

Ask For White Racial Awareness

To The Editors:

Approximately three weeks ago Russ McGregor contacted four white Grinnell students to act as a sounding board of white attitudes toward the CBS proposal for a black cultural library. We attended a meeting with library staff members on February 10, and a meeting with members of the Library Committee on Thursday, February 17.

Our position in respect to the library proposal was observational rather than an operational one. However, in expressing our views at the meetings, we soon realized that we had acquired participant biases which clearly favored the CBS position. Therefore, we have at present more than a cursory interest in the actions and reactions which occurred last Thursday (Feb. 17). Because we recognize these biases, we will not and cannot censure the actions of the parties involved in this dispute. Rather we will attempt to clarify what has now become a stagnant and muddled situation.

The CBS proposal, as we understand it, was as follows:

That a black cultural library be established in what is now the complex of offices just south of the Registrar (this includes Dean Wall's office).

That the black cultural library contain as much of the library's current collection of material related to black culture--i.e., books, periodicals, artwork, music, and artifacts--as possible.

That steps be taken to increase the library's collection of black culture materials; especially books and periodicals.

These were in essence the CBS "demands." However, included in the outlined proposal were such items as listening rooms, microfilm viewing facilities, and other "related media materials."

As we understand the situation, the CBS proposal was meant to suggest a focus for discussion once the concept of a black cultural library had been accepted by the administration. The proposal was not a list of concrete demands, but rather suggestions to be discussed once a definite commitment to the idea of a black cultural library had been established. As Russ stated quite clearly in the February 17 meeting, "The concept rather than the institution of the program is what is important."

It was obvious that CBS fully understood the need to speak to specifics. However, the meeting with the Library Committee was instituted solely to obtain their support for the concept of the black library. Subsequent meetings would have probed specific implementation of the proposal.

Several concerns seem to have been uppermost in the minds of certain members of the Library Committee:

(a) The degree to which a library should compartmentalize specific fields of study (i.e., if there is a black library, why not a separate economics library?)

(b) Specific details involved in the implementation of the library proposal (e.g., financing, re-cataloging books).

(c) Allocation of available library space (there are plans at present to move past periodicals from downtown to Burling basement).

(d) A proposal by the library staff to locate the black library in the 20th Century Room, thus providing more open exposure of black cultural material to the student body.

These are all valid and necessary questions. However, these questions were beyond the scope of the Feb. 17 meeting. Basically, CBS was seeking a commitment--a beginning--from which specific implementation could have evolved. It was more important to answer "Should we do it," than to ask "How should we do it." The administration seems to believe that the two questions are inextricably linked and that CBS is demanding a library full-blown from the budget. We do not believe this to be the case. While CBS was adamant on the concept, they were flexible on its implementation. However, by concentrating on technicalities of implementation, the administration effectively abrogated any accord which may have been reached concerning the "concept" of the black cultural library. We emerged from the Feb. 17 meeting without even the bare bones of a commitment.

It was only natural that blacks should perceive this as but another manifestation of bureaucratic hypocrisy and inaction. However, we do not feel that the action taken by CBS on Thursday night was conducive to reaching accord on the library. This action tended to confuse the issue, both in respect to students and to the administration. Perhaps CBS should make more of an effort to educate the campus community to the validity of its demands.

That the necessity for such education exists may be perceived from comments such as several of those quoted at the end of the Feb. 18 S&B article. CBS activities in the Twentieth-Century Room must not be construed as a social outing. While the action itself may have had "A very social atmosphere," the motivation behind it was deadly serious. It is time for white students to give equally serious consideration to the racial context of their "Grinnell experience."

For their enlightenment and education, white students should seek out black students and attempt to communicate with them concerning the racial atmosphere at this college. The issue of the black cultural library is only the tip of the iceberg of black sentiment at Grinnell College. A genuine concern about racial issues and prejudices must develop here, replacing the liberal guilt complex endemic to the white elite not attending this institution.

Phil Klingeberger
Chuck Karpf
Jack Mills
Drake Holliday

Bemoans Loss Of Cultural Relics

To The Editors:

The student body of Grinnell should be notified that a great tragedy has befallen the campus. One of the college's priceless cultural centers has been desecrated beyond recognition. I am referring of course to that veritable treasure house of graffiti once located in the Norris pit. A magnificent collection of insightful quotes has been buried under a coat of paint. As a result of this sacrilegious act, our children will forever be denied exposure to the intellectually stimulating words of the great, unrecognized philosophers of our time. The pit is used as a study area and the words of the prophets that were written on the basement walls were conducive to its overall academic atmosphere. Yes friends, modern technology has struck again transforming a comfortable, homey room into a barren cell wholly unfit for the furthering of anyone's education. I am sure that the entire campus joins those of us who live in Norris in our sorrow over the college's loss of this shrine.

Students, tired of their drab, everyday existence and wishing to seek

inspiration from the "old masters", pilgrimaged from all over the college (some hiking the entire length of our sprawling campus through Iowa's ice and snow) just to stare in utter rapture as they gratefully absorbed the sage wisdom of their ancestors. Some would contemplate for hours on end such theories inscribed on the stone tablets of the pit as:

God is Love
Love is Blind
Blind is Ray Charles
Ray Charles is God!

Will Grinnell lose its standing as one of the 47 "liveable" communities in the U.S. when what has transpired becomes known? Unfortunately, what is done is done. Why anyone would take the time and half-effort (only the writings were painted over leaving the walls obscenely splattered with the white paint) to ruin our study pit is beyond comprehension. It is now up to those of us who still believe in true intellectualism, individuality, and free speech to try to rectify the situation as best we can.

Preston A. Gould



Seeks Concern For Homosexuals

To The Editors:

There is a segment of the student body, to be something profoundly lacking in their "Grinnell experience". I am specifically referring to the homosexuals on the campus. For us there exists a void or a social vacuum in a very important part of our social environment.

Aside from the usual hassles associated with college life (such as the infamous academic pressure), the homosexual at Grinnell is presently denied social interaction with large groups of our peers. Campus life for us can be truly lonely at times, with only a few randomly discovered gay friends to discuss our inner selves. We have unique life styles, and hence often unique problems, which presently the college community is not geared to handle. There simply does not exist means of communication and organizations from which gay Grinnellians can achieve our full identity. We must function partially in a social vacuum, keeping an integral part of ourselves hidden from view.

I am not saying that we should all "come out", that could be disastrous on a reactionary campus like ours. But I do think it is essential that all the isolated cliques become known to each other. We can only stand to benefit from meeting with a large group of our peers, ranging from discussions of our problems on campus to collective action to alleviate them.

I imagine this letter will precipitate many jokes, but it is very serious in intent. I also imagine a good many straights will read this and say: "Shit, they got a hell of nerve to bitch. Our 'social environment' ain't so hot either." We realize that because for all appearances we've tried to live the straight life too. But now it is time we have the means to try to improve our social environment. The fact that we feel we need additional facilities to improve the quality of our campus life doesn't mean we don't like you straight people. Some of my best friends are straight, they really are; honest. You just have some things we don't want or need.

To all the gay people who read this, I realize this isn't the most articulate presentation of our cause, it wasn't intended for that purpose. My purpose was to open a dialog on our campus situation. I hope this is the start of many letters to the S&B and ideally these letters will climax in the information of a viable campus organization. We can only improve our campus situation, and our situation in the United States in general, through collective action. I'd also like to apologize for not signing my name, but I just don't trust the reaction of our straight fellow Grinnellians.

To you straight people, if I was too hard on you, tough shit. Seriously though, if I misjudged your reaction I'd like to apologize. But I've been a fly on the wall too many times. You see us "faggots" look just like you and we act the same way too. And unless we tell you, you'd never know we were "queer". Hence I've listened to all your complimentary remarks. But time changes all things, perhaps even people can change.

Name withheld by request

Another letter on page 5, "Whelan Doubts Thornton View."

Thornton Decries S&B Coverage

To The Editors:

The following is an open letter to you and to the college community: I assume that any responsible newspaper, or for that matter any interested or responsible person, would want to get at what is behind this current "Black Rage" in which we are all involved. I do not want to appear as an apologist for black action, but certainly it would be accurate to say that the Grinnell Scarlet and Black has been almost libelous in its dilemma in trying to accurately report on current developments on this campus.

I realize that accuracy is an extremely complicated problem particularly for the Grinnell Scarlet and Black. The problem has several parts. The press must be able to accurately report the facts of dynamic stories in a manner that the individuals most directly or indirectly involved will be understood and judged fairly. It must also interpret the news so that it can be understood. This is tremendously difficult.

Although the press was on the scene, at Burling Library on Thursday evening, it failed to give an adequate and correct reporting of events. Since I am so deeply involved in your myopic reporting which has created a credibility gap, let me make a further comment. My involvement in Burling has been overstated and distorted, and there can be no argument over the legi-

timacy of my being in Burling.

Let me make it clear to The Scarlet and Black and its readers, the burden of proof rests on The Scarlet and Black and all those seers who are trying to read and interpret my actions.

The resolution of our dilemma will not be easily nor quickly achieved even if you were to write a corrected report of those events which you so brilliantly reported in a slanted, distorted, and fabricated manner. But more than any other issue, I remind you once again, the main responsibility for accuracy within the frame of our legal system rests upon you.

Let us be frank and admit that you did not know my role in Burling. Let it be further stated that such a reading of my role by you and others has already triggered a campaign of insults. It is worth noting that all attempts to muffle me through insults and pressure will not succeed for I will not become a eunuch--neither as a scholar nor as a black man in Twentieth Century America.

Virginius Bray-Thornton III

Two of the three articles in last week's S&B which contained references to Mr. Thornton were checked with Mr. Thornton and approved prior to publication. We were apparently in error in including him in the first paragraph, as one of those persons who desheveled books in the Twentieth Century Room. We stand by everything else in the lead story. --The Editors

Carolyn Wallace Not Opposed

To The Editors:

Two articles in last Friday's S&B are grossly inaccurate and dangerous to a college community reeling under a barrage of rumor and vicious gossip.

The S&B of 18 February states that women faculty opposed the appointment of Caroline-Reid Wallace. It also states that there was a meeting of the Executive Council and the "Women's Search Committee" on Thursday. The women faculty were not contacted by the S&B; the women faculty have no power in faculty hiring except as members of their own departments. They did not all meet Mrs. Wallace, but all women who did meet here were very favorably impressed by her. There is no separate women's search com-

mittee. The full-time women faculty are organized solely for the purpose of seeking improvement in their own living and working conditions.

The paper's staff must be thorough in its research on sensitive issues.

Mary Gae Wylie
Bonnie Hampton
Beth Noble
Jean King
Helen Shipley
Sandra Hoth
Velma Hiser

The remarks on Carolyn Reid-Wallace were not unqualified; they were attributed to Mr. Thornton. We regret our confusion about the Search Committee. --The Editors

Lalonde Expands Library Statement

To The Editors:

I would like to review one paragraph in your account of the open meeting of the Library Committee held February 17. You write: "All members of the library committee gave favorable reactions to the concept of a Black Library, but Gerald Lalonde, Classical Languages, said it would be 'dangerous to give carte blanche a framework that has the rubber stamp of the library committee.'"

Regarding the grammar and style of the "quotation", I hope, but with a hesitation more pedagogic than moral, that the suggestion of illiteracy was unwitting on the part of the S&B. As for the word "dangerous", I disclaim it simply because I did not use it, although it does have a ring of hysteria, which also is not my style.

More bothersome aspects of the paragraph are its abrupt and ambiguous transition ("...but..."), and its withering density, which distort my position on the Black Library and the views which I stated last Thursday.

At the outset of the meeting, the spokesman for Concerned Black Students expressed the hope that the Library Committee would go on record by the time it adjourned as "agreeing on the concept" of the Black Library as embodied in the written proposal of CBS. At the same time, the Committee was asked not to concern itself with quantitative aspects of the Black Library, although the proposal itself contained many fairly concrete suggestions. I expressed my difficulty

in dealing with the "concept" without consideration of its form, unless we were to consider the mere existence of a Black Library. But that was an issue settled last semester.

More to the point, I observed that the Library Committee is not commissioned to "agree" to "concepts"; its duty is to make recommendations to the Administration on substantive matters of library policy, after detailed study and discussion of all necessary questions, including finances. But it was in keeping with this function that the Committee expressed its intention and interest in making more than a cursory study of the proposal submitted by CBS, and, in consultation with them, the library staff, and the financial officers of the College, formulating for the Administration a recommendation for the precise constitution of the Black Library. If the Library Committee's interest in thoroughness is construed as negative and dilatory, it is unfortunate and ironic, since precisely such attention to hard fact in the original negotiation of the Black Library might well have obviated our current mutual complaint, "This is not what we had in mind."

G. V. Lalonde

The correct phraseology should be "Lalonde said it would be unwise 'to give a carte blanche which has the rubber stamp of the Library Committee'", instead of 'it would be "dangerous to give carte blanche a framework that has the rubber stamp of the library committee."'. We apologize for the error. --The Editors