, South America, Europe, Canada and to bring it closer to your attention: white racism was openly exhibited at York in its broadest and most overt sense. We as an African people do not plan to tolerate or condone such actions which serve to degrade and humiliate us.

It was well understood that the

white audience — professors and students alike — enjoyed and were rather amused at the overt racism exhibited in the play WASPS in Winters College. As already stated, this is not a critique of the play but at this point we should mention that the whole play was an infantile attempt at theatrical drama. However, we are not prepared to give detailed criticism of the entire work; suffice it to say that it was a disgustingly worthless exercise.

We are well aware that the Fine Arts department at York is racist and we are prepared to defend this statement. There are brothers and sisters in courses in this program who are faced with having to negate statements such as "African art is



primitive and simple; "African dance is primitive, as opposed to ballet which is classical." Courses such as The Arts of Man ignore or treat contemptuously, African art — so that one is left to believe that the word 'man' refers only to the white man. Bearing all this in mind, we were not surprised to see the way in which Blacks were treated in WASPS. But because we expected it does not mean that we condone it.

We demand a written apology from The Company, or whoever is responsible for the production of the

play. We realise that one cannot prevent racist playwrights from writing racist plays but one can certainly refrain from enacting such plays. To perform such a play is to state that one agrees with the assertions made in the play.

In closing, our people must wage a war against white racism whenever we see it. Freedom of Black People by any means necessary.

Patrick Hunger, Chairman,
Black People's Movement

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