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Welcome to another exciting issue of uhuru! We're back as strong as ever this issue, with more articles designed to make you think. We're always looking to improve ourselves and this semester was no different.

The theme for this issue is Seasons. Inside you might notice we seem to be a little loopy these days. This issue presents two sides of life (the different “seasons” if you will), the happy and the sad times.

“The Color of Worship” is a look at an African-American church, and whether God really sees color. All the articles are informative and meant to be enjoyed by all.

The Kuumba section is filled with great prose as always. We didn’t disappoint you!

I hope you enjoy this semester’s uhuru, Seasons!

Tara Pringle, managing editor

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a time to sow
spring
It's almost summertime, and I know many of us will be heading to the gym so we can look great in time for it. This is also the season to assess our total health, from our mental health to our physical state.

by: Tara Pringle

LET'S TALK ABOUT SEX

The AIDS crisis is not just a crisis over in Africa. It's real over here in the United States as well. I'm sure by now you know the numbers (but then again, maybe you don't): fifty percent of all new AIDS cases are African-American women. FIFTY percent! That's way too high.

AIDS isn't the only killer. STDs rates are increasing, and they're increasing in our neighborhood. I'm as tired as you are of hearing these same "protect yourself" messages, or, rather, I would be if it seemed like they were working.

The truth is, it just seems like no one is listening. We've still got men walking around talking about, "That bitch burned me." Well, protect yourself as best you can and maybe things like that won't happen. I overheard a girl at the bus stop saying, "Yeah, but Michael don't like using condoms. I want him to, but I can't make him."

If your man won't wear a condom, and you want him to, don't have sex with him. It's not worth it. Ten minutes of pleasure (let's be real about it fellas) is not worth suffering for the rest of your life.

BET and other media outlets are teaming up for a "Rap-It-Up" campaign to help raise awareness about the diseases that are plaguing our community. RAP-IT-UP® is "BET's call to action, grassroots HIV/AIDS awareness campaign designed to address the epidemic in the African American community", according to the information on the Web site.

HOW ARE YOU FEELING TODAY?

Remember in the movie Soul Food when the family had their Uncle Pete in the upstairs bedroom, and (in the movie at least) no one went in there except to give him food? That's how a lot of families deal with the topic of mental health. There's a "If we don't talk about it, then it doesn't exist" syndrome going on in our families. But we need to address this issue, if for no other reason than the fact that it has been secret for so long.

uhuru/spring! '03
there's a

"IF WE DON'T TALK ABOUT IT, IT DOESN'T EXIST"

syndrome going on in our families. But we need to address this issue...
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Sixty percent of African American women have symptoms of depression, according to the national study conducted for the Black Women’s Health Imperative. Between dealing with our husbands/boyfriends, running around doing errands, hanging out with friends, going to classes, holding down a job, and getting homework done—we’ve got so much going on that sometimes we don’t even know how we get it all done. We have to juggle our relationships with hometown friends, Kent friends, professors, advisors, family, extended family, boyfriends, and so on.

Many celebrities have dealt with depression at one point or another. Who hasn’t heard the story of Halle Berry’s bout with depression after her divorce from David Justice? If anything, it lets us know that we are not alone.

It’s okay for us to not feel like going to class, just as it’s okay for us to cry every once in a while. It’s all right to ask yourself, “What do I feel like doing today?” It’s okay to wear sweatpants to the HUB and not give a damn what anyone thinks because you’re too stressed to worry about fashion. All these behaviors are okay, as long as you don’t engage in them everyday.

College is a stressful time in our lives where we must really figure out who we are. We learn so much about ourselves during these four (or five) years—how we handle conflict, who we’re attracted to, how we handle problems that come up in our lives. We learn that we don’t like being broke, so we get a job. We don’t like paying tuition, so we study harder to possibly get a scholarship. We don’t like our boyfriend, so we get a new one. Change is an everyday part of our lives, and we have to learn to deal with the stress that comes with it.

Take some time to breathe every once in a while. Do something that pleases you. Watch Soul Food, buy some shoes, and call your grandma. We can’t be walking around campus looking and feeling stressed. We’re too blessed for that!

“DO THESE JEANS....?”

Fifty percent of African-American women are obese, according to the National Women’s Health Information Center. Let me say that again—fifty percent of us are OBSE, not just overweight. We need to take better care of our bodies starting right now. African-American women at a higher risk for diabetes, cardiovascular disease and hypertension—diseases we might not be too concerned about now, but these diseases will affect us later in life. The risk of having these diseases is significantly lowered when we exercise and eat healthier. We are a group of strong, beautiful women at Kent State, and I’d hate to see any of us struggling with health problems.

However, the key to maintaining or achieving a healthy weight is not by developing an eating disorder. You heard me—an eating disorder. I couldn’t believe it either when I checked out the facts, but it’s true: African-American women are just as likely to develop an eating disorder as our white women. And guess what else? Women who are in college (the young educated crowd) are at the highest risk, which means us.

Anorexia and bulimia are usually perceived as issue white women deal with. Let’s be real with each other for a minute. If someone walked up to you and said, “My friend Rachel is anorexic,” the first image that would enter your mind would be of a frail white teenager refusing to eat breakfast, lunch and/or dinner.

The reason we think like this is because the long-standing notion is that black women are much more comfortable with our body image than our counterparts. We love our wide hips, embrace our full frame and take pride in the fact that we have enough meat on our bones for the man (or woman) in our lives to hold onto. Or do we?

In recent years, the number of black women suffering from some type of eating disorder has increased. Many studies have been done over the years and we’re finding out that we’re just as likely to binge-eat and then purge. Part of the reason for this rise in eating disorders may have to do with the society we live in.

In movies and on television, we’re more likely to see thin black women if we see any at all. The four Girlfriends look like they wear a size six, and Monique and Countess Vaughan were on TV, but only after being introduced on Moesha. A look at the UPN lineup will tell you that being thin is better. On Eve, one of the characters is full-figured, but is in a supporting role. Queen Latifah, finally being recognized as a serious actress after her Oscar nomination, recently had a breast reduction and is losing more weight by the minute.

Another reason many black women have problems with their weight is because many black women have trouble shopping for clothes. Sometimes clothing fits only if you’re a size four. If you’re a plus-size woman, there are only a couple stores that cater to you: Lane Bryant and Ashley Stewart.

Just a simple trip to the mall for jeans can be frustrating. Either they’re too small in the hips or too big in the waist. If they do fit, there is most likely a gap in the back that even a belt won’t help. The curves we’re so celebrated for end up being our downfall.

No matter what our shape, a sense of satisfaction must be present. Whether we’re tall and thin, or short and curvy, or somewhere in between, it’s up to us to make sure our bodies are in the best shape possible.

As we try to better ourselves in many areas of our lives, let’s not forget to take better care of our bodies. Go to the doctor and get regular checkups. As much as we hate it, make sure you go to the gynecologist. And, don’t be afraid to see a therapist if you feel your world is falling apart. Our children, brothers, sisters, and friends all depend on us, so let’s make sure that we’re healthy in all areas of our lives so we can be there for them.

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by: Kristy J. O’Hara

Ah, the joys and frustrations, trials and celebrations of being black.

It’s frustrating to not be able to get your hair done in the city you attend school in. It’s amusing that you could show an ID of any black person, even one who looks nothing you, and get into a club.

It’s enraging to hear the n-word flowing from a white person’s lips like they own it, but it’s comforting to see students and the community come together in love, care and support for each other.

But for me, I can get my hair done in Kent, Ohio. One of my past roommates and I look very much alike and the club confiscated my ID when she tried to use it. It upsets me to hear the n-word but I can’t identify with it. And I see the camaraderie and support that black students, community members, faculty, staff and alumni have with each other and wonder why it’s not like that with everyone else.

Simply put, I’m white. But being white, black, Hispanic, Asian, or whatever you are doesn’t mean you have to be ignorant, and I’ve learned a lot during the past four years. Although learning about race differences gives me a lot of perspective and allows me to sympathize with black students, it doesn’t give me the ability to empathize. I haven’t directly experienced what black people have, and I don’t know firsthand how they are feeling.

I’ve been close with my best friend since 9th grade. We’ve shared classes and played basketball together. We’ve had movies nights, coffee shop discussions, vacations, laughed and cried together. The only thing is I’m white and she’s black.

Until college I never really thought much of it. I come from suburban Columbus, where the minority population is about the same as Kent State, and my direct family isn’t 08 uhuru/spring!

We all just got along and saw each other as equal. Some of our friends in high school didn’t even REALLY realize my best friend was black until we were in Atlanta senior year, and a man got up in our faces about being “spoiled white kids from the ‘burbs, just eatin’ off daddy’s silver spoon.”

Then we came to Kent State. For both of us it was exciting to be away, but for her it was also a chance to meet other black students who she could identify with. I never understood that she and I couldn’t identify on some levels because our histories are very different.

I got stuck in a freshmen honors English colloquium that discussed relationships between blacks and whites during the past 500 years. I, in no way, wanted to take this class. I wanted a different one, but it was full, so it was either this or some religious thought colloquium. Being a Christian woman, I had no desire to be in a new age, religious-whatsoever class, so I reluctantly signed up for the race relations class.

The next 30 weeks that I spent in that class taught me more than I ever could have imagined that I didn’t know before. By the end of freshmen year I felt educated and wanted to learn more. My friend and I were still close friends, despite rooming together, and she had developed a strong, close-knit group of friends, eventually called the Crew. I also became friends with the Crew, but I didn’t bond with them as closely as they did with each other. They’ve shared a lot of great times, and they’ve included me in a lot of those times as well. We joke a lot about race issues—things I’d get stared at or slapped if I said with anyone else. On a recent birthday celebration, it was all of us, and we joked about me being the “token” of the group. They joked to me that now I know what it’s like for them.
Although it was all joking, there is some merit to that, in a way. But again, I can’t fully understand and can never empathize.

At the homecoming comedy show last fall, comedian Money Mike said, “Every black person needs a special white friend.” We joked a lot about how I’m the “official white friend” of the Crew, but these women have been more than just friends with me. They’ve taught me a lot that I never would have learned by being stuck in the predominantly white bubble that is Kent State University.

Some of it’s funny, trivial things. For instance, I’ve gotten the hang of rolling in late. Also, I’ll be the first to admit that I’m still not a great dancer, but they’ve given me “lessons” everywhere— in the movie theater lobby, at parties and just in our rooms, and I’m at least allowed to dance in public now. We still laugh when we pass people handing out flyers because I’ll only get one if I’m with the whole group of them. Once they even told the guy that they wouldn’t take one until I got one too. The Crew and I all enjoy movies like Brown Sugar, The Brothers and Two Can Play That Game, but the vast majority of my friends have never even heard of those and ask, “What’s that about?” when searching my movie collection.

Beyond the trivial lessons, the Crew has taught me about the realities of life as black women. During a scavenger hunt, my friend had put a relaxer kit down on her list of items for people to bring her. She actually got massage oils and aromatherapy candles. We laugh about it, but until four years ago I didn’t realize that the salon experience is different for black women, and that there really is no place in Kent for them to get their hair done. I can sympathize, but I can never empathize because I can get my hair cut at any number of places within five minutes.

I never realized how many people assume all black people look exactly alike. Freshmen year one of my roommates lost her driver’s license the day she was going out with her boyfriend, who was visiting from Dayton. Since she and I both have tanned skin, blue eyes and long, curly, dirty-blonde hair, I let her use mine. My thoughts were that if my friend can get in to the 19 and over clubs with a fake ID that looked NOTHING like her, then surely my roommate could use mine at the 18 and over places because we looked so much alike. Wrong. While my friend can get a once-over look and the wave of approval in, my roommate got a two-minute stare-down and my license confiscated. It still amazes me how many people think all minorities look the same— whether it be black, Indian or oriental ethnicities.

Life isn’t all fun and games, and the Crew has definitely had their share of racial issues, and it’s taught me a lot about the tough stuff in life too.

I’ve never used the n-word before because I always knew it was offensive, but I didn’t understand the realities of how hurtful and offensive it is coming from a white person’s mouth as opposed to one of the Crew’s mouths. Some white people think they can use it because they have black friends, but no. It makes me cringe to hear it, but I’ll never fully understand how painful that word is.

Some white people pride themselves in having black friends or think that because they have one black friend, all blacks should accept them and like them. I love to meet new people, especially people who are important to my friends, like their family and friends; however, I know I’ll never meet my friend’s grandmother because she would hate me. According to my friend, she’d be nice and polite, but as soon as I would leave she’d throw everything away I touched. After rollin’ with the Crew, I’ve learned the realities of how oppressive whites were (and still can be) and how it still resonates and hurts.

Despite everything I’ve learned from my friends the past four years, the one thing that still amazes me is how supportive and close-knit the black community is with each other. Last fall the Crew invited me to a Greek event, so they told me where and when to meet. I politely pushed uhuru/spring! 09
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way through the crowd and actually got a seat with them, to which they all laughed because many in the room were left standing. I can still hear the calls from that night resonating in my head like a song.

In that room that night was such an outpouring of love, friendship, camaraderie and support for each other—by both Greeks and non-Greeks. It doesn’t happen like that for me, but blacks have had many more experiences that they’ve been through together. Again, I’ll never fully feel it, but I can recognize and understand it.

I’ve learned a lot, and I’ve been willing to see new things, and I love my best friend and the Crew very dearly for giving me both close friendship and life lessons. Even though they have enlightened me to a lot, there’s still so much out there that I don’t know or understand. I recognize that, but I feel that I understand more now. I know I can sympathize with my friend, but I can never ever empathize with her because I’m not black. And that’s ok. I’ll still be there for them if they need me and listen, even if I don’t completely feel the situation. We joke around a lot, and they say I’ve earned my badge, but I’d say I learned it. That process doesn’t stop when I receive my diploma in May though—-it’s something that will always be inside and pushing me to understand more.
A Single Rose/White Shadow

Deep inside the ground, a love lay in wait
Settled, undisturbed and uncertain of its fate
In a state of silence, unsure of how to grow
Unbeknownst to it, the seed had been sown
Alone, surrounded by an endless dark
Hopeful of a sign, a guiding light, a spark
Hark it did, not a single noise was heard
A quiescent voice unable to murmur a word
Is it absurd to dream dreams of future hope?
Wishing to fill with color like a kaleidoscope?
Of course not, although that love thought so
Patiently waiting for its chance to grow...

Where these feelings arose from, nobody knows
For now, they can be found, though, within a single rose

Deep inside the ground, a love has bloomed
Its grace and beauty, one naturally would assume
Within looms hatred, punctuated by thorns
Piercing skin, producing blood used only to warn
Because as love is born, many obstacles still arise
For its true meaning, one must peer into the eyes
As it cries, the pedals glisten with every tear
The crimson red shivers, it displays its fear
My dear, the time will come, a decision is close
To take it away or let it grow, like most?
Oh, the single rose...

A Blank Canvas/RobinDaHood

My heart was closed, a blank canvas, untouched & virgin.
Though I had loved, no one had ever indelibly painted their soul on mine.
Until you. With the brush of your passions, you painted my heart with joy reserved for angels.
With pastel hues of love & the soft touch of an artist.
Your loving hands moved the colors of my soul & blended them with yours, creating sunsets & moonlight, oceans & shores.
Your eyes get lost in mine, like a painter lost in his art. You will never know the masterpiece you've created...
You, Me, Us / Arthur Miller

Patiently I've waited to be one on one with you.
Now I'm so excited, I'm not sure what do do.
I mean, where should I start.
I want to begin with you running your fingers through my hair,
end by touching your heart.
This is sure to lead to excitement for your night.
Making you feel good, I'm going to give it all of my might.
This night will forever be embedded in both of our memories.
Getting to the basics, we will both be smiling and pleased.
Pleased that we chose this time to spend together.
Will the excitement ever evade us? No never.
Visions of us creating romance in all kinds of weather.
How far we'll go, we will create our own levers.
Now its you, me, and us.
Vibing to the situation at hand, thats a must.

Come Lay With Me / Luc

Come lay with me
There is no rush for tomorrow
for it will come on its own
Let us explore each others minds
and talk of our times
Entangled in each other
Exploring the union of our souls
As we move in unison as one
Let's share our passions for each other
As the day moves along
Let's not take for granted our time
and what it gives us
for it is fleeting and never long enough
Come lay with me
as we listen to the beat of our drum
Let the world pass away as we
enjoy the world of our own
Let the sunlight play upon our bodies
Encircled in each others arms
Our desires cover us bringing warmth
come lay with me
and let day slip into night
as worries melt away
cocooned in our fortress estranged
from the callings of the world pulling us back
Come lay with me
In moments of escaped reality
the pleasantries of sheer joy
given to us
No crowds, no worries, no pain
Come lay with me...
Ode to Women/Nyaga Mbitiru

A Woman, long the second, the supporting cast, the sheltered
The doer of the mundane, trivial, meaningless
Sometimes a mere tool for domestic upkeep and masculine maintenance
But only through the eyes of man

The texts and words of man, betray the woman
Weak only by strength, delicate and fragile only to protect the brilliance within
What brilliance you ask?
To answer that we must view their nature

The woman is soft, gentle, patient
For her purpose is to nurture
Nurture warriors, kings, poets and women
For "in her the future generation dreams"
The man is merely a tool
The woman's nature is what sleep is to a man
Healing, restoring, replenishing all that has been used up
So that the earth may continue to turn

The scientists say that the essence of man is half that of a woman
Surprised? I am not
Women have intelligence, Men have character and passion
But a woman is not without fault
"In hatred she is far worse than the most fierce warrior"

Women give birth to the thinkers
Their nature is one that brings forth and maintains
Their nature is the island in the universe of chaos
Whose winds and shores are always calm
Whose sun is ever shining
Whose base is deep and unwavering

Ode to women, the essence of existence

Soul Mate/Soul Poet

I am so mesmerized by the deep earthy browns of her eyes reflecting a love i
can't deny pardon me i believe we've met before i am sure sometime ago your love
stood at my door...Please don't go, just
give me a moment to refresh your soul...
When I say I love you, understand that
these words reflect my inability to
express the completeness of my feelings
for you...although you may say.......i don't
know you...Your flavor i can almost taste
taking me back to some familiar place
when I said I love you...I mean I want to
touch your soul walk through the corridors
of your heart, caress your spirit and
embrace your mind...I'm sure we have
loved each other somewhere across time...
Your melody is such a familiar tune I am
sure we've met on the moon shared a
shooting star together long before we
left heaven...When I say I love you
understand that this is my Sole reason
for living, for being that without you there
is no meaning...I know it's not everyday
when you hear a stranger say i love you...
If given time, you may find that this love is divine.
Last Night
I took a step back
Took a look at my life
Every moment of the past year
In an instant
Stretched throughout
Last Night
I found I've learned
Many lessons needed
But know
I have many more
I looked back
And saw my failures
The pain that they inflicted on me
The pain I, in turn, inflicted on others
I've had my heart broken
Lost my 'self' in someone else
Placed that someone in fear
Burned bridges with my fam
And lost some of the best friends I have
I thought about all of this
Last Night
I found I've learned
Many lessons needed
But know
I have many more
Despite all my failures
I see this year as a success
Failure creates two things
I see this year past filled with both
My heart has been mended with time
And, though a piece is missing
It has been filled with many needed
Lessons
I found my 'self'
And know how it is done
Should I ever be lost again
My bridges are being rebuilt
One piece at a time
And I started mending
Friendships strained
Last Night
I found I've learned
Many lessons needed
But know
I have many more
I've learned to say
"I like myself!"
But more importantly
I've learned to mean it
So I leave this year a little older.
A lot wiser.
With a better perspective on life
And all I had to do
Was take a step back
Last Night

Untitled/Darrick A. Adams
We tend to look at the world with open eyes
But when we close our eyes to our surprise
Things actually come into focus.

We see the faces
Of familiar people and places
And things from times gone by.

These images usually make us smile
If only for a minute or a while
We find a peace that calms us.

Sometimes the images make us cry
For no reason and we don't know why
And then we find a peace that calms us.

At this point down memory lane
We tend wonder why these things remain in our brain
But they serve a great purpose.

These thoughts to our surprise
Help us when we open our eyes
Not miss the things in our focus.
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Black cinema has always had its heroes. The bridge between silent films and talkies had Paul Robeson. After that, Sidney Poitier flourished in mainstream Hollywood as furiously as any man of any skin color. But these men were shining exceptions to the movie business' approach.

Black cinema wasn't able to inject a movement all its own into Tinsletown until after Robeson opened the doors of the '30s and '40s and Poitier dominated the '50s and '60s.

The 1970s introduced an unexpected public to the fast and violent format of filmmaking that eventually became known as blaxploitation.

These movies showcased people of color in an unusually funky fashion. The feelings many blacks had for blaxploitation movies were split. They felt it fantastic to finally be consistently represented on the screen, but disconcerting that they were normally presented as criminals or, at least, very prone to bloodshed as the first response to any and all problems.

A possibly problematic, but interesting, thing about these films were that, like most of American movies, were produced, written and directed by white people. One such director was Jack Hill.

The writer/director began his cinematic career with chicks in prison flicks like 1971's "The Big Doll House" and 1972's "Women in Cages." He then found himself unwittingly helping create the blaxploitation era by writing and directing 1973's "Coffy" and 1974's "Foxy Brown."

These two low-budget movies did big business at the box office. They, along with movies such as "Sweet Sweetback's Baadassss Song" and "Cotton Comes to Harlem," also resulted in many similar-minded movies being released.

In this Q & A, the filmmaker talks about why he got into the business, what it feels like to be ripped off creatively and the effects his works have had on today's cinematic landscape.
Q. How and why did you get into the realm of movie making that would go on to be called blaxploitation?
HILL - Mostly, I needed the work. And at the time it was virtually the only way to get started if you didn't have a close relative who was either in the business or very wealthy.

Q: The bulk of your first movies had women in the central roles. You then did movies showcasing people of color in the leads. What do you pull from to find these voices?
HILL - All of that just came naturally. Who can say where ideas and "voices" come from?

Q. When do you first remember wanting to make movies?
HILL - When I was in the film department at UCLA, which I entered in order to learn how to write music for films. I just got drawn into writing and directing because my mentor there, Dorothy Arzner, encouraged me.

Q. What were your early influences? How big of an artistic push did you art director of a dad give you?
HILL - My father never pushed me in any artistic way. I suppose the early influences were my enjoyment of the Warner Bros. style of films - strong ideas as opposed to lavish budgets. Maybe somewhat more because my dad worked at Warners.

Q. How was Pam Grier to work with?
HILL - Great. Thoroughly professional. Maybe just a tad more difficult after she became a star.

Q. The third Austin Powers movie hung much of its ad campaign on a line very similar to your line in "Foxy Brown" that went "That's my sister and she's a whole lotta woman!" Does stuff like that flatter you or annoy you?
HILL - Well, I'd hardly put that line on a level with "I'm shocked - shocked!" but yes, it does give me a tingle when I notice that it seems to be getting around.

Q. Did it surprise you that "Coffy" and "Foxy" performed so well at the box office?
HILL - Yes. It was a very pleasant surprise - being that it was my hope more than my expectation at the time.

Q. While commenting on the DVD of "Foxy Brown," you say that Black Power and Black Pride are missing from today's movies.
HILL - Those expressions were catch-phrases of the time. I suppose they're difficult to understand today, even for an African-American, what a revolutionary emotion they conjured up.

Q. Whether it was about violence, the treatment of minorities or whatever, did you ever take the criticisms of your films to heart, or did you think those who lashed out were taking your works too serious?
HILL - The harsh criticism that was often leveled at my films never bothered me because I had no (conscious) thought or intention to do anything other than to entertain a paying audience. Actually, I appreciated the attacks because they invariably made people more curious to see the films.

Q. How influential were the movies of this era?
HILL - They were very influential in demonstrating to the industry beancounters that there was a large audience of all colors willing to buy tickets to see films that depicted black characters and lifestyles. The eventual result was that black characters, and the black actors who played them, became more and more incorporated into mainstream films. If there's anything I'm proud of about my work at that time, it's that.
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~ Dr. Pete Goldsmith
Vice President for Enrollment Management & Student Affairs
A white reporter and photographer step into The Spelman Chapel, an African Methodist Episcopal Church in Kent, with one goal in mind:

The color of worship

As I was driving to the Spelman Chapel at 910 Walnut Street, I was uncertain of what I had gotten myself into. I picked up the photographer and we easily found the small chapel nestled behind a row of suburban houses on Kent’s south side. The church is physically more than fifty years old and has been a staple for the local African-American community throughout its lifetime. I was referred to the Spelman Chapel by Dr. Fran Dorsey, a professor with the Department of Pan-African Studies at Kent State. He occasionally fills in with a guest sermon.

I do not consider myself racist by any means, but to be honest, it is a bit intimidating to step into a church knowing that I will be a minority. I was raised in a small southern Ohio town with a population made up entirely of whites. Growing up I attended a Presbyterian church with a congregation made up of, once again, all whites. I had an idea that the Spelman Chapel would be a bit different from the church in my hometown, which was, to say the least, frigid and confining. I knew there would be differences between my hometown culture and the culture I was expecting at Spelman. I wanted to learn what divides a community racially and what brings us together. I also wanted to find out why we still have forms of segregation. I wanted to know, as a Caucasian individual, why there are predominantly black and predominantly white churches at all. Then again, maybe it was just my personal curiosity. I had media-engrained visions of the members of African American congregations jumping around, clapping wildly, falling down and yelling desperately towards the ceiling. I would often get lost in the spectacle and at the same time, lose an understanding of the expressiveness of a different culture. I was unsure if we would be welcomed as fellow worshippers or labeled as ‘white visitors.’

A Special Sunday

As we pull into the parking lot of the chapel I note the outside of the church is not elaborate. There are no ornamentations or stained glass. It is very simple. I park parallel to a Suburban Sport Utility Vehicle, unable to see the parking lines which are covered by snow. A tall, elderly black man emerges from his car, parked rear end first, opposite mine. “You might not want to park that way, you’ll never get out,” he says, laughing. “That person parked wrong,” he says smiling, pointing to the Suburban.

I briefly explain to him that I’m doing a story on the church and he points me in the direction of Reverend Juenele Thompson, who is surfing from her car clothed in full neon lime green African garb. An elaborate African robe stretches down past her knees and a matching lime green headdress adorns her forehead. Her two-year-old granddaughter Aryantha accompanies her closely.

I follow Juenele to the basement of the church, a dishelved mass of miscellaneous clutter, wood and plastic. The basement is in the process of being remodeled due to extensive flooding last year. The inside was covered with disgusting sewage, she informs me.

The service is set to begin in about a half hour. We watched as Juenele helped her granddaughter with her Burger King breakfast. Aryantha enlightens me with the fact that her name starts with the letter ‘A,’ as she draws the capital letter in the air.

Juenele laughs. “She’s learning.”

Juenele, an Akron resident, has been the pastor at the church for about two years. Prior to settling in at the Kent church, she was a pastor at St. James Ame Church in Youngstown. The majority of the congregation is from Kent, she informs me. “They’re from here, mostly, born and raised here, which is a good thing,” she says. “This is a neighborhood church.” She informs me that today is a special Sunday. Today has a theme. Members of the congregation are encouraged to wear African clothing. It is also Youth Sunday.

A Different Kind of Bible Study

As we head back upstairs, I notice that the sanctuary is significantly larger than it appeared from outside. A colorful bulletin board with African-American themed events is located near the door. Inside the sanctuary, the interior is covered with light-colored wood paneling. The pews are made of hard wood, and a large cross hangs over the pulpit. The scene looks very similar to the church I grew up in, except the pews are lined with brown faces instead of peach ones.

Only about eight people sit scattered throughout the rows engaged in a Bible study session prior to the actual service. Albert Wilkerson, a member of the church since 1963, explains that studying the Bible is just as important as hearing it in the form of a sermon, hence the study session. He holds a large cane in front of him, both hands balancing on the top of it. “It’s a family thing with me,” he tells us. “I was raised in a black, Methodist church. Some people go do other things, but this is for me,” he says, smiling.
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This bible study takes a much more hands-on approach, which is very unlike any bible study I remember. Spontaneous outbursts come periodically from the small group. Individuals are also far more expressive and open with their thoughts and feelings on the Bible. I definitely never lost interest at this bible study.

An elderly woman named Anne decorated in orange African apparel sits in the front and periodically comments on the lesson. “I’ve only been here twenty-seven years,” she says, smiling and offering her hand as a greeting. “But I like the warmth. It’s welcoming. The spirit,” she says, continuing to smile.

Keith M. Jones, a member of the ministerial staff, sits in the back, outfitted in brilliant blue attire. When asked what draws him to the church, he answers very sternly, “God. That’s whom I serve,” he says nodding his head. “I serve my Lord.” He pauses. “Many men and women put themselves first, but any that truly serve the Lord should serve God and not man.” Keith feels Black History Month should not only be in February. He tells me that the African clothing worn at today’s service is in celebration of their heritage. “It shouldn’t be celebrated only twenty-eight days a year. As Americans, you can’t celebrate an entire culture’s history in one month. It should be taught in the school system.” Keith proceeds to explain why this church is predominantly black. “Man separated us, not God.”

Service Begins
The service is beginning and everyone finds a seat. Slowly, more people filter in during the first half of the service. Over fifty African American churchgoers fill the pews. A few Caucasian people enter in late, as well. A young white woman enters escorted on the arm of a black man. Two other latecomers are older white women with two mulatto grandchildren.

The service begins with a rousing rendition of “This Little Light of Mine,” complete with clapping and soulful refrains lead by three women at the front of the church. Again, I note another difference from my past church experiences. People can actually sing on key at this church! I am very impressed with the harmonious voices that are filling the sanctuary. After the gospel interlude, there is a call-and-answer opening procession. The photographer and I don’t know any of the lyrics, but everyone else seems to. The first official hymn begins and everyone rises out of their seat. Once again, each person knows the words. We simultaneously stand, dumfounded. We search the morning’s agenda in the program, but no reference to lyrics or page numbers are found. A tall black man in his mid-twenties with cornrows is sitting four rows in front of us. He turns around and glances back at us. Suddenly, he runs toward us with a hymanal book already turned to the correct page. He hands it to me and smiles. Soon enough, the song ends. A series of readings by the youth follow. I can hear a periodic “amen” and “praise Jesus” emerging from the congregation.

Charlette Davis, a junior at Alliance High School, sets off toward the front then belts out an inspiring performance of a church hymn. “Sing it, girl!” someone shouts. She obeys. Her performance could rival some top American Idol contestants. Feet stomp. Hands clap. Charlette has attended the church for seven years. Her father was the pastor prior to Juvelene. Charlette told me she was excited to perform for Youth Sunday and that not many churches carry on themes like Spelman. Next week everyone is wearing white, she updated me.

The time has come to welcome visitors. I knew this moment would come sooner or later. Two young black men are welcomed by being asked to come forward and sing Boyz II Men. They do just that. One of them forgets the words halfway through the song. The other young man puts his hand on the shoulder of his friend and helps him sing through it. The congregation sings along. I don’t recall Boyz II Men in the hymn book at my church, but here, it’s quite alright. Next, we are asked to stand. We introduce ourselves to the congregation and everyone turns to look at us. “Welcome,” many people say looking back at us, smiling. Luckily, we don’t have to sing.

The Black and White of it
The sermon finally begins, but not before two separate offerings and several more hymns. Music is key and seemingly ever-present. I haphazardly see my watch and can’t believe it has been over an hour. It seems like I just got here. I remember at the church in my hometown, I would keep one eye on the agenda and the other on the clock. Here it is different. The service is entertaining and exciting.

The sermon is good, courtesy of guest minister Stephen Butler from Barbenton, delving into several Bible passages deeper and comparing the church to a courtroom in one instance. One quote hits me. “Things are rarely as black and white as they seem.” A third offering plate is passed around for what is called a “love offering” and the service concludes with yet another song.

Angela Wilkerson sits in front of me. She is the white woman I noted earlier that entered arm-in-arm with a black man. She has attended the church for seven years with her husband and children. “There is a divide here,” she says, “only if you don’t come in and welcome yourself.”

Pat Rager is one of the white women seated toward the front of the church. Her two children are named Arriaes and Kole. When asked if they are from a previous relationship, she says simply, “They are my sons. God knows no difference,” she says, showing me a copy of the African-American Bible she uses to teach her children about religion. Pictures of black religious figures enhance the center color pages. “Back in the days of Jesus, Peter, and Paul, there were black people, too. Children need to learn that important people over time were black also.”

Arriaes sits next to me, watching me scribble down notes. Kole stands in front of me, outstretching both hands. “Guess,” he says. I pick a hand and he curls it outward, exposing a Halls cough drop. He smiles. The two boys are ushers at the church and help collect the offerings on alternating Sundays.

“I don’t think [prejudice] will ever be stopped,” Pat continues. “If God’s not worried about it, I’m not either. When that happens, I believe it will be heaven.” Pat says that as a white member of the church, she does feel somewhat left out. “But not in a bad way,” she clarifies. “These people have known each other for so long. It’s not because of prejudice.”

The children’s grandmother, Jennie Lowe, sits at the front. She has played the piano at the church for over fifty years. She says that more white people from interracial marriages have been coming to the church in recent years. She says they feel more accepted in a black church. Jennie recalls an elderly lady who is in an interracial relationship. The lady attends the Spelman Chapel and another church. “When she comes here,” Jennie recalls, “she always says, ‘This is my church.’” Despite the segregation that occurs, Jennie says she has seen times change throughout her lifetime. “White churches have a lot more blacks going to them,” she says. “Especially near the university.”

Keith M. Jones walks by in his bright blue suit and adds a comment. “Black or white, I have an idea who you are when you come into this church,” he says. “Only in the world do we look at color. God sees no color.”
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okantah

academic chair of pan-african studies
badejo

advertising manager, office of student media
lynn

production manager, office of student media
common
Well...here is another issue of uhuru. It's filled with some articles, some pictures, some page numbers, some people...I don't know. It's got stuff in it. There's an article about the "Underclass" and what's "Right and Wrong."

We're pretty unhappy these days and I'm sure it'll show once you read it.

Read it, or don't read it. We don't care. It's been a hectic, mind-numbing second semester and we're just glad it's almost over.

Here is this semester's uhuru, Seasons.

Tara Pringle, managing editor

discontents

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stand up -05

kuumba -08

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a time to reap
When I look around at the Kent State campus I see an array of a million faces. This campus is so full that at certain times of the day it is hard to find a place to walk on the concrete—let alone a place in line to get a quick bite to eat. Out of all of the things that I have gained from being here at this university, the one thing that has always been missing is an increase in black males. My girls and I have spent countless hours talking about the shortage of black males on this campus. The question on all of our minds is where are all the brothers at? Even though this is petty conversation, it still holds a strong point. Where are all of our black men on campus? The answer is simple: there is a shortage of black males in the university setting.

This is a problem that goes beyond Kent State University. The percentage of black males is low at most schools in the United States. The thing that really shocked me was the percentage rates at the Historically Black Schools. Schools such as Fisk, Clark Atlanta, and Xavier do not carry a percentage over 30%. Out of the African American race two-thirds of the bachelor’s degrees are awarded to women. This is a problem because we need more positive, educated, black male role models out there. So what is the problem? Why are our men a dying breed within universities?

In the United States 43% of children live in homes where fathers are absent. A large percentage of theses home belong to black families. Young black males need strong male role models. Don’t get me wrong—single mothers do their part, but there are some issues that they cannot fix. The presence of a good father helps to mold a man into what he should be. Fathers are able to guide their sons through life, give them confidence and self-esteem, and discipline them all at the same time. The assurance that comes from all of this will play a part in helping young black men when they go out into the world. The absence of fathers in the home has had detrimental effects. Mothers are having to either depend on the system or work two or three jobs just to make ends meet. When you are living this kind of life it is hard to concentrate on anything other than just making it from day to day. In some of these homes the ABC’s of how to survive, stay alive, and keep a roof over your head outweigh life as told through the eyes of William Shakespeare.

When young black males enter K-12 schools they have a whole new set of problems to deal with. A lot of teachers are not trained to teach black male students. Some of these students were not taught in the home to have a love for learning; therefore they do not embrace school. Other black male students may like school, but because their self-esteem is low due to the fact that they have not come from caring backgrounds they do not have confidence in their ability to learn.

Since some teachers do not know how to handle these problems they place students who do not catch on quick enough into classes that are meant for children who are learning disabled instead of putting them in gifted and talented programs. The male students who chose to act out their frustrations are suspended or expelled from school. Suspension and expulsion are not the answers because this just takes our males away from school as well as giving them a negative stereotype.

I know from experience that a lot of my black male friends were never at school because they were always in trouble. Not being in school also takes a student away from class, which takes them away from learning, which puts them behind, which messes up their grades. I have also seen teacher’s just pass black male students through school regardless of the grades that they have just to get rid of them. All of these mechanisms that are being used in K-12 schools are do to the fact that teachers do not have the proper training in how to handle the way that some of our males have been socialized.

Once our males come out of high school they are looking at what to do next. A lot of the males that I know did go on to college. Some went on to trade schools or 2-year programs. The remainder settled for legitimate jobs or an illegal way to support themselves. Some of the reasons that males choose not to further their education are due to the fact that they do not want to go through the same things.
that they did while in high school. The pressure is way more intense in college than it is in high school. The classes are a lot more advanced and things move a lot quicker. If you do not have a steady foundation from your K-12 years then things will be a little bit harder. There is also the fact that black males feel that they are just as discriminated against in college as they are anywhere else. I have sat and talked to guys who have told me that they have been automatically stereotyped when they go into a classroom.

Other black male friends of mine feel like even though they have made the effort to go to school, people are still waiting for them to fail. There are many who make the attempt to go to school, but do not make it all the way through. Some guys feel like the can make a better career trying to rapper than going to school to become a teacher, doctor, or lawyer. Plus when you look at television, the majority of our successful men are in the entertainment world. Very few of them are actually college educated.

The list could go on and on for why black males are almost extinct at the college level. The question now is where do we go from here? I have read about several programs that are on the rise in the K-12 schools to help meet the needs of our black male students. Certain states are trying to pass acts so that teachers have to take courses and workshops geared towards the discipline and teaching of inner city males. They are also trying to set up courses for black males who have a bachelors in another field, but want to be teachers. These courses will allow them to be certified to teach in the classroom. Another program that is being looked at is for parents who are receiving assistance. They will be required to take part in their child’s educational growth in order to receive assistance. These programs have not come to pass yet, but they are being looked into.

Hopefully these things will be implemented and then a change will start to appear. I feel that it is very important for our males to receive a college education so that they can go on to inspire and motivate other young black males. It is time for us to have more positive male role models in our communities so that we can grow. In the end the sooner that we can increase the number of black males that go to college and go out into the work force and the community, the sooner the world will be able to see the brilliance that they have always held.
I am a “dago”. That’s right. You don’t get more Italian than “Fazio.” In our new and wonderful politically correct world, it seems that unless you’re a minority you can only criticize your own. Hence, I can use the word “dago” all I want. I can criticize Italian-Americans if only for the reason that I am one. So to dispense with all the drama of being criticized for commenting from without, I felt the need to make this point.

However, there is another group that right now I’m happy that I am in. In fact it’s quite crappy. However, again in our warped, politically correct world, because I belong to this group, I can still criticize it all I want. I plan to cut to the chase and identify the REAL causes surrounding its problems.

Because it’s like this folks: I...am poor. That’s right. I am impoverished. I make less than $7000 dollars a year, about HALF of the federal poverty line, which is $12,500, straight from the W-2’s. I get no subsidies from the United Bank of Mommy and Daddy. The reality is that at any given time, I am on several social, utility, and academic programs.

While the academic ones could be deemed a scholastic characteristic of middle-class children as well, the other programs I benefit from would most-certainly be included in that most negative of connotations called “welfare.” What I love about the situation is this: I am a stout conservative, a serious Republican with the occasional elitist view.

My dad grew up in a podunk town called Willard, where he and his family lived simple. He worked hard as I grew up, but unfortunately we lost our house when I was 16. I remember a fairly prosperous time when school clothes shopping would happen yearly. Later that slowly tapered off. I’ve never been destitute, but then again I’ve never known anyone that was who put in even the least little bit of effort. Later, I moved out on my own.

Life was mine but of course I would have to pay for it on my own as well. I lived in Akron for a good part of the beginning of my twenties. I stayed where rent was cheap, and the neighborhoods often reflected that. I even stayed a bit with a friend under the Y-bridge, possibly the worst part of town. I not only saw that thing called the “underclass” everyday, but lived, worked, and played within in. For a good 4 years of my life I was knee deep in the cut.

Why did I start my intro to this article with this long elaboration? Because when you go on the attack on any one particular group, the only very pathetic defense is to lash back, “You don’t know!” Well, sorry folks. I do know. So...now that I can talk about this topic with some bit of authority, let’s get down to the nitty gritty.

The reality is that poverty is a serious issue. Moreover, it is often very perplexing, given that we live in such a prosperous nation. However, at the same time, it is nothing new. Since the dawn of time, life has been hierarchical. There are people at the top and people at the bottom. There are people who make it in this world and many more who do not. Part of the reason capitalism has been so successful is the blatant fact that its core— competition—has been a staple of life.

Nonetheless, poverty still exists and the people within it occupy the broadest class by far in society. Many people view it as a “problem.” Like somehow in a completely unrealistic and utopian way, it can be solved and it can go away. Without going too much into socio-economic and political principles, scarcity will always exist; everyone cannot have everything. There is not an unlimited amount of resources to distribute a “thorough” amount to all. Some will have more, and some will have less. That is just how the world works.

Now, this is not to say that improvements cannot be made with respect to the quality of life of our citizens at the bottom. However, at the same time, we must approach this in the correct manner. To really address the problems and formulate solutions, the TRUE causes must be identified first. If we are to ever find a solution that is at least fairly viable, we have to do the following: Dispense with the bullshit:

You see, this is where I stop trying to articulate a nice structured argument and cut right to the chase about what really is going on at the bottom. This is where I stop being nice and accommodating my opponents. Instead, what’s needed is a healthy bitch-slap. Because I have been on the ground. The truth needs to be told. Because they insist on living in some utopian dream world, putting forth plans and goals which will never be realized in a million years, that truth must be told blatantly, because they just obviously don’t get it.

Before I start seriously laying into people, let me make this disclaimer: When I start to generalize, when I start to stereotype, of course I don’t mean ALL. No one ever said that every single person of a group is like this. Instead, and
the fact is that "most" are. You can cite an exception to the rule all day long. But that in no way, shape, or form, makes the rule go away. So when I start slamming', keep that in mind. There are people who do not fit into these categories I am laying out. There are those who are better who will rise above. The reality is, they are few and far between.

Because I am poor, because I am one of these in this class, I get to say it. Many, if not most, people in this group can be characterized by how they perform: pathetically. If the underclass were a sports team, boo's and shouts of "you suck!" would litter the stands. You've seen the bumper sticker? "Mean people suck." Well, the underclass suck more. Their lives are immersed in mal performance and a terrible work ethic (laziness), willful ignorance and naiveté, and they are all bent on making truly pathetic decisions and not giving a damn after they do.

But the truth is they are COMPLETELY responsible for their situation, and that is a fact. You see, all I hear is excuse after excuse as to the reasons these people are in the situations they are. None of them are their fault.

They are all just a victim; they aren't responsible or should be held accountable. Some one else did it to them. And if they could just have the chance they somehow never got, they could make it. The ghettos would disappear, everyone would be rich and have PhD's. God, I wish that were true.

I'm about to show exactly why they are where they are and how it's all, and I do mean all, their fault. Then I'm going to go into the plethora of excuses that are given to these people, of which I belong, and why they are nothing but a pile of fallacies. Finally, I will sum up what really needs done to make headway in this issue called poverty.

Like some of my friends, I've had my share of run-ins with Johnny Law. After all, I never said it was just as easy being poor. I never said it wasn't at least a bit harder. Being poor, there were plenty of times I couldn't pay a fine, and a bench-warrant was issued. So I go to court. I've been there before. So I know what to expect. I know some crusty, old, conservative judge is going to be up there eyeing me. So I put on my best button-down shirt and khakis, because I don't own a suit. I find a tie that fits and stroll on in, on time, mind you.

I go before the judge. I say, "Ma'am." I say, "Your honor." I conduct myself respectfully. Then I go sit back down. Next, I look over, and this person struts into the court room, late by like 20 minutes. The clerk finds his paper work. And then he goes up to the podium. "Uh...yee...ah" he says. "Yes...no" he blurs out. I'm sitting there the whole time, knowing this dumbass is getting the book thrown at him. And ya know what? That's exactly what happened.

I can't tell you how many times I've been to court. But each and every time I go, there is some punk just like this kid, who doesn't have enough sense to change up how he carries "his'self", no matter how obvious it is that he's probably been there as many times as I have.

Living in the ghetto, I noticed a number of totally stupid things. First, people walk in the middle of the street. (At least in Akron) Now, I'm not talking in the dead of winter, sidewalks covered in snow. I'm talking about the middle of summer, in the heat. I went to a neighborhood watch meeting once where parents complained about kids getting hit by cars. It never occurred to them once they should teach their kids not to walk and play in the street. I used to think it was funny. But one day, I saw some woman, probably about 19, walking in the middle of my street. That wouldn't be as bad, except for the fact that her 4-year-old daughter was by her side holding her hand.

I wanted to run out their and slap her upside the head. And they wonder why their kids are getting hit by cars. No one told these people to do that. No one make them walk in the middle of the street. They CHOSE to do it by their own volition. God created sidewalks for a reason. Some things are just plain common sense.

Another thing about the ghetto is this: Mailmen wear boots up to their knees. Why? Because 3 months of winter can come along...and ghetto people will not bust out a shovel, not once. In the summer, the grass grows almost as deep, burnt brown and weedy. Trash blows all over the place.

I used to have to pick it up out of my yard all the time. But it was futile. There would be more there tomorrow. Why? Because rich old white men would sneak into the ghetto in their $80,000 dollar BMW's and secretly dump out their trash and then speed off? Please. I would watch people in the ghetto tie up their trash bags poorly all the time. Garbage would spill out or the bag would break or a dog would go rip one open. Or they wouldn't secure them and the wind would blow them over. And after they fell, they wouldn't even go out and pick them back up.

One more interesting fact about the ghetto and more so the "projects" is this: Ever notice how dilapidated the projects are? I mean, there's probably not an area more worthy of the title "armpit of the neighborhood" than the projects. Why? Because they were built like that? Do you really think a contractor went in and said, "Ok...we're gonna put a crack in here, and let's put a stain over there. Let's put some worn out water carpet over here, finally let's install a few broken windows over there. Oh yeah, don't forget the broken door and beat up exterior." Of course not! Why do ghettos look like they do? Because of the people in them.

One of the excuses out there is that people suffer from the negative environment around them. Like with the classic victim argument, they would've gotten ahead, but instead go astray because of the negative aspects of the environment around them in which they live.

-06 uhuru/winter
Well, who do you think created that environment in the first place? Duh! Do you think they simply installed the ghetto like that and then had people move in? Any place in this world is exactly what you make of it. If you treat your car like crap, a few years later, that's exactly what you'll have. The same goes with the neighborhood. The whole is simply the sum of the parts, that being the citizens. If there are bad hoods out there, it's because citizens in them made them that way.

You see, there is an endless stream of handouts for the underclass that supplements any and every cost they will ever have in their lives. We give these people everything, and literally woe their ass for them from cradle to grave and they still go nowhere. There needs to be a point where we realize there are just some people out there who are hopeless. And sadly enough these people are not in short supply. There is an enormity of aid that is available to poor folks and it still doesn't do them one bit of good.

The topic of healthcare has been vastly exaggerated. The media and various politicians have made it seem as if healthcare costs ten thousand dollars a month for everybody, and only the super rich could possibly afford it.

When people don't have health insurance, it's because they choose not to. Of course, I'll get the excuse that they work at a local job that doesn't offer health care. Well, change jobs! If you're a poor person and making minimum wage anyway, why stay there? Low paying jobs are a dime a dozen. Go with a company that offers health insurance.

Now, besides health care, there are a myriad of other programs to help poor people rise above. Forget meeting them halfway. We are literally clothing them, feeding them, bathing them and putting a roof over their heads. They have to do hardly any work, and they still go no where.

There are plenty of programs that subsidize where you live, from Section 8 to HUD. That knocks out the rent.

There are local city plans to subsidize your water bill. HEAP in Ohio subsidizes your gas bill, your electric bill. That knocks out the utilities.

There are food stamps for groceries. That knocks out the meals.

There is Headstart to help with daycare for children. That knocks out the baby sitter so you can go to work. You get child credits from the federal and state government just for having kids.

There are earned income credits as well, simply for making a certain amount of money. That's right, cash-money completely free and clear!

And of course, there is the good old basic welfare check. I mean, give me a break. Any bill you can possibly think of that you and I pay everyday, there is a subsidy for it.

Keep in mind that most poor people live in the ghetto. Do you know what property taxes are in the ghetto? Next to nothing. This list of handouts and their excusable counterparts goes on and on.

And even if we take the state and public arenas out of the equation, there's still a plethora of help for the underclass. There are numerous private organizations that do all sorts of charity and philanthropy work around our nation for the sole purpose of stamping out poverty. Private donors give hundreds of millions, and even billions of dollars in aid to help these people in addition to all the handouts they get from the state.

So what really needs done? Two words- tough love. Because poverty isn't a "problem"; rather, it is a condition. It will always exist and it will never go away. This world has been and always will be a hierarchy. You could take 100 people from anywhere and strand them on a deserted island. Some would excel and others would not. There would be a leader at the top, and a plurality of followers as the bottom.

With regards to tough love, it's amazing how easily you can get someone's butt in gear when they realize their feeding tube is about to be cut off. And that's exactly what we need to do. Because the amount of effort being wasted continually is never going to change the structure of our society. There will always be people at the bottom, and all the money and excuses in the world will never change that.
Myself/SarahLaine
21 years old and alone
With a fatherless child.
Sometimes I can't tell up from down.
Sometimes I can't tell quiet from sound.
From the outside, people see smiles,
They hear the laughter,
But I can taste the pain --
It's Bittersweet...
Cause every night I start to weep
Until I kiss my sleeping angel
Before I'm off to sleep.
How could you abandon such a shining star--
An extension of you the best of who you are?
My mind tries to forget, like I made him alone
And I try to get back all the years you stole.
17 years young,
An impressionable being,
Giving total heart and soul
Without even seeing
The destruction in my life in the future, near
Love's rose colored lenses made it harder to see clear.
Just the thought of you gets me seething
Not because we aren't together, that ain't the reason...
The whole thing is--
How could you leave your son behind?
And when you see him twice a year,
You act like everything is fine...
What's running through your mind?
Are you dumb or immature?
Or is your heart numb -- you love yourself more?
Maybe he's better off without you in his life
We may not have you here, but I'm gonna do this thing right.

Go and find your balls, whore.
All you did was provide the seed.
I'm his daddy, everything he needs.
I'm more of a man than you, I'm tough.
Cowboy, I won't sit on man.
Flesh and blood, your child.
How could you desert us? Desert him? Your King?
But I cannot teach him to be a man.
And understand...
Grieving throught.
I can reach him now, how to be nice.
I gave you my whole life, you only gave me a kind.
I gave you my best, you gave me your word.
While I got his doctor's bills piling up on my chest.
You lay your head down at night, get a good nights rest.
You don't deserve that mess, you don't do nothing.
For an instant I see you
And I turn me up, catchin expressions he makes
I can see you in his face.
I can see it in his face.
The damage you're doing is already taking place...
How can you call yourself a man?
I Used to Love Him/Ms. Emotional

I used to love the way he smiled
I used to love the way I would sit there and watch him for a while.
I used to love the way he laughed
But I don't love him no more that was the past.

I used to love the way he said I love you
I used to love everything he would do
I used to love the way he said my name
I used to love the way he would sex me insane

I used to love the way he danced
I used to love our late night romance
But I don't love him no more that was the past.

I used to love the way his hand would hold mine
I used to love how he always had time
I used to love the way he used to be
I used to love him when he used to love me
I used to love how it wasn't about them...
But that's the past because I used to LOVE him...

Lying Eyes/One Mind

My eyes lie to me.
They tell everything is ok.
I now know things did not go my way.
How could I be blind for so long?
I was telling myself I was doing the right thing,
when I surely being wrong.
So now with my vision pure and clear,
I should face the facts without the fear.
Doing this is easier said than done.
Especially when I thought I was having fun.
Lies had to clear my way.
I did not have anything to say.
It was all my fault from the beginning.
Then there should be no surprise with this ending.
A lesson well taught and a lesson learned.
So maybe next time I will not get burned.
The Me No One Knows/Bill R.

I Sit Back And Laugh
People Think They Know Me
But They Don't Know The Half
I'm Sometimes The Person
My Persona Shows
Lemme Introduce You
To The Me Little People Know
I Am Not The Person
Who Cares About Stupidity
I Am Not The One To Blow My Money
To Get Jiggy
I'm Not The One Who Cries
Over Spilled Milk
I'm The One Who People Mess With
And End Up Getting Killed
I'm Not The One To Steal Your Woman
And U Wanna Cut
I'm The One Ya Woman Comes To
When Ya Stupid Azz Fucks Up
I'm Not The Gentle Innocent
I'm The One To Rob Ya Momma
To Pay My Rent
I'm Not The One To Put My Business
In The Street
I'm The One To Knock The Mess
In My Business
Off His Feet
I'm Not Shady
But I Can Be
And If Don't Believe Me
Cross Me
Please Try Me
I'm Not A Playa
One Woman Will Do Fine
I Am Psychotic
If You Try To Jack With Me And Mine
If You're Reading This And
Feel You Know This Soul
Then That Means You're One Of Few
In The Circle I Hold
But For The Rest
There More To Behold
Cause There's More To Me
Than The Me No One Knows

They Talk
toronto

So they talk
they talk to rumours
they have invented themselves
guessing, stipulating
recreating, lying
telling others what they want to hear

So they talk
they talk about others
people they do not know
judging, degrading
hating, negative name calling
only divulging their Envious Souls

So they talk
they talk of the unseen
places they have never been
people they have never met
situations inexperienced, and yet
they will talk

So they talk
they talk like politicians
making shady decisions
hiding behind fake personalities and smiles
waiting for you to fall, polluting societies with lies
while they guard their files

So they talk
they talk like a crack head
nervously seeking a dealer
to buy their next rumour
to sniff it, burn it - talk about it
like dirty needles, they share it

So they talk
They talk of their dislike for others
based on nothing but hear say
like a group of middle school kids at play
they gather together for the rumour of the day
professing to be altruistic, they talk

So when they talk
I evade, omit and laugh
at the ignorance of these court jesters
foolish minds, judgmental souls
green with envy they glow
scared to face the subject of their discussions,
and it shows

They talk to feel better about themselves
They talk to attract more friends like themselves
They talk the secrets of others, starting rumours
They talk in private, too scared too bitter
They talk like precocious, low self esteemed Jokers
They talk to start next week's new rumour

-10 uhuru/kuumba
I'm too common for your interest
but too odd to be accepted
from a hood
where I'm too grounded to be understood.
I'm too quiet, outside
but my style's too loud to hide,
So I'm noticed but ignored;
When they're focused, I'm abhored.

I am humble; I am brash
I am fire; I am ash
I'm the cash; I'm the stash
I am balance, but I clash
"Slash".

Black Queen/Kevin Clark

An African Queen rooted in American soil,
The Ebony muse created in beauty and etched in my memory for eons,
You... the sincere risk taken with a consequence of my perfect imperfection,
In where you make those imperfections perfect....

The essence of your being is crafted in sublime radiance,
But the truth remains that you shall be far from me in distance,
Both in body and in heart... words could be spoken until breath no longer is within my being,
I would be a charlatan -- forging my tongue into the recesses of my mouth,
Never letting the truest words exit from the depths of my soul,
Especially going from not knowing your name to greeting each morning with your name on my lips,
The feeling of you intoxicates me -- the choice of falling for you wasn't mines to choose,
But the reality of the scenario is that I'm playing a game in where I may ultimately lose....

You could be everything that I ask for in my prayers at night,
A smile that will never leave -- even if you happen to leave from my sight,
A single graze from your fingertips along the back of my neck sparks a sensuous embrace,
Where I wrap my arms to enclose you in the love that beckons to call for your name,
Where our souls connect in the wee hours of the eve and dance along the shadows illuminate by the morning sun,
I expressed to you that I felt something deep for you,
And I have to have will power to suppress those urges true...

Ultimately I am placed between my heart and my fears,
Never wanting you to break from your nest and take flight with me,
But yearning for you to experience Love from this grown man's weary heart,
And while this war rages on... the struggle shall just continue,
But all in all -- I thank you for being the woman you are, whether with me or friend...

It's a welcomed change amidst the tarnished relationships that scatter my Love's past,
And which ever direction we shall embark on -- our relation remains to be written in the night's sky,
I just wait for the full Moon's light to illuminate the truth to both you and I....
Looking

by: Sankofa

In December 1955 in Montgomery, Alabama, a Black middle-aged seamstress sat down on a segregated bus with the presumption of carrying on with her daily routine. She did not anticipate being arrested for refusing to give up her seat for a White man. "Rosa Parks walked into the belly of the bus merely a passenger and left in handcuffs, the maternal figurehead of a movement that would change America" according to Africana. Rosa Parks' unjust arrest received attention from the Women's Political Council, who staged a one-day protest.

The council’s department head, JoAnn Robinson, sent out over fifty thousand fliers to Montgomery’s Black community requesting residents to boycott the buses on the day of Parks’ trial. E.D. Nixon, the work protester that paid for Parks’ release informed several ministers including Martin Luther King Jr. of Parks’ arrest and upcoming trial. His notification and Robinson’s fliers began the involvement of the Montgomery Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

The majority of Montgomery’s Black community joined together under the wing of King and created Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA), in order to protest not only Parks’ arrest, but all aspects of segregated transportation. Together they boycotted the buses, carpooled and utilized taxi services. The boycotts caused an assortment of violence from adversaries such as harassment from police and White Citizen’s Council. Despite their tribulations, the MIA continued to fight for the desegregation of transportation. In June, the MIA achieved their goal. The federal court ruled that segregated seating was unconstitutional and Parks’ case was appealed to the Supreme Court, where the primary ruling was upheld.

Segregated seating would not have been ruled unconstitutional without the strength of one individual: Rosa Parks. Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott are pieces of history which prove that great things can be achieved with the support and determination of one’s community.

Does the community support from 1955 still exist today in Black communities?

Community support still exists today within the Black community to some extent. For instance, Kent State University has a variety of programs and organizations dedicated to the retention and education of Black students. These programs include Black United Students (B.U.S.), University Mentoring Program (UMP), Academic Students Achieving and Reaching for Success Program (S.T.A.R.S.), Kupita Transiciones, Harambee, and the Kent African Student Association (KASA). Being involved with these groups enables Black students to become aware of the social/racial, economic, and educational issues that face their community both on and off campus.

BUS serves to “unify all Black students by addressing their needs, identifying relevant issues and initiating appropriate actions” on campus. Similar to MIA, BUS is familiar with community encouragement because without it, their existence is questionable. According to the BUS website, BUS was founded with the unified action of all fraternities and sororities on the campus. It recognizes the power of unity and seeks to bring together Black students by providing them with events and volunteer programs. These events and programs include “Hip Hop vs. MAAT: A Psycho/Social Analysis of Values” presented by Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu, and Progressive Education Community School (PEC School), a volunteer program that tutors children from the King Kennedy Community Center in Ravenna, Ohio.

Laini Harden, a member of PEC School says, “Volunteering has enabled me to give back to my community… I have the ability to influence and encourage others to not only seek out a higher education, but to take what they learn and use it for the improvement of their neighborhoods.” BUS’ presence within the community has encouraged many Blacks to become more conscious of their ability to change their environment.

Becoming more conscious of one’s ability to change one’s environment is one main feature of the S.T.A.R.S.
Program. The program shows incoming Black freshmen the power that one individual, like Rosa Parks, can have on their community. Thirty students live together and take classes together the summer after their graduation from high school. The students must learn to work together as a community or face the consequences. The disruption of one student can result in the extension of study tables or even an earlier curfew.

Sheila Harris, an Academic Star, says, "Living as a community is very difficult because everyone is an individual and when people are asked to work together conflicts can arise, but when we began working towards a common goal (avoiding reprimands) we began to unify more easily." The S.T.A.R.S. Program shows students that goals can be achieved so long as everyone in the community joins together.

Though programs on campus provide learning experiences for students, many of them do not work together when scheduling events. Candace Wood, secretary of BUS, says "There are events on campus that overlap and cause students to choose one event over another. If the campus organizations would work together when making a yearly agenda, students could attend all of the programs provided by the organizations."

Wood's suggestion is idealistic; unification of campus organizations on scheduling would enable students to become better acquainted with different associations and issues that they would otherwise remain unaware of.

Do Blacks show support for one another economically?

Blacks took it upon themselves to economically support one another during the Montgomery Bus Boycott. E.D. Nixon paid bail for Parks, extra miles were put on people's cars in order to drive around members of the community, and taxis faced harassment for giving boycotters discounts.

It may not be necessary to drive around the community today, but we can support one another economically by taking advantage of Black owned businesses, and by supporting Blacks in the media. Shana Lee, Director of the Multicultural Center, says, "I show my support for Black owned business by patronizing Diamonds and Curls (Black beauty salon owned by Felicia House) and Fashion Fair (Black makeup line created by John Johnson)." Patronizing Black owned businesses is an expression of Lee's desire to enhance her community while receiving a quality product or service.

On the same hand, Durrell Jenkins, a student, patronizes Black owned corporations by purchasing clothing and accessories that are created by Rocawear and Sean John. Jenkins said, "By supporting Black businesses I am enabling them to be successful and their success portrays the immense capabilities of the Black community." Jenkins makes it all to clear that he takes great pride in supporting Black owned companies.

Arika Jones takes pride in her community by showing her support for Blacks in the media. She watches the United Paramount Network (UPN) on Monday nights. UPN showcases a variety of Black centered television shows including, The Parkers, Eve, Girlfriends, and Half and Half. Jones ecstatically states, "I enjoy watching UPN Monday nights because the shows address issues within the Black community, and I feel that I can relate to some of the characters on a psychological level." Blacks being prevalent in the media is empowering to the Black community because when a culture sees images of themselves, they are enabled to better identify with and in turn support their surroundings.

In order for support to be given to Black corporations, companies must make their products available to the many communities in the country. Black business may be prominent, but some products that have Black celebrity endorsers may not be convenient for blacks for purchase. Raven Yeboah, from Detroit, says, "My mother travels to different states in order to purchase items that appeal to her, like MAC cosmetics." Missy Elliot is a spokesperson for MAC's Viva Glam lipstick line, "with 100% of sales donated to people living with AIDS" and this aspect of the company is what attracts Yeboah's mother to the product.
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Do Black business owners and Blacks in the media have a responsibility with the elevation and portrayal of the Black community?

Black owned businesses and famed Blacks are the national and even international representation for the Black community. If Black corporations take the initiative to provide different social events to uplift the Black community, members of the community will not only be inspired by the companies concern for their enhancement, but be inspired to provide benefits for their community as well.

John H. Johnson, a successful entrepreneur, began the Johnson Publishing Company in 1942. Since then, his company has grown to include Ebony and Jet magazines, and Beauty Salon: Fashion Fair Cosmetics. As a man concerned with the well being of his community, Johnson has taken it upon himself to enhance the Black community. His efforts have caused the founding of the Ebony Fashion Fair, where "African-American designers continue to create exciting, innovative designs that compete and compare favorably with those from well-known European and American designers" (Black Designers). Through the publication of his magazines and the creation of cosmetics that match the different pigments of minorities, Johnson informs Blacks about other entrepreneurs within their community.

Johnson uplifts the Black community on an international level as well. In 1995, Johnson Publishing Company expanded their operations to South Africa. Expanding his company to another country further showed his concern for Blacks. A year after expanding to South Africa, Johnson was awarded for his outstanding achievements with the Presidential Medal of Freedom. His efforts to uplift the Black community have made it possible for his company to be worth about $500 billion dollars.

In their efforts to boost the Black community, some celebrities work with Black owned industries. During the holiday season LeBron James collaborated with the Black owned Henry's Acme Grocery store in Akron in the donation of 300 turkeys to less fortunate families. According to the Plain Dealer online, LeBron expressed his opinions on community service by stating, "Basketball is a small issue compared to the world...I'm out trying to help people see the future and not concentrate on basketball." LeBron is a celebrity who recognizes his role in the betterment of his community.

Despite its contributions to the Black community, Black Entertainment Television (BET) is no longer Black owned. As of January 2001, Viacom, Inc. completed its acquisition of BET. The sale (which was for a total of $3 billion) consisted of Viacom Class B Common Stock and the assumption of debt. The sale of BET was a setback for Blacks in society as a whole. Robert L. Johnson, BET's founder, sold BET to consolidate the corporation's debt. As a result of the deal, he is now the first African-American billionaire and is currently number 179 on the Forbes 400 list, with a net worth of 1.3 billion. Even though some may argue that he "sold out," there is still no denying the fact that he has gone places no other black person has been before. He is currently the only minority to own a basketball team.

Although Robert Johnson is still chairman and CEO of BET, he must report to Mel Karmazin, Viacom's White President. Johnson no longer has the ability to expand or control the images projected to the Black community without the approval of Karmazin. BET reaches 63.4 million households in the U.S. and has a large influence on Black communities because of its ability to address issues, educate, and entertain Blacks on a national level. The images being projected to

"What happens when a Black-owned company, once the leader of putting Blacks in the media, becomes White-owned?"
Arika Jones are brought to her by Viacom, who owns a variety of production companies. I ask the question, when we watch shows that are centered on Blacks, do we realize that we are not only supporting the actors, but we are supporting the companies that employ them as well? If we do not support the shows that are centered on blacks, will the media become white washed?

How can images of Black people be projected to Black communities by a white-owned company, as BET is now? Is it up to the Black employees of BET? Viacom to accurately portray images of Blacks that encourage the enhancement and education of the community? Yemi Toure, a journalist on MediaFile, says that, “Robert Johnson and BET President, Deborah Lee, got five- year contracts with Viacom, but almost nothing has been said about the approximately 500 other BET employees.”

If Rosa Parks had accepted an offer of a dollar to give up her seat so that a white man could sit down, the Black community in Alabama might not have achieved their goal of desegregated transportation laws. Toure further expresses his concern for the future of BET by saying, “The Christian Bible says that without vision, the people perish. BET has been looking down at its bottom line so much; it never looked up to see the noose swinging above its head.” Toure’s quote not only applies to BET, but to the Black community as a whole.

In 1955 the Black community of Montgomery, Alabama unified in spite of the violent opposition of their oppressors. Today in 2004, on the Kent campus, violence does not prevent Blacks from participating in the events that relate to the elevation of their communities. If nothing is preventing them from partaking in events that promote community unification, why is the attendance of Black students so meager? I asked Octavia Jones, Clerical Specialist for the Office of Campus Life, “Do you feel that Blacks really support one another?” She disappointedly replied, “No, because if you look at the Black History Month programs, attendance is minimal.” Octavia hopes that Black students will consider the question, “Can we support one another if we don’t reflect on our history?”

During Black History Month, BUS presented a variety of events that acknowledged the achievements, histories, and social and racial issues of Blacks. Needless to say, the events that promoted the uplifting of the Black community through remembrance of the past received poor attendance. On February 25 only thirty-five people went home with a greater knowledge and understanding of African culture because they attended the Bi’Okoto Dance and Drum Troop. The Troop is “a professional African dance company comprised of highly talented artists” who’s mission is to preserve traditional African drum and dance heritage and promote cultural understanding by educating audiences of all ages about African countries through language, music and movement for a better appreciation of diversity” (Bi’Okoto). Events similar to Bi’Okoto have great purposes, but without the support of the community, their purpose is defeated.

**Do Blacks sacrifice the possibility to educate themselves for the sake of entertainment?**
BUS brought Russell Simmons, creator of Phat Farm Industries and a major hip-hop/pop icon, to speak on “Hip Hop and Academia” during Black History Month. The event received a lot of attention considering that approximately 700 people attended the event, but Simmons’ speech was deficient when it came to educating the audience on issues that revolved around the Black community. Several persons that came expecting an encouraging speech about music and academics were highly disappointed and left the event less than ten minutes into his discussion or lack of one. Latoya Simmons, Programmer for BUS, expressed her dissatisfaction with Russell by saying, “I was highly disappointed at Russell Simmons because he was unprofessional and let down the audience.” Simmons’ poor performance frustrated the audience, and many of them lost respect for him as a leader in the Black community.

Unlike the Russell Simmons event, the aforementioned event featuring Juwanza Kunjufu received poor attendance. Kunjufu is a respected author and publisher of books such as the Black College Student Survival Guide and The Conspiracy to Destroy the Black Woman by Michael Porter. His speech informed and encouraged the audience to not only seek out information about Black history, but to apply the information to their daily lives. The lack of people was disheartening to many attendees of the event.

Michele Sanders, a freshman, says, “I felt kind of angry because I expected more students to come out and show their support for BUS and the events that they put on.” Perhaps students should make the effort to attend events that do not circulate around popular culture. Some may argue that they do not have time to attend specific events, but if you can make it to the most popular events, you can at least make an effort to attend the less popular events.

Candace Wood says, “BUS understands that students can not attend all events, but we would appreciate it if more students would attend the more educationally centered programs, as well as the more socially entertaining programs.” Making an effort shows one’s support for one’s community and allows programmers to know that their efforts to educate the community are not in vain.

Rosa Parks influenced the Black community to support one another by joining together for one cause: desegregation of transportation. The end result of their unity was a step forward for the Black community on a local and national level. It is essential for Blacks to educate themselves and remember persons and events from our history, like Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott, so that we too can uplift one another and take steps to move forward, not stand still.
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Everyone has their own interpretation of absolute truth. Some believe in oneness with self and others believe it is found in Holy Scriptures. We all have personal ideas of what is inherently wrong or right. But what is right? What is wrong? Are the concepts of right and wrong absolute or do the definitions vary from culture to culture? We all have a conscience and we all have some feeling of what is right and what is wrong.

What happens when all of the values that you thought were right are suddenly challenged? Why do we substitute wrong for right? What justifies a wrongful act? Throughout our lives, each one of us has had at least one person who has taught us what is right and yet we choose to do wrong. There is no other way to phrase this, but some things we choose to do are simply stupid.

The Fourth Edition of The American Heritage Dictionary uses the following words to define stupid: making poor decisions or careless mistakes, lack of intelligence or care, foolish or careless, dazed, stunned, stupefied, pointless and worthless.

Drugs
We live in a society that rewards wrongful acts. Denzel Washington has publicly stated that he will not permit his children to view the bloody and intense movie, Training Day, the film that won him an Oscar. The movie is based on veteran Detective Alonzo Harris and his less than twenty-four hour training session of rookie narcotics detective, Officer Jake Hoyt. Alonzo allows Hoyt to see the inside perks of being a cop: direct access to beautiful women, mounds of cold hard cash, and, of course, illegal narcotics. The tagline to the motion picture draws an interesting conclusion: the only thing more dangerous than the line being crossed, is the cop who will cross it. This key line to the movie directly links criminal involvement with illegal narcotics with danger and stupidity. Alonzo eventually figures out that choosing to do wrong doesn’t pay in the long run. Stepping out of Hollywood and back into reality, we should all know that it is wrong to get involved with illegal narcotics, yet some still choose a lifestyle that leads to failure. African Americans are thirteen times more likely than Caucasians to be arrested and charged as drug offenders. That number is staggering. Another stunning fact is that even though Whites are five times more likely to be users of narcotics, Blacks are prone to being arrested for possession. Some statistics show that Black men make up slightly more than fifty percent of Ohio’s jail population, while Blacks only account for eleven percent of the state’s total population. Most Black men are going to jail on drug related crimes. It is puzzling to think that Blacks, being aware of these statistics, still choose a life of crime.

Sex
Another topic that often stems from something that many of us have been taught to be wrong is promiscuous sexual activity. Over sixty percent of new AIDS patients are Black women. African Americans comprise approximately thirteen percent of the total United States population. Over half of the individuals being infected with HIV, Human Immuno-deficiency Virus, the virus that causes AIDS, Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, are people of color. In the U.S. alone, one-third of AIDS patients are Black. Again, African Americans are being affected by this disease at record rates and there are still sexually promiscuous men and women within our local communities. We can all play a part in protecting ourselves and our future loved ones. AIDS can remain dormant in one’s body for up to ten years without the person ever knowing it? Unfortunately this means you, your partner, your fellow student sitting next to you in class or on the bus, your professor, your roommate or you one-night stand last weekend could currently be infected with HIV or AIDS right now and not experience any signs or symptoms until it rears its ugly head a few years, and a few more partners, down the road. Many statistics show that one in three college students is infected with a sexually transmitted infection. You can help put a stop to what some may call self-inflicted problems. You can choose the one-hundred percent safe way around sexually transmitted infections including HIV and AIDS, pregnancy and heartache by abstaining from sexual activities completely or simply start using multiple forms of protection. The truth is here amongst us college students and we must adapt to our ever-changing culture in order to protect ourselves and our current and future
loved ones. I encourage you to choose a decision that is right for you.

Violence
As an onlooker to a brawl I witnessed late last year, I wondered to myself what could possibly cause these two grown African American men to engage in such brutal actions towards each other. Sometimes during the punching, kicking, and cursing the police arrived and hauled them both off to jail. I continued to explore the possibilities to the root of this hatred. This hatred was obviously so passionate that both men were willing to publicly act irrationally. I later learned the men were disputing over a woman.

This well sought-after woman happened to have no particular interest in either of them. Some may refer to their actions as stupid. There were many logical paths the men could have chosen to take that night, yet they both chose the wrong one, which led them to prison. Everyone has been taught, but it has obviously not been learned that physical violence is wrong.

Dreams
Sometimes I imagine what would happen if Black people took all the negative energy they use to hate each other, and put it towards cooperative efforts to fight the powers that keep them in low income housing, sub par educational systems, and drug filled communities. I visualize our future if the money used to house one out of every twenty Black men in prison was instead used towards a college education. Upon successful completion of college, what if they turned around and made educated contributions to their representing black politicians? What if they ran for public office themselves? The possibilities are endless, when we choose to do right.

How would life be different if men and women were striving to be the best spouses and parents they could be instead of setting their goals at how many partners they can add to their lists? If we chose to stay monogamous, student sexually transmitted infection rates may plummet. If we change our wrong ways of thinking -20 uhuru/(the)fall

and look in the direction of what is right, we have an excellent chance at changing the way society view our culture.

According to the latest United States census, our country is home to African Americans and Hispanics, both holding percentages at approximately thirteen percent. I believe due to the cultural similarities of both groups, we could unite an interest in domestic and political affairs that has the potential to reshape the current laws we live under. Blacks and Latinos could come together and create a powerful voting block, a larger economic pull, successful media conglomerates, corporate giants, and possibly form a new, respectable, ethnic way for America to do business. With the support of progressive Whites we can start an entirely new political party that is ready to battle Democrats and Republicans for political control of this country. The main focus of this new party would be to gain support from and represent the interest of the working class, minorities, and progressive thinkers. By choosing to make the right choices over the always present and tempting wrong ones, Black America could easily begin to explore current inadequate conditions in this country. There is an overwhelming need for improvement in many areas such as: education, the economy, housing, health care, and political standpoints.

If we are in agreement that illegal drug use, infidelity, black on black crime, and the presence of an overall negative attitude is considered wrong, then why continue to glorify this things? Why do we continuously attempt to portray rappers, ball players, and other rebellious media icons who are not true moral role models for our younger generations? As we grow older and hopefully wiser, we should realize that always choosing to do right is not always necessarily the most popular decision.

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In History class, we all learn about when Africans were brought to this land and sold as slaves. No where in the history books does it mention that those same human beings had their own organized societies, communities, government, ways of thinking, liv- ing, and raising families before they were forced to reside here. Over four hundred years later, we are the descendants of these great men and women. We have evolved into a group of people have never had the opportunity to recognize the power potential that we possess. Black communities spend nearly $600 billion on insignificant, frivolous items, while recycling less than ten percent of their goods.

We can start businesses and invest in our children to guarantee a strong financial future for Black America. Black America needs a national plan, one that will create economic wealth and competitiveness. If not, we will forever be asking the majority for tax cuts, reparations, civil rights, and other things we can get ourselves. The first step in creating a new way of thinking is to stop engaging in activities that are anti-black empowerment movement. Things like continuous sexual promiscuity, distribution and consumption of illegal narcotics, and black on black violence just to name a few. If we just think about the long term for our people, then we can reshape the way the world depicts us.

I am aware that no one is perfect and that people make mistakes. I am not perfect myself so I do not expect anyone else to be. But when I look at the state of Black America, and hear the cries of our people, it makes me upset. I hear nothing but complaining about education, disproportion and that, conspiracy theories, and everything else.

My challenge to Black America is to stop complaining and start doing. It is time that we put away those childish excuses such as “I had no choice” or “It’s because of my environment”. We make our own decisions because of free will, and if your environment is dirty, clean it up.

I am writing this article because racism in America is alive and well in the year 2004, and the only way to combat it...the ONLY WAY, is to work together. We must understand that we must clean ourselves before we can take on the bigger problems. If you are a man or woman, and you are competent, quit doing wrong and start doing right!
BLACK AMERICA
WE LIVE IN A SOCIETY THAT REWARDS WRONGFUL ACTS

we are controlled by materialism, captured in illusions and destroyed by violence. Look deep within our cultures, our scriptures, ourselves.

STOP self-inflicted problems
STOP complaining and start doing

WE MUST NOT be compartmentalized
WE MUST NOT be marginalized
WE MUST get organized

we have never recognized the potential we possess. We are not perfect, but together, we are powerful.

THE POSSIBILITIES ARE ENDLESS WHEN WE
CHOOSE TO DO RIGHT
we will get ours
The Department of

Pan-African Studies

Our department offers an undergraduate major leading to a Bachelor of Arts degree and a minor in the College of Arts and Sciences. The developing discipline of African studies includes Pan-African Studies (or Diaspora Studies) as one of its primary emphases. Our major and minor course sequences are structured to provide an in-depth study of history, language, philosophy, education, literature, art, music, science, sociology, and other subjects as they relate to people of African descent throughout the world. These courses also expose students to theoretical, practical, and domestic and national issues facing African Americans. Students are encouraged to use their intellectual skills to bring about better organization and development within the African American community.

Students majoring in any field—from Business or Education to the Humanities and Fine and Professional Arts—are encouraged to consider Pan-African Studies as a minor.

The PAS curriculum includes courses which cover a broad spectrum of the Pan-African experience. Its purpose is to provide students with basic information and questions which will lead to further research, study, and analysis. The curriculum also seeks to investigate the African connection and/or influences among other ethnic groups, particularly Native Americans and Latin Americans, and the extent to which these may be reciprocal.

Please find below a list of general courses offered in the Department of Pan-African Studies. (For available courses each semester, see General University Catalog and Schedule of Classes for each semester.)

**PAN-AFRICAN STUDIES (PAS) for placement and credit in foreign language courses see Arts and Sciences—Foreign Language requirement—placement and credit.**

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