

**THE AFRICAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE BOTH PAST AND PRESENT**

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**By**

**Walter Forrest Musgrove III**

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Education and work are the levers to uplift a people. Work alone will not do it unless inspired by the right ideas and guided by intelligence. Education must not simply teach work—it must teach life. The Talented Tenth of the Negro race must be made leaders of thought and missionaries of culture among their people. No others can do this work and Negro colleges must train men for it. The Negro race, like all other races, is going to be saved by its exceptional men.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Excerpt by W.E.B. DuBois as found in *The Negro Problem* by Booker T. Washington.

**Freedom is not enough: The historical overview of the African American's  
quest for a higher education**

Many legions of African Americans have fought an ongoing battle for an adequate public education system in Texas. The hope was a quality education for all who desire to take advantage of what the state offered. From 1865 to present day, the state and local officials that oversee the public education system in America have failed to provide adequate resources to effectively educate its students.

African American Congressman, Jesse Jackson Jr., acknowledges the disparity in the funding provided to the inner-city school districts as opposed to that given to the suburban districts. More specifically in Texas, the legislature has been required by the courts to develop a more efficient system for funding public education. As a remedy for this financial epidemic, on February 24, 2003, Mr. Jackson proposed the 28<sup>th</sup> amendment, thus providing every American with a quality public education as guaranteed by the Constitution (Gavel 1). Unfortunately, for the underprivileged students, the 28<sup>th</sup> amendment was not passed, nor has any other meaningful state legislation been passed.

African Americans are no strangers to the struggle for equal access education in the United States. In fact, African Americans have been fighting this battle since their inception into America. In *Self-taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom*, historian Heather William writes, “Despite laws and custom in slave states prohibiting enslaved people from learning to read and write, a small percentage managed, through ingenuity and will, to acquire a degree of literacy in the antebellum period” (Williams 7). Further Williams includes slave testimonies from documents recovered

from the antebellum period. In these testimonies one can fully understand the nation's, especially the South's, desire to keep its "colored" inhabitants illiterate.

Public education historian James D. Anderson also addresses the inadequacies of the southern education system in his *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*. Anderson suggests that the southern education system was designed to fail the African American students, because it trained them to be workers. This rudimentary system still exists on levels in Texas.

## BROKEN CHAINS AND THE QUEST FOR EDUCATION

After the Emancipation Proclamation (1864) and the Thirteenth Amendment<sup>2</sup> put an end to the inhumane treatment of African Americans, they emerged with a thirst for an education. Most African Americans saw education as a tool for social and economic progress. Anderson supports this arguing, “blacks emerged from slavery with a strong belief in the desirability of learning to read and write” (Anderson 5). Unfortunately, African Americans would find that for the next 100 or so years their thirsts would go unquenched. While some African Americans were content with receiving a second hand education from the ex-slaves who were fortunate enough to educate themselves while in bondage, there were some who sought the best – a higher quality of education.

Seeing the power that whites received with a formal or even rudimentary education, blacks demanded “schooling.” However, as a determined people, African Americans struggled for educational opportunities, thus they organized their own educational institutions. The lack of textbooks, the inadequate materials, and the shabby facilities would not discourage the young African American students from coming to school and putting forward their best effort in an attempt to enhance their future. The struggle for an equal elementary and secondary education would be an ongoing battle; however, it would eventually end with the *Brown v. Board of Education*<sup>3</sup> in 1954 (nearly 100 years after the Emancipation Proclamation). Richard Kluger’s *Simple Justice*, suggests that the case would yield results that reached far beyond the desegregation of

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<sup>2</sup> U.S. Const, Amend XIII § Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to its jurisdiction.

<sup>3</sup> *Brown et al. v. Board of Education of Topeka et al.* Appeal from the United States District Court for the district of Kansas \* No. 1. Argued December 9, 1952. Reargued December 8, 1953. Decided May 17, 1954.

schools. They hoped this would wage a war for equal accommodations in society in general. However, education was the appropriate starting point.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> For a more extensive discussion into *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* consult *Simple Justice*.

## **At the Forefront: Texas and the Desegregation Challenge**

While many note *Sweatt v. Painter* as the landmark case ending of segregation of higher education, few really know the effort it took for the Heman Sweatt and his NAACP attorneys' to get a favorable ruling (Shabazz 5). On first appeal the District Court of Travis County in Austin ruled that Sweatt was granted "relief" by the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment (Bulluck 229). Sweatt was trying to enroll in at the state's only state maintained law school, the University of Texas at Austin. Although it seemed that Sweatt was set to enroll at the University of Texas Law School, the enactment of the ruling would be postponed for six months.

During the following six months the Texas A. & M. College board of regents established a makeshift black law school in Houston to avoid admitting a black man into one of its all-white schools. This school's was named the Texas State University for Negroes, and it would later become the Thurgood Marshall School of Law. The purposed new law school would be far beneath the facilities at the University of Texas Law School. In fact, Sweatt's NAACP attorneys' sent forward appeal after appeal to the lower courts in which they presented evidence showing that the three-room law school was not equal to that of the white students at the University of Texas (Bullock 229). In response to the University of Texas actions', Sweatt appealed the case which was heard by the United States Supreme Court, on June 5, 1950. Chief Justice Fred M. Vinson ordered the University of Texas to admit Sweatt into its law school. Even more important than the court ruling, Sweatt's case sparked vocal discussion amongst the Supreme Court regarding the illogic of the "separate but equal" doctrine.

## **SWTTC, The Last of the Mohekans**

Ironically, the alma mater of President Lyndon B. Johnson who appointed Thurgood Marshall, the first African American Supreme Court Justice, and who as interim president pushed through the most aggressive civil rights Act (1964) since Reconstruction, was the last institution to require a federal court order to allow admission of black students (Shabazz 213). Southwest Texas State Teachers College (SWTTC) denied Dana Jean Smith, an African American woman and honor graduate of Anderson High School (in Austin, Texas), admission into the university. John Garland Flowers, president of the college, stated that although Ms. Smith met the academic requirements to attend the university, he could not admit her on the bases of her "racial background" (Shabazz 212). Determined to enroll, Ms. Smith hired an attorney to appeal President Flower's decision. Instead of publicly confronting President Flowers, Smith and her attorney, J. Philip Crawford, went directly to Clem Jones, SWTTC registrar. Jones claimed that without a court order, he could not admit Ms. Smith. This action opened the door for a new legal challenge by Smith and her attorney.

Crawford filed a case in Austin with the U.S. District Court II on February 4, 1963. Once the case was filed, Crawford and Ms. Smith decided that it would be best to have a state attorney general represent her at the hearing. This was a bold and inventive move. They now had a son of the south representing them in their fight to end the Jim Crow segregation laws. Judge Ben H. Rice Jr. presided over the hearing. The only concern of the court was whether or not the state of Texas was permitted to deny Ms. Smith or other African Americans solely based on race. After nearly two months, the

court ruled that the law does not allow for denial of admission on basis of race, and they ordered that Smith to be enrolled "forthwith" (Shabazz 212).

After the trial, Ms. Smith enrolled at SWTTC, and became the first African American student enrolled in the university. In September 1963, in an interview President Flowers stated, "I am proud that the rest of the students were mature enough to allow the desegregation efforts to go so smoothly" (Shabazz 212). That same year four other African American (Carolyn Burleson, Gloria Odums, Georgia Hoodye, and Oswald Cockrell) students were admitted into the university.

### **Walter Forrest Musgrove III: An Anomaly**

As the product of a teen pregnancy, many speculated that from November 23, 1983 until the date of my death, my life would be riddled with many trials, tribulations and academic failures. In an article, Eugene M. Lewit writes, “After infancy, children of teenage mothers are more likely to have problems in school and score low on IQ tests” (Lewit 186). Fortunately, for me, Walter F. Musgrove Jr. and Marsha Musgrove, my parents, were able to raise a child that would exceed the low expectations that many people had for their child. At the age of 8 my parents gave me the greatest gift I have received to date, a brother, Brice Bernard Cornish Musgrove. Despite separating a few months after my brother’s birth, my parents remained a driving force in my life.

Throughout my youth, my parents’ exhausted themselves attending countless athletic competitions, programs and molding a man of principle, purpose, and discipline. With my mother stressing the importance of religion and academic excellence, and my father grooming and honing my athletic ability as well as the importance of a man’s work ethic, I feel my parents were able to raise a well rounded individual. I was blessed to graduate in the top 8% of the Duncanville High School’s 2002 graduating class, with a full athletic scholarship to play football at Southwest Texas State University.

Although August 7, 2002, reporting day to football practice, marked the beginning of my athletic career and my physical journey to this university, my scholastic journey was well under way. Before I came to campus, I had applied and been accepted into the University Honors Program (later named the Mitte Honors Program) and credited with 12 hours toward my degree, 6 of which I earned in a summer session at Mountain View Community College in Dallas, Texas.

As a result of God's blessings, I have been able to experience both academic and athletic success. On May 13, 2006, I will be graduating with my Bachelor's degree in Liberal Arts (English) with my Teacher Certification. During the four years it took me to earn my Bachelor's degree, I have received several academic awards and nominations. My athletic success has mirrored my academic success. I am preparing to begin the 2006 football season, my senior season, as a 4 year starter and First Team All Southland Conference selection. God is good!

## **The Two Types of African American Students**

For many of the African American students of my generation, we are the first members of our family to attend college. While we are intellectually prepared, we lack the social preparation for college which leads to frustration and in many cases failure. I have observed two types of African American students entering college. The first has been groomed from kindergarten throughout high school for college. By grooming I mean their parents played an active role in not only preaching the benefits of education, but also exposing their children to other professional African Americans who succeeded in college. Knowing that the majority of the college campuses in the United States are predominately white, these parents make sure their children have been exposed to and interacted with mainstream culture.

The second type of African American student is “academically refined, but socially raw<sup>5</sup>.” While these students are academically/intellectually prepared to handle the college curriculum, he or she finds life at a predominately-white institution socially challenging. Many of the challenges he or she faces are a direct result of a lack of exposure to the majority culture that dominates the campus culture, which in turn generally dictates or determines the overall atmosphere of the campus. Please note that this is not to say that the “groomed” African American students will not face racial issues upon arrival at a predominately-white university. However, they are better equipped with the social tools and experience to deal with the racial challenges as they arise.

The lack of social skills contributes to the turmoil of the “academically refined, but socially raw” students. In most cases, these students are not able to maximize and

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<sup>5</sup> This is a label that I have designated for this type of student in which I have witnessed while here at Texas State University.

capitalize on their college experience, because they are not able to withstand the challenges (i.e. culture shock, unwelcoming professors, culturally insensitive campus environment) that they are bound to face within the first couple of semesters at a predominately-white institution. The lack of social skills needed to communicate with the majority culture of the university for African American students can lead not only to discontentment, but it can also lead to academic failure. Being the only African American student in an introductory philosophy class was very intimidating.

First of all, who is really comfortable asking for clarity of a given topic or objective in front of 300 strangers, who you feel are waiting for you to mess up or do something “ghetto” simply because of the color of your skin? Apparently, I am not the only African American student who has dealt with this type of anxiety. In Julia C. Elam’s *Blacks on White Campuses*, she speaks of something she calls “minority paranoia” (Elam 16). Basically, “minority paranoia” results from society saying either overtly or subtly, “You (the minority) are not academically adept enough to handle the college curriculum; however, we lowered our academic standards so that you can have the chance to enroll at our university.”

I also have a bit of “minority paranoia” during my first couple of semesters here at Texas State University. Largely due to the fear of being embarrassed in front of my classmates, I sat on my hands in fear of being labeled as the only student in the class who didn’t understand the material being taught. Consequently, after my first year of college, and despite graduating in the top 8% of my class in high school, my G.P.A was below 3.0. This was far below the academic standards which I had set for myself. I had never, I mean never received such low grades.

Elam also states in her book that most African American students struggle academically in their first two years at predominately-white universities. While my study habits were good, I did not ask for additional help or participate in the class discussions. Baffled and frustrated by my sub par academic performance, I decided that not only was I going to have to come out of my shell and take a more active role in my classes, but that I was going to actually have to start interacting with some of my classmates.

In searching for answers to improve my grades, I discovered the value of joining a study group. But, of course, because there was no one requesting the “black guy” to join their study group, I had to partially strong arm and slither my way into some of the study groups. While I never played the “race card” in an attempt to lay guilt on anyone to allow me to join a study group, I did feel extreme pressure (due to my own personal pride) not to be what “they” had expected- the typical “lazy, do-just-enough-to-get-by, whose-back-can-I-ride-on” black guy. While working in these study groups, I found that my work ethic and preparedness far surpassed those of many of my classmates. After becoming a member of many of the once seemingly exclusive “study groups,” my grades improved greatly.

## **Does Anyone Have Any Questions?**

The first course I took at Texas State University was Biology 1310. The class met at 8 o'clock in the morning, Monday, Wednesday, Friday, in the Alkek teaching theater. For most college students, getting up for an 8 o'clock class is very difficult; however, when you are a member of the Texas State football team, not attending class isn't an option. Out of the 250 plus students in the 8 o'clock Biology class, there were only 11 African American students. To be exact there were 4 African American females and 7 African American males (including myself). Not surprisingly, all but one of the African American males was on the football team. The other African American male was a member of the university's basketball team. I had to admit that the racial make-up of this class was much different than that in the honors (Renaissance Concepts) course I was also taking that semester.

Because of the ratio of males to females at this particular university, I expected there to be more African American females in the class; however, I really didn't have a problem with the lack of African American students in my class. I saw it as a challenge. Each day I went to class, I felt as though I was sent there to represent the entire African American race. You couldn't pay me to show up to class late, show up unprepared, or fall asleep in the ever-so-boring class. I was on a mission!

Unfortunately, my African American teammates in my class were not on the same mission. It seemed that they were out to discredit or overshadow any positive light. These guys made it a point to show up for class unprepared. They even had the audacity to wake up late for class, show up late, and then fall back to sleep. However, there was that one time that I wished they had slept. However, as an English major, I have not had

any of my teammates in any of my upper division English courses. Therefore, I can not say that all of my African American teammates conducted themselves in this manner.

The professor would ask with about ten minutes left in class, “Does anyone have any questions?” For most students, this is a time to clear up any problems they may be having with the material. Because I didn’t feel comfortable posing my questions in front of a class of 300 students, I wrote my questions down or emailed them to my professor. However, my African American teammates saw this as a time to promote or present themselves to the class. Because the theater was so large, the aides would pass around a microphone so we could ask our questions. While the “other” students in the class would ask their questions in a civilized manner, my teammates would get the microphone and clown around with it—further contributing to the negative stereotypes attached to black athletes by the majority of the students and professors at the university.

Their questions were never about any one concept, but instead they were always very vague and poorly articulated. For instance, they would say, “Umm, you remember when you said, ‘Humans have cycles and systems’? What exactly do you mean by that?” Often times what made matters worse was the questions they would ask would be totally irrelevant to the day’s lesson; or even worse, the answers were boldly printed on the syllabus: “So how many tests do we have?” and “Do you give curves or extra-credit?”

After embarrassing the hell out me as an African American, they always made a point to bring down their families and the football team. They would end their preposterous questions with, “Oh yeah, I play football. I am number \_\_\_ and my name is \_\_\_\_.” To make matters even worse, sometimes they would give their salutation while the teacher was desperately attempting to answer their pointless questions. Their questions

got so bad that the teacher aides would act as though they didn't see them, or they would give them the microphone with about 10 seconds left in class. That way, the professor could just say, "I am sorry but we have run out of time, and we need to be out of the room so that the next professor can begin his class. Just come to my office and we can discuss your question one-on-one." Now, trust me; my teammates never went to his office to get any clarification on their questions. After cutting us short and not allowing us to ask questions, were not being incorporated into the campus academic culture. The system was not working.



Figure 1

Figure 1 Madam CJ Walker stamp issued by the US Postal Service on January 28, 1998.

## **The Texas State University Haircut: The Eighth Sin of the World**

After analyzing the data collected by Target Market News, an African American consumer science website, I found that despite making less money than whites, African Americans spend a higher percentage of their income on apparel than any other race of United States citizens (Target). Conclusively, it is safe to say that African Americans place greater importance on physical appearance than any other race. Therefore, as an African American male going to a college like Texas State University, in a city like San Marcos, I encountered some very interesting dilemmas. While there are countless tanning salons and Supercuts found throughout the city, for the African American student an attempt to find a quality professional grooming salon involves either a road trip to Austin or San Antonio or mere chance. Either way, the African American students, will often find that they get more than they bargained for. If few decide to drive to Austin or San Antonio for a haircut, now because of the astronomical gas prices and our meager college budgets, a reasonable \$10-\$12 haircut now turns into an expensive \$20-\$25 haircut.

Now comes chance. One of the most interesting and unique features of Texas State University is the diversity of talents amongst the students enrolled at the university. When I say this school is loaded with Jacks, by Jacks I mean “Jacks of all trades,” that is an understatement. There are guys who can change oil, fix brakes, program computers, install car stereos, repair televisions, and of course, braid and cut hair—all this at a very reasonable price. And yes, there are girls who are equally adept at handling some of these same tasks. Now while the charge for some of these services may seem cheap, beware, because some of the work may come at a cost that your wallet can’t accommodate.

As a member of the Texas State University football team, I have witnessed several of my African American teammates' hair fall victim to the clippers of some of the team's self-proclaimed barbers. Believe me when I tell you that many of the haircuts that have been administered by these self-proclaimed barbers have provided the team with hours of laughter. However, I must admit I have been on the wrong end of one \$5 haircut administered by one of my teammates.

I believe a bad haircut should be designated as one of the new Seven Sins of the World. Bad haircuts are amazing! During my freshman year, after going weeks without a barber to cut my hair, anything would have satisfied me. I thought. When I got out of the chair that was adjacent to the microwave and directly in front of the refrigerator (Yes, I got my hair cut in the kitchen of one of my teammates.), I felt like a new man. Like any person after receiving a fresh haircut, I went to the bathroom to check out my fresh doo in the mirror. "Alright! Finally I can stop wearing those stupid hats," I thought to myself as I walked to my car.

How amazing it is that all that afternoon and all that next day at school, I thought I was sharp as a tack. But sometime during the course of the day after I received the haircut, my hairline became slanted. My fade became crooked and plugs magically asserted themselves in the back of my head. But that was not what shocked me. All these changes took place without me even being able to see them. It was like having an invisible friend that only my teammates could see. And trust me, they saw him. You see, not only can the bad haircut hide from you; it can also make people laugh for hours.

From the time football practice started to the time it ended, my teammates made jokes about my haircut. They gathered around me at the end of practice waiting for me to

remove my helmet as if I were going to unveil some great masterpiece. Ironically, the guy who cut my hair, an upperclassman who unbeknownst to me until the massacre of my hair was notorious for destroying hairlines, devastating fades, and basically rendering hairlines helpless, had the audacity to laugh at my haircut.

Eventually, after a few days of continuous joking, a few of the upperclassman filled me in on the real team barber. This guy was actually good. The problem came when it was time to actually get a haircut, and every, I do mean every African American member of the football, track, and basketball team decided to get a haircut the same day. I kid you not; there were times when the team barber cut hair from after practice (roughly around 6:30 p.m.) until four in the morning. Well, as we all know, all good things must come to an end. The team barber finished his athletic eligibility, graduated with his degree, and he is now living in another state. The hunt continues.

While many of my African American teammates simply drove to Austin and San Antonio for a haircut, my roommate and I decided to try our luck at a certain very popular salon in San Marcos. This salon still advertises \$5.99+ tax haircuts. At first sight, my roommate and I, both of whom are from Dallas, thought it was a bit weird to pay anything less than \$10 for a professional haircut, let alone have to pay taxes on a haircut. Nonetheless, under the given circumstances, my roommate and I decided to go in and give it a try. Normally, we would have stayed clear of an establishment that charges taxes on a haircut, but because of the lack of services offered to minorities, what did we have to choose from? Sure we could have walked into some of the other salons around town just for grins, but I guess somehow the huge picture of the Hispanic lady posted outside of the salon lured us in.

I have already gotten my grins out of walking into a barbershop where the customers and the barbers are exclusively white. The look on the barber's face is priceless. They hope that you don't ask, "Excuse me sir, but how many heads do you have waiting on you?" Instead, they are praying that you just need directions or something. One barber actually asked me, "Son, how may I help you?" I thought to myself, "Barbers never ask anyone that." Really, if you walk into a barbershop, it's basically understood that you want a haircut. Well, being the fun loving person that I am, I asked in my most articulate voice, "How much for a tapered fade?" All the while knowing there wasn't one person in the entire shop who knew how to cut a tapered fade. Before the barber could answer, I looked at all the customers and said, "That's okay, I will come back when you aren't so busy." You could just see the pressure lifting off his shoulders.

Back to my roommate's and my trip to the \$5.99 salon. As soon as we walked in, a middle-aged Hispanic lady warmly greeted us. "So who's first?" she asked after her exuberant greeting. Eager to get his hair cut, my roommate jumped into the chair. "Well, I guess that settles that," I thought to myself as I sat down in the waiting area. Out of nowhere the lady decided to put us both at ease by saying in a surprisingly heavy, yet different Hispanic accent than the one with which she greeted us, "Boys don't worry, I cut all types of hair. Black hair. White hair. Hispanic hair. No need to worry." At this point my roommate's body tightened up and I knew right away that she was not, under any circumstances, going to touch my hair. She started to apply the trimmers to my roommate's head without even asking him what type of haircut he wanted. At first contact with the clippers, my roommate jerked his head away from the trimmers so hard I

involuntarily stood up. He shrieked, “Hold on! I want it even all over!” The lady responded, “Oh, that is what I figured.” Well, to make a short story even shorter, she cut his entire head in maybe 12 strokes and under 3 minutes. I have been getting my hair cut since I was 2 years old, and I don’t care if you are getting an line, it is going to take more than 3 minutes. After nearly bursting with tears, my roommate slapped a \$10 bill on the counter and to this day I am not sure if he even got his change. However, I do remember him storming out of the salon. Let’s just say his haircut was definitely going to be the center of attention for the next football practice.

“Our policies prohibit racial profiling. You simply cannot take enforcement action against people based on their race or ethnicity. That’s not acceptable.”

~SMPD Chief Howard Williams  
*University Star* March 9, 2006

## **Driving While Black: Racial Profiling**

Regardless of what San Marcos Police Department Chief Howard Williams reported to *University Star*<sup>6</sup>, racial profiling does exist in San Marcos, Texas. Prior to my enrollment at Texas State, I had only witnessed racial profiling; however, I had never experienced it first hand. In fact, prior to moving to San Marcos, I had never been pulled over. When I first enrolled at Texas State, I heard many of my older African American teammates talk about how the University Police Department and the San Marcos Police Department had treated them. It wasn't that I didn't believe their allegations, but I just figured that these were isolated occurrences, not a trend. Surely it wouldn't happen to an honest, respectful, clean-cut, honors student such as myself. I have been pulled over three times in San Marcos city limits and have never received a ticket.

### **June 2003**

The first time I was pulled over was during my freshman year on my way to a summer workout session at 5:30 a.m. The policeman followed me from the Sessom, Aquarena Springs intersection, all the way to the Bobcat Football Stadium parking lot. Right before I got ready to get out of my car, the officer pulled alongside me and flashed his lights. Once he approached my car he asked for my license and registration. After checking my information, he returned to my car and asked me if I was aware of the city noise ordinance. I said, "Yes sir." He then returned my license and insurance card and told me, "From now on, make sure your system is not too loud or you will receive a citation."

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<sup>6</sup> *University Star* published article on March 9, 2006 stating that according to data collected in 2005 there was no racial profiling against blacks.

While I am not denying that my radio was audible, from the time I turned my radio on until the time that the officer returned my license, I never once touched my radio. And, of course, as we all know, turning your radio off is the first thing you do when you are pulled over by a police.

### **September 2004**

Riding down Sessoms, a female friend and I were pulled over by a police officer. As usual the officer asked me for my license and registration. After checking my information, the officer returned to the passenger side of the car and asked my friend, "Is everything okay mam?" My friend, a very pale African American woman, replied, "Yes, we are going to the movies." "Why would he ask that?" I thought to myself. Was it because like many people, he too, thought my African American friend was not a black woman, but in fact a white woman? Well, whatever the case, he returned to my side of the car and asked me if I was aware that I had run a red light on Sessoms. I said, "No." It was a no-brainer, because I hadn't been down Sessoms. In fact, I made it a point not to drive down Sessoms at night because of the limited sight and the deer that regularly roam the street. So yes, I was sure I hadn't run any lights on Sessoms. After I told the police officer that we hadn't traveled down Sessoms, the officer replied, "Oh, I guess I got the wrong car," and returned to his car. I didn't get, "I am sorry, I must have stopped the wrong car. Sorry for the inconvenience, have a nice day." He acted as if he didn't owe me any type of apology for the inconvenience. After all, you better believe I was respectful to him.

## **November 2004**

One night my teammate and I were leaving practice, and I was pulled over again by a San Marcos policeman. The usual protocol took place. The officer asked for my license and registration; however, there was one problem— I didn't have it. My father forgot to mail my updated insurance card. After failing to produce an up to date insurance card, rightfully so the officer issued me a ticket. I didn't have a problem with the ticket because I knew that I could get my father to mail me an updated insurance card in a matter of days; thus I could have the ticket dismissed. However, after leaving the scene, I then asked my roommate, "What did he pull us over for? Did he ever say?" With a puzzled yet angered look on his face, he responded, "Naw." The officer never said anything about my breaking the law or any traffic violation. But I guess I did in fact break the law. Maybe the officer was so highly skilled at his job that he had the ability to tell who doesn't have an up-to-date insurance card.

### **In summary**

I am sure someone reading this may say that I was not a victim of racial profiling by the San Marcos Police Department, but instead, I was just a witness as to the topnotch skills of the San Marcos Officers and an honest error by an officer. However, until you have been pulled over numerous times, for D.W.B, Driving While Black, you cannot say who or who hasn't been a victim of racial profiling. While the police and lawyers outline the guidelines of what makes one a victim of racial profiling, it is the driver who best serves as the jury for victims of racial profiling.

About 1,400 college students are killed every year in alcohol-related accidents, according to a study released Tuesday that researchers call the most comprehensive look ever at the consequences of student drinking.

~Associated Press, USA Today, April 9, 2002

### **This bud's for you: Beer and college**

Apparently, many African American youth have chosen a path of assimilation over self-appreciation. Many of these same African American classmates of mine have concluded, "He [Walter Forrest Musgrove III] thinks he's too good..." The ellipsis represents the many things in which college students across the nation become infatuated with while in college. For me, the ellipsis represents the numerous manmade and self-perpetuating obstacles that we, college students, allow to hinder or deter us from achieving greatness.

The first devastating obstacle that I have managed to surmount is alcohol, which I feel is poison. Growing up my mother always pointed out people who were once successful but lost all they had to drugs and alcohol. However, because she knew that school and television always preached, "Say no to drugs," she made it a point to point out the alcoholics. These images of destroyed and poisoned men and women stuck with me throughout my life. Unfortunately, somewhere during the maturation from adolescence to young adulthood, some college students begin to feel that despite the fact that several college students die each year from alcohol related deaths, it can't and want happen to them.

However, while many groups of college students make it a weekly routine to get drunk, there is one group that I am particularly worried about. Naturally, being an African American, I am always going to be concerned about the advancement of my race. Thus, anything that I see my people involved in that does not promote a positive progression toward success; I am going to take exception to. When I try to talk to my African American classmates about their drinking habits, so often the discussion ends

with them saying, “Oh, I see. What, you thank you too good to drink.” While some may see it as being self-righteous; my response is, “Yes. In fact, I believe my body is too good to be polluted with alcohol. My body has allowed me to be able to receive a free education as a scholarship athlete.” “I will even do you one better,” I often tell them before I present my very practical case to them. “Now that we have established that I am in fact too good to poison my body with alcohol, I would also like to tell you that I am too intelligent to dabble in anything that is going to break me both physically, mentally, and oh yeah, financially.” The truth is to me, drinking is one of the most destructive and dangerous habits any young African American male can pick up. Really, when you think about the logic of spending what little money you have as a college student on something that is guaranteed to destroy your vital organs and diminish your cognitive functions, how much sense does that make?

For my disdain and refusal to consume alcohol, I have been scrutinized by my peers. After much discourse between my African American classmates and myself, I am deemed as the guy who thinks he is too good to kick it with the fellas. If I have to poison myself to be considered one of the fellas, then I guess I am just going to have to find me another group of guys who love their bodies as I do. Not only will this new group of guys love their bodies as I love mine, but hopefully they will see the same trials and tribulations that lay ahead us, young African American men, as I do.

Here at Texas State University, African American students see the Caucasian students drinking all the time. However with all the things that I have experienced and witnessed I am certain that because of the color of our skin, we, black men in American, have to be careful not to construct any obstacles (i.e. alcoholism, drug abuse) for

ourselves. Trust me, already enough under construction. As African American men we have to be not only considered good at what we do, but we have to be considered the very best that anyone, anywhere has to offer. Thus, we must present ourselves as commodities, not as mere reaffirmations of society's expectations of us as alcoholics.

Our skill and knowledge have to be in some cases, revolutionary. But, ironically, for the fear of being seen as a threat by the people that run this nation, we have to monitor our knowledge. For many African American men have found that their innovative and well-researched theories were not accepted by America in fear that they (African American men) were trying to challenge the precedents that have already been established by the "other" members of our nation. Knowing that this is something that I am bound to be faced with as an aspiring African American man, it is imperative that I minimize and if possible alleviate any obstacles that could hinder me in my quest for greatness.

Even sadder is you have some brothers who take this word and flip it so that it empowers them..So now nigga is a good thing... We've internalized so much negativity it's ridiculous<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> Rapper KRS-One in *Nigga or Nigger* by D. Davey

### **More than a word**

Standing in the Quad, riding the Tram, or even eating in the dining halls, I often times wish that I could become invisible. As a proud member of a very, very small minority group at Texas State University, I am constantly aware of the scrutiny and low expectations that some of the other ethnic groups here at Texas State University have for my ethnic group. Therefore, I go out of my way to dispel any of the negative stereotypes that may be associated with being a black man in America.

Before coming to Texas State University, I was somehow under the misconception that minorities who attend college were on a mission to dispel the generational, ethnic and/or family curses that haunted them. I also thought that even as an athlete, I would be surrounded by other African American athletes who understood the grandness of the opportunity that has been presented to them upon signing a full-athletic scholarship. What better monetary gift is there than to receive a free education, and also, be it highly unlikely, the opportunity to play professional athletics- all this at no cost! Well, soon after the beginning of my first semester at Texas State University, I realized that much of what I thought of college students was wrong.

African American men who are determined, I mean to the point of making a conscious effort to hold on to their rugged past lifestyles, came as a tremendous shock to me. Don't misunderstand me; I am not saying that anyone should forget his past; however, I do believe that in an attempt to move past the struggles of our past, we must strive and carry ourselves with the utmost dignity and respect.

Throughout my four years here at Texas State University, I have seen, heard, and witnessed the self-destruction of my African American classmates at an alarming rate.

Not all, but unfortunately, too many of my African American classmates have embraced what some hear as just a word, but I hear as a cry for help. While I will not accept the idea that any African American college student is ignorant to the origin of the word, I am forced to believe that there is some sense of ignorance attached to people who use the word regularly.

“Nigga,” “Nigger,” “Niggar,” however you choose to pronounce it, to me its denotation and connotation remain the same. Originating as a racial epithet<sup>8</sup> used to degrade my ancestors, the word is still being used by many of my African American classmates and teammates here at Texas State University. Of course, because they say, “nigga,” as opposed to “nigger,” they feel it has a different meaning. In fact, according to many of my African American classmates who use “nigga” its meaning can best be described as friend, acquaintance, or companion. My response to this ridiculous explanation is I would like to see your response the next time you come to class late and your professor says, “Com’on in you wonderful, studious nigga and have a seat!” Basically, all the professor said was, “Come on in you wonderful studious friend and have a seat!” No harm in either one right? That’s how it works if your definition of “nigga” holds true. Of course not! Trust me; if this were to take place here at Texas State University, my African American classmates would make sure it would be front page news in the University Star for the rest of the semester.

The “N” word is degrading, no matter the spelling or the pronunciation. I choose not to use it as a term of endearment. In fact, as I was discussing with the family of one of my friends, when I use the word, I am not trying to befriend or welcome you. If you hear me say or call someone a “nigger,” I intend to strip him of any positive attributes. In

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<sup>8</sup> For further epistemology of “Nigger” see Oxford English Dictionary.

other words, I am intentionally putting him down. And yes, like many of the franchises across our great nation, I too am an equal opportunity employer. As far as I am concerned, anyone, regardless of race, can be classified as a low-life, ignorant, filthy, classless individual – “Nigga!”

Really, I can't understand why we, African Americans, of all people in the nation have chosen to try and recycle the garbage that this nation once cast upon us. I understand the saying, “One man's trash is another man's treasure,” but if I understand it correctly, the value of the trash must on or at some level become beneficial to the advancement of the man. I don't see how my African American classmates standing in the Quad, riding the Tram, or eating in the dining halls, can embrace any form of the trash that was once and in some cases still is cast upon us as beneficial to our movement toward success.

Amazingly, we seem to be the only race of people in America and specifically on this campus, who casually and acceptingly use our own racial epithet to greet and converse amongst each other. But oh yes, we are so quick to contribute our seemingly never ending struggle to “move up” in this nation on the strongholds that America has put on us. Well, as this wise man (my grandfather) once told me, “If you are not part of the solution, you may be part of the problem.” Honestly, do you ever hear two focused, astute Caucasian guys greet each other, “Hey cracker! How's it goin' honky?” No, of course not! They seem to have a mutual respect for each other that will not allow them to soil each other with any type of negative nomenclature.

I have heard many African American ministers, political figures, and even my own mother assert that my generation enjoys more freedom than any generation of

African American to date, yet we are more mentally detained than any generation of African Americans ever. Unfortunately, I have to agree with them. Although we are enrolled at Texas State University and are free to experience and capitalize on the countless opportunities that the university has to offer, many African Americans remain slaves to their own minds. Devaluing themselves via their own language, bad habits, and pollution of the body and mind, many of my African American classmates limit their own potential. And for many of my African American classmates, simply having potential is to have arrived. However, I was once told by a coach, “Potential don’t mean shit! All it means is that you have the potential to be great, good, average, or just another shitty person polluting the paths for those who realize and take heed to that fact that the only reason it is said that they have potential is because they haven’t done shit!” Granted this coach was by no means a philosopher, but when I heard him say that, all I could think was, “Man, I wish all the African Americans in my generation could have heard that!” I hope that the time will come when all the African American students here at Texas State University will realize that everything, I mean everything we do and say affects how we and the rest of the world thinks about us.

On a lighter, but sincere note, one night while watching BET’s (Black Entertainment Television Network) Comic View, I heard an African American talking about one of his friends who chronically uses the word “nigga.” After becoming fed up with his ignorant friend, the comedian decides to address the problem with his friend. According to the comedian the encounter went as follows.

Comedian: Say bro, why do you keep using that ignorant word?

Friend: What word?

Comedian: Nigga! Bro, ever other word out of your mouth is “Nigga this...” and “Nigga that...”

Friend: Awww, I see what it is!

Comedian: See what!

Friend: Yeah, see you one of those niggas who think they too good to be called a nigga!

Comedian: Well, actually bro, I am too good to be called a nigga.

To sum it up, that is the way I feel and I wish more of my African American classmates here at Texas State University would adopt the same attitude of the comedian. It’s all about self-respect. Many believe that “nigger” is just a word, but for me I believe that the word carries a huge degree of weight. Deriving from pain and strife, the word nigger evokes a very powerful and negative feeling, and it has no place as a metaphor for black life.

Ebony and Ivory  
Live together in perfect harmony  
Side by side on my piano keyboard  
Oh Lord, why don't we<sup>9</sup>?

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<sup>9</sup> Excerpt from “Ebony and Ivory” by Sir Paul McCartney & Stevie Wonder.

## **Interracial Dating**

What happens to dating when many African Americans go off to college at a predominately white university is for some best described as an immersion in taboo. While interracial dating is nothing new for this day and age, it is still looked up by many as taboo. For the majority of African American students, the limited dating pool will cause them to cross over the forbidden waters of interracial dating. In the African American community, interracial dating, especially for African American men, is frowned upon. African Americans see interracial dating by its males as a display of disrespect and lack of honor for the strong African American woman.

As statistics show, there is an increasing number of African American women who are being forced to raise African American males on their own. With the great responsibility that comes along with being a single parent, also comes an unspoken, but expected, glamorization or reverence for the strength and sacrifice that the African American woman exhibit in raising their children. For the African American culture the problem arises when the male children of these strong, fearless, dedicated women decide to date women who are not African American.

Unfortunately, I cannot speak on the reason why young African American women decide to crossover; I can only speculate that they are faced with the same issue of the minute dating pool in which the young African American male is faced with upon enrolling at a predominately white university such as Texas State University. Although statistics show that there is a great disparity in the growing number of African American women enrolled in college compared to the stagnant number of African American men

enrolled in college, the number of African American men that I have seen involved in interracial dating is quite overwhelming.

Ironically, during my four years at Texas State University, I have witnessed countless African American men involved in relationships with Caucasian women. It would seem that because African American women enrolled at Texas State University outnumber the African American men greatly, the African American women would be the ones overwhelmingly involved in interracial dating. Not only from a numbers standpoint but also from a very vital factor such as parenting.

Like myself and many other African American males in my generation, there are many African American females in my generation who were also raised without a father in the home. Thus it would not be totally preposterous to think that the African American women of my generation would have some sense of resentment toward the African American male figure; consequently causing them to seek men unlike those who, for whatever reason, abandoned their families.

However, it is my experience that despite the fact that many of my African American male classmates (specifically my teammates and other African American athletes at Texas State University) have chosen Caucasian women as their mates of choice, the African American women have, for the most part, remained loyal to the African American male. Although many of the African American women express great displeasure at the sight of seeing the males of their race escorting their Caucasian mates through the Quad, there is still a sense of pride and honor attached being with an African American male.

While many African American males are straddling the race fence when it comes to dating, the African American women are generally exclusively dedicated to dating members of their own race. However, this is not to say that I have not noticed a few African American males at Texas State University who have decided to exclusively date outside of their own race. As an African American male student-athlete here at Texas State University, I must say that I have witnessed first hand the onslaught of the Caucasian women who in a sense “throw” themselves at you for whatever reason. Anyone who tells you that as a college athlete women aren’t at your disposal is lying through their teeth. Now, due to my religious beliefs and my respect for women, I have tried my best to refrain from selfishly cashing in on the erotic benefits of being a highly popular and successful athlete here at Texas State University. However, I must admit that my religious beliefs are not the only reason why I have been able to refrain from capitalizing on the advances of all kinds by some of the women here at Texas State University.

If I were to make a T-chart with African American women on one side and Caucasian women on the other, of all the times I have been approached by women ranging from the ages of 18-30, one side would significantly outweigh the other side. Unfortunately for someone like me who has exclusively dated African American women, their side of the chart is very bare in comparison to the Caucasian women’s side. While I would guess that there are some African American women who may be interested in dating an African American male such as myself, I believe there are two dispositions that

African American women possess that cause them to not aggressively pursue a relationship with me.

- 1) They believe that it is my job as a man to approach the woman.
- 2) Because many of the professional African American athletes have chosen to be with Caucasian women, I (Walter Musgrove) too am interested in Caucasian women. Thus, they believe that there is no need for them to even attempt to approach me.

As I stated before, for me and for whatever reason the number of Caucasian women who approach me outnumber the African American women. I have found that in the event that I am approached by an African American woman, she is quick to let me know, “I don’t care how many tackles you make or games you have won; I am not like those white girls who be all over y’all; I ain’t takin’ no mess off of you.” I find it quite amusing that they feel the need to say that to me, because I have always prided myself in being the type of guy who does his best to honor and respect women. My mother always taught me, “When in doubt about how to treat a woman, ask yourself, “Would I want a man treating my momma like that?” Raised to love and respect myself, my decision to exclusively date African American women has nothing to do with any problems or grudges against Caucasian women, but more so with the teaching of my mother.

## **Conclusion**

Despite the forced opening of its doors to Dana Smith in 1963 and thousands of other African Americans that followed, Texas State University still has a lot of work to do to make African American students feel as though they are part of the campus environment. Because every student is different, each African American has his or her own unique experience while here at Texas State University. I am sure that my experience as an African American football player is somewhat different than that of the African American who did not participate in athletics here at the university. Although I would have loved to have been an active member in the multicultural organizations on campus, my status as an athlete consumed much of my time.

Undoubtedly, the strained race relations in America affected Johnny E. Brown 's experience as the first African American athlete at Southwest Texas State in 1966; however, he still managed to graduate with both his bachelor 's and master 's from the university. Since then, scores of African American athletes have come and gone, but unfortunately, few have been able to experience the academic success that Dr. Brown achieved during his time here as a student-athlete. It concerns me that an athlete can remain academically eligible as long as he has not exhausted his four years of athletic eligibility. The NCAA mandates that after each academic year, in order to remain eligible to compete in the following season, the student-athlete must have passed roughly 25% of the hours outlined in his degree program. Thus, after the athlete 's first year of competition, he must have nearly 25% of his degree completed, and after his second year, he must have 45% to 50% of his or her degree completed, and each year thereafter, the

requirement increases by 25%. Unfortunately, for many African American athletes, after fulfilling their athletic obligations to the university, they have nothing to show for it but aching joints, a bad back, and numerous scars—but no degree.

For me and several thousand African Americans across the nation, athletic scholarships have provided the opportunity to attend predominately white universities. Unfortunately, many of us have found this opportunity to be both a blessing and a curse. Frequently, African American athletes are shielded from the unpleasant race relations on their respective campuses. This leads to a sense of detachment or separation between the black athletes and the black students. However, being an athlete often gives us access that the black student isn't granted. We are able to bypass some of the scrutiny aimed at African Americans by the university and the city. For instance, several of the local establishments have dress codes that are aimed at keeping out anyone wearing hip-hop apparel, thus posing a problem for many African American students who desire to enter the establishments. However, despite being in violation of the dress code, I have witnessed many of my African American teammates and other African American athletes routinely enter these establishments, thus further separating us from the African American students.

Another interesting aspect of being an athlete is the tendency to become desensitized to the differences between the races. College athletes are encouraged to de-emphasize the differences one may have with people of a different origin. In an interview, Michael Langford, a former African American student-athlete at the university, stated, “ Because of the importance of the bond and trust amongst the

members of a football team, we don't concern ourselves with the race or any superficial differences of a teammate. After spending countless hours together working toward the same goal of victory, you begin to see all of your teammates, regardless of color or race, as an extension of yourself. This is because in order for me to do my job, I must depend on my teammate to do his" (Langford). After reflecting on this statement from Langford, I found that I totally agree with him. However, I would say that my teammates are aware of the diversity of our team.

Evidence of separation can be found in the festivities following a game. As one could guess, because this is a predominantly white university, it is not out of the ordinary to find many of my African American teammates at a predominantly white after party; however, it is highly unlikely that you would find any of my white teammates at the black after parties. The lighthearted jesting and joking amongst members of different races about racial stereotypes suggest that the members of my team have been able to accept our cultural differences.

As a member of the Mitte Honors Program and the Texas State University football team, two extremely different organizations, I have been able to interact with students of all backgrounds, intelligences, and races. Because the administration was not very interested in making minorities a significant part of the university, when my time here is up, I can't say that my allegiance to the university will be as strong as that of my Anglo counterparts. However, this is not to say that I will divorce myself from all aspects of the university. I shall always cherish my association with Texas State's welcoming and supportive athletic department. I would like to thank Karen Bryson (my academic

advisor), David Bailiff (head football coach), Jason Washington (position coach), Diann McCabe (Assistant Director of Mitte Honors Program) and Dr. Patty Margerison (professor) for making my time here at Texas State University an enjoyable and memorable experience.

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