

From the archives: January 16, 1970

Blacks' statements provide insight to NT-E race relations

"My parents believe that the white man will do you right if you work for him. I don't dig that. You've got a new breed this year so don't mess with us or we'll cut your throats! We don't love you and we don't want your love."

Last month the New Trier News sponsored a seminar in which Black students had an opportunity to voice complaints and comments on New Trier East. Some frightening attitudes were revealed in this seminar.

"Parents have a great influence on us here because we're inexperienced," one student said.

"We'd rather be at Evanston high school because there are more militant Blacks there who are ready to tear the school apart."

"I have been many different people," said a Black student. "One person with white kids, and another with Black. But this year I know who I am, I am myself."

"Prejudice against the Black student in this school can be felt. It can be felt in the classroom, it can be felt in the lunch hall, it can be felt from some teachers; it can generally be felt all over."

"Black teachers should teach African studies. Also, there should be an Afro-American studies program, dealing with Black life in this society."

"The only reason I participate in any outside activities is because it looks good on my college record."

There are only 35 Black students in a student body of slight-

ly less than 4,000 white students. Black students have been attending classes at NT-E for as long as people can remember. When the first Black student came to NT-E is not exactly known, but there were Black students during the 1920's.

Why then does it seem the Black students are just now beginning to say, "This is what I feel," and "This is what I want"? It is not an isolated attempt at Black Equality, but a very real attempt to obtain and establish an identity which has long been denied them.

Incidents of prejudice always seem to arise for one reason or another at student dances and sock-hops, and a more recent example occurred in the lunch hall in December. A few of the Black students started to dance to the music being played in the lunch hall, and though white students were also dancing, the Black students were the ones who were told to sit down, and threatened with green cards. Furthermore, they were accused of inciting a Black riot.

Though the teachers and the administration seem to pride themselves on the open-mindedness and relative equality of the school, to the Black student it is a far cry from what it could be.

Black students feel that some of the teachers are prejudiced against them for one reason or another, but they were fair in stating that some are not and leave them alone. The general complaint against the teachers is that at times they make generalizations about the Black people, which are usually based upon



Three students, (l. to r.) Denise Bey, Rita Johnson, and Wendy Harston are representative of New Trier East Black society. (photo by Baker)

the teachers' own feelings and a general lack of knowledge about the Black people and their background.

These generalizations have run the full gamut, and the Black students feel it is not only annoying to themselves, but should be to the white students as well, for the teachers teach these as truths, and expect the white students to accept them as facts.

These and many similar incidents have alienated Black students from whites in general and from NT-E, specifically. Most Blacks attend NT-E for the single purpose of attaining a good education, not for the purpose of social involvement.

Some Black students enter NT-E expecting their four years here to be a beneficial experience both academically and cul-

turally. Their attitude now is that things have been made so difficult that they just want to get through and go on to college, where they perhaps will excel in fields that are most interesting to them. Black students feel that they have tried to become a homogeneous part of the school community. In their own words, they have tried "turning themselves white," they have renounced the friendship of "Black brothers" to gain acceptance in a white society. They have, they say, tried to think white, and act white, but they have reached the conclusion that they have only been fooling themselves.

In searching for ways to improve relationships with the Black students who are attending school with whites, the Black students have brought up some

interesting ideas. The establishment of a Black cultural center within the school, where students can learn about the culture and ideas of the Black man was suggested. Also, the establishment of Black performing arts within the theatrical department would bring to the stage the feelings and emotions of the Blacks. These are just two of many cultural exchanges which could be formulated within NT-E.

The establishment of the Black students here in NT-E is not as great as it is in Evanston, nor are the tensions and explosive atmosphere as great. However, there is still much that can be done to ease the situation, and increased steps should be taken to enable a greater understanding between Black and white than now exists.

Letters to the editor: January 30, 1970

Student letters voice opinions on News' Black coverage

Failure to communicate

In reference to your article entitled, "Black students provide an insight into New Trier race relations," in the January 16 NT-E News, it is apparent to us that you have failed to communicate to the masses of students, the reality of the Black situation at New Trier East.

The failure is understandable, inexcusable, and expected from a white newspaper. It is a perpetuation of institutional racism as practiced by white journalism here and all over America. What is more important to the newspaper; infringing upon individual's rights or operating expediently? Creating sensation print or helping to create greater understanding of this problem? The reason for this failure is due to the insensitivity and lack of knowledge on the part of the newspaper's bureaucracy.

To clarify the absurdity of the article, let us point out two obvious fallacies. First of all, if other people have their names by quotes, then why are the Blacks' names omitted. Are we not individuals? Your distortion of the seminars not only does not provide insight into the NT-E race relations, but also hinders the development of an understanding between people.

The only way the newspaper can justify its reporting in reference to its main goals for individuals is to gain understanding from this experience in hopes of opening hearts and minds. Take Heed! Be Sensitive! But Remember! Sensitivity is a means to an end; LIBERATION!!!!!! Yours in Brotherhood,

Denise Chyrell Bey
Susan Ellen Clark
Mary Ruth Jones
David Garland Wilkins
Jane Louise Williams

Clarification is necessary

The front page article of the January 16 issue titled "Blacks' statements provide insight to NT-E race relations" has become a cause of a great many misunderstandings throughout the school and the community. Numerous questions have been raised as to the sources and/or the validity of the quotations, and subsequently, some sort of a clarifying explanation is in order. At the very least, an article written solely by the Black students mentioned in the last NT News should be printed by this paper, and it should be written in a fashion that leaves no doubts about its meaning.

The misunderstanding of the article is by no means existing only within the school. Ever since the papers were distributed, many adults have contacted the Glencoe Human Relations committee questioning the president and the board as to the meaning and the truth of the article. The committee has not been able to produce answers, and it asks that the NT-E News attempt to make the answers available to the community.

At best, the front page article concerning NT-E Black students was a poorly written and confusing article that failed to adequately explain the situation. Because the questions and doubts about this matter still remain, it is the News' responsibility to follow up and clarify their original article.

Andy Maneval
for the Glencoe Human Relations committee

Black students need chance to express views

As I opened my New Trier News this morning, I was full of hope when I found an article titled "Blacks' statements provide insight to NT-E race relations." I thought that finally these people have a chance to openly express their true feelings and complaints, a chance that they have needed and deserved for a long time. After completion of the article, I have concluded that they still need and deserve this chance and that a slight distortion of the facts was the cause for this article's failure to give them the chance.

First of all, I cannot see how it is possible for the personal opinions of a few individuals of any group to represent the personal opinions of all the individuals of that group. I have discussed this point with many Blacks and I have discovered that some, but definitely not all Blacks, share the views expressed by those interviewed. The opinions of the Blacks interviewed must be respected, but your methods of journalism have twisted the views of a few individuals into a statement of feelings of every Black in this

Article tends to damage

Friday, Jan. 16, 1970, there was an article printed in the New Trier News that was understood to be the report on two seminars: the first, concerning prejudice in the school, not necessarily applying to Blacks or whites; and the second, an interview with Blacks only.

The poor journalism and the misinforming implications tended to be damaging to Black students whether they were involved or not. The manner in which the article was written gave apparent intentions of not presenting the true meaning of the statements and purpose of the meetings.

A picture of three girls was printed along with this article without consideration for one of the girls who requested that the picture not be printed because she did not wish to be identified

school by the use of rash, hypocritical generalizations. You state, "Black students feel that some of the teachers are prejudiced against them for one reason or another..." and then continue with, "the general complaint against the teachers is that at times they make generalizations about the Black people..." The irony of these two statements is that while the News states that the Blacks object to generalizations made about them, the News generalizes by saying that Black people feel prejudice from some

In conclusion, I feel that the students of NT-E have the basic human right to the pure, unadulterated truth in their paper and that an article such as this on a topic of great importance does more harm than good. teachers and does not state the straight facts.

Peter Milwid
SC co-head of responsibility
Jerry Brand
SC president

with the article. The News denied requests by involved people to read the article for purposes unknown.

We hope that this can remain an in-school issue without ensuring the involvement of the community press. Therefore we expect that this letter be printed in full so that our voices can be heard in non-editorialized truth. We also believe that we are entitled to full and equal space and coverage as was devoted to the previously mentioned article, to voice the real connotations of the article. We also believe that NT-E students are entitled to hear, in proper perspective, the statements that were actually made. We list full coverage as a demand of our violated rights for the purpose of righting unjust implications.
Rita Johnson
Wendy Harston
Demetra Hampton
Karen Sidney

How the NT News reported race in the 1970's

The article above and letters to the editor at left were taken from two editions of the NT News in January of 1970. While the News already reprinted the article as part of the 100 year Examiner, we believe it is worth revisiting in order to look at the backlash and criticism it received following publication. The black student population especially took issue with the article and the way the News made generalizations about the experiences of minorities at NT.

It is clear that the reoprtng on the seminar for black students was flawed. Rather than quoting directly from students or including a variety of perspectives, the News paraphrased what they believed to be the experiences of black students.

"They have, they say, tried to think white, and act white, but they have reached the conclusion that they have only been fooling themselves," the article above said.

As is clearly indicated by the letters to the editor, this was not an accurate representation of all black students. While the intention of the article may have been good, these generalizations are symptomatic of a news staff lacking diversity.

NT is still a largely homogenous school racially. While the News staff today does include writers of a variety of ethnic backgrounds, we recognize that we are still lacking black voices on our staff. We also recognize that we can never capture the entire range of experiences any of category of students as we continue to strive to address the issues, changes, and problems that need to be talked about within our school community.