

Campus racism rising

Panel studies causes and solutions

By Debbie Roberts
Of the Emerald

"Negros (sic) have spent a lot of money in the past to buy anything to make their skin whiter and we all know if a machine were invented tomorrow that could make you completely white you would all run to be white... you people are good athletes (sic) and can run like the wind, I see you jogging all over town. But the reason negros (sic) strongly support Gun control is you know we cant run but we can shoot and if all the guns are gone the fastest and strongest could survive best. Viva Reagan Viva Gund (sic) and where are you now marcus (sic) Garvey."

Last spring term, the University's Black Student Union received this letter in the mail.

The full-page letter, typed on notebook paper, extolled racism with such additional comments as "99 and nine-tenths percent of all Negroes want to be on some government program," and "99.44 percent of all Negro females are poorly built."

BSU director Vinscon Green says he has "no idea" about the letter's origin.

"There was no return address, no name — just the letter," Green says.

Racism is on the rise and becoming more "obvious" say many University community members.

The Jewish Student Union recently discovered a swastika painted on a poster beside a sign welcoming all Jewish students to the Union, says Alan Contreras, acting ASUO executive vice president and a student member of the newly formed University task force on racism.

The forming of the task force was prompted by increasing racist graffiti, jokes and a direct confrontation, off-campus, between a black student and a "white man with a knife who claimed to be a member of the Klan," says English professor Ed Coleman, who is also a member of the task force.

"The situation is already out of hand," he adds. "There's already more racism than any of us want to see."

"Open" racism is not rare and has become more frequent within the last 1 1/2 years, Coleman says. He also blames the Reagan Administration's lack of support for minority groups, saying that Pres. Reagan's stance is "giving license to this kind of behavior."

Leon Jordan of the University affirmative action office agrees with Coleman that many people believe the present administration seems to have given racism a "green light."

"Racism wasn't seen two years ago, because it wasn't cool," he says.

Jordan also says that he thinks racism has a "direct correlation with the tightening of the economy" and many people see Affirmative Action as "taking food out of the white males' mouths."

Racism falls into two categories — "lower class verbal and physical abuse and upper-class tendency to tell racial jokes," Jordan says.

To many people, the racial jokes, the subtle racism, can be more of a problem than physical abuse.

One member of the BSU cites "walking down the street and being called 'nigger' from a passing car" as a minor form of discrimination.

"Sometimes I feel ignored in my dormitory," says a member of the Chinese Student Union.

Another member of the task force, psychology Prof. Myron Rothbart, stresses "peer responsiveness" as an important factor in stopping racism.

Both Rothbart and Coleman believe that the task force can be used to educate the community about what can be done to stop racism.

"We can try to get as much information as possible to students and faculty," Coleman says. "People have to know University policies and state laws against racial harassment."

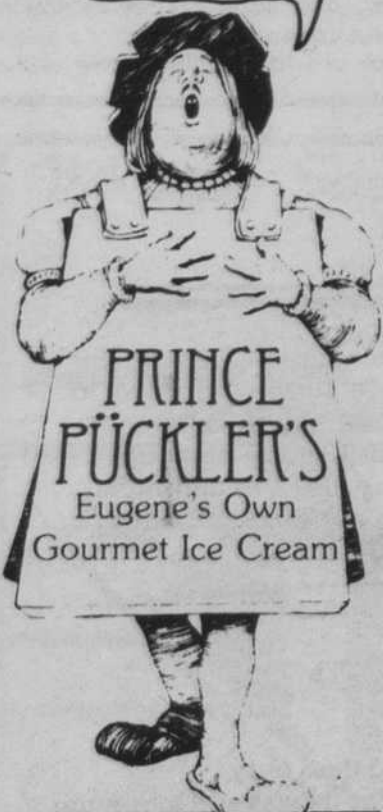
Jordan says he thinks educating people about racism must include helping them to understand "minorities aren't any different as a group, but as individuals."

"There's a tremendous burden for minorities to be better than the average human," he says.

Minorities have a need to tell people, "I am an individual, not the exception to the rule," Jordan says.



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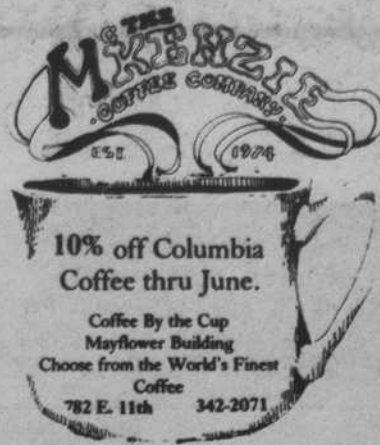
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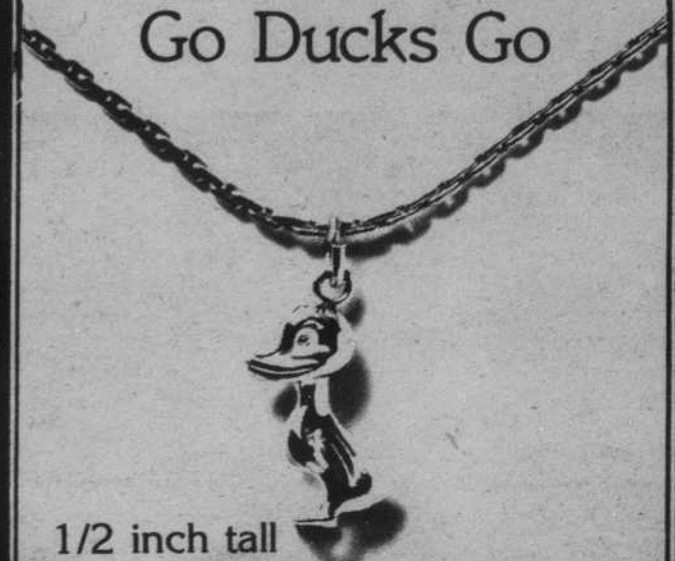
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