

editorial



A Lesson in Retail and Commerce:
The customer isn't right when in conflict with the rights of owners.

Jungle fever is not the issue

Black students at York are suffering a crisis and it is not one of racism directed at us but rather the petty squabbles which prevent us from fighting it.

Last week the Caribbean Students Association hosted a forum on children of interracial marriages. Ostensibly about the problems faced by children of mixed parentage, the forum digressed and degenerated into a petty discussion of interracial relationships.

Apparently the hot topic for the summer of ninety-one refuses to die.

Interracial relationships were called "deviant" and someone actually had the audacity to say that only one per cent are based on love. Where this figure came from is a mystery, but it seemed to be the premise for many of the arguments.

It was suggested that Black people often get into relationships with White people for somewhat dubious reasons: for social advancement or to ascribe to a Western concept of beauty which denies the attractiveness of Black people.

Added to the mix was a discussion of a comparison of interracial relationships to slavemasters raping slaves.

No wonder the topic is so hot.

As is often the case with these discussions the essential issues were virtually obliterated by a discussion of the tangential ones.

To say that Black people are in a subordinate political and economic relationship to White people is one thing, but to compare personal relationships between Whites and Blacks to masters and slaves is to assume that *all* Black people are in subordinate relationships to *all* Whites regardless of class or gender or even personality — it is an argument which isn't even worth considering in any serious debate.

Two other disturbing arguments made their rounds at the forum: first, that interpersonal relationships liquidate the experience of the Black community and deny us our history; second, that these relationships should be discussed as political acts.

If Black people in interracial relationships are losing a sense of their own history, the problem isn't the relationship. Even if Black people were only to date, marry and have children with other Black people this in itself would not give them a better sense of their past.

The problem isn't sexual. It is educational: we must teach and learn more about our culture and our history. And it is political and economic: we must have more control of government and history so our past becomes important. We must address these issues directly. Who we sleep with each night is incidental.

In fact, the issue of Western aesthetics interfering with our love for ourselves would also be redressed by educating our children about the beauty and richness of our history. And this is where we should be spending our time.

Personal relationships have come to represent political motives to the point of ridiculousness. It seems as though some people find it impossible to believe that a Black person — a conscious, politically aware Black person — may want to be with a White person for no other reason than they to enjoy one other's company.

But more to the point, whether we choose to make declarations about the acceptability of certain relationships or not, the choice is really out of our hands. We are wasting precious time giving political weight to this issue.

Black students have more important to deal with and much better ways to spend our time. We should be trying to address racism on campus, in our communities and in the workplace; we should be educating our children and educating ourselves, we should be embracing each other and our diversity.

That a forum which could have been a discussion of a very real issue — how to raise children of mixed parentage who feel comfortable and healthy and in touch with their history — turned into the most trivial session of bullshit I have witnessed in my five years at York.

This week the CSA is holding a forum on homosexuality. I sincerely hope that this too does not digress into a discussion of what is an acceptable "Black experience." We may be losing some of our most worthy contributors to the fight against racism once we start expelling those in the group who are most marginalized.

The unification of the Black community appears to be grounded in the rhetoric of conformity. And it's crippling us.

JA

excalibur

Excalibur
420, Student Centre
York University
4700 Keele Street
North York, Ontario
M3J 1P3

Telephone:
Advertising • 736-5238
Editorial • 736-5239

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EXCALENDAR

Wednesday November 6
Production Meeting at 12:00 pm

and every Wednesday

Workshop on Women in the Media at 5:00 pm

given by Dale Hall

of the Sexual Harrassment Education and Complaint Centre (SHEACC)

Paste Up Seminar at 6:30 pm

Given by Kevin Connolly of *What* and *This Magazine*

Thursday November 7

Editorial Board Meeting at 2:00 pm
Black Writer's Caucus Meeting at 3:00 pm

General Meetings
Every Wednesday
4:30 pm

All Welcome