

BLACK HISTORY MONTH SPECIAL EDITION - FEBRUARY 2001

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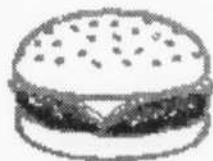


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Passing down the stories of our past

On the Real

Shawn Whitsell



Opinions Editor

I remember one night when I was probably about 14. There was this terrible storm and the power went out. It wasn't that late so my entire family was awake. Naturally, my brothers and I went straight to our mother's room.

We searched the house for candles but had a hard time finding any. Actually, there were candles in the living room but my brothers and I knew that we weren't gonna use Mama's "good" candles. Anyway, we finally found one candle, meaning we would all have to stay in one room.

So, we lit the candle and camped out on my mother's bed. We just sat there, joked and talked about different things. My mother then started telling stories about our family and her childhood. Though we had heard those same stories a million times, we sat there attentively.

Most of the stories were just funny, everyday life, situations. However, the tone got a little more serious when she told us about her grandfather and how significant he was in her life, even though he passed away when she was only six.

As the candle burned, I held on to my mother's every word. I had heard the stories so many times, I could tell them myself. But every time she told them, I learned something that I didn't know before. Each time felt like something new and I was deeply touched by it. It just gave me a warm, comfortable feeling inside.

Now that I look back on it, I realize how beautiful that moment was. Outside, it was dark, windy, thundering, lightning and raining cats, dogs, cows and sheep but on the inside, our house was peaceful. We had found peace in the middle of the storm.

At the time, I didn't realize how significant my mother's stories would be in my life. Knowing pieces of my family's past has definitely helped me build my future. Just being aware of some of my family's struggles has added fuel to the fire that keeps me pushing

forward each day.

I also realize the importance of the repetition of the stories. Like I mentioned previously, I'd heard the stories so many times, I could tell them myself. They had become engrained in me and I carry them around with me every single day of my life. Those stories have slowly become a part of me and I'm definitely going to pass them down to my own children one day.

This brings me to my point. With Black History Month, we are celebrating the stories of struggle and triumph among African Americans. We need to learn these stories so they can become a part of our lives, much like my family's stories became a part of my life.

We must reinforce these stories over and over, so that one day, we'll be able to tell them ourselves. They should become so much apart of our lives that we can verbally bring them to life and not always have to look in a book to find out.

We should pass these stories down to our children so they know how challenging it has been for African American people, so they know that many African Americans achieve, so they know that they too can achieve as well and so they know that the struggle is far from over.

We have to make sure we are educated, so that we can educate our children. We must use our history to enrich the lives of our children so that they may be inspired to do great things. We also must let them know that though we use February to focus on the contributions of African Americans to world, we don't by in any means separate black history from overall history.

The contributions of African Americans have enriched not only the lives of African American people but also the lives of all people and I think it's very important that we all partake in it.

As I type these words, I have another niece either being born or about to born, which is an incredibly humbling experience for me. Things like this is definitely what makes life worthwhile and it adds another element of importance to my putting together this special issue.

Hopefully one day, my nieces will tell their children about their uncle - the writer - Shawn Whitsell (or my oldest niece's name for me, Uncle Shawn Shawn).

Peace,
 Demerrius La-Shawn Whitsell

Got something to say about one of our stories?

Write us a letter!

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Quotes by Famous Black Americans

"When I discover who I am, I'll be free."
Ralph Ellison

"America doesn't respect anything but money. What our people need is a few millionaires."
Madame C.J. Walker

"In all things that are purely social, we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress."
Booker T. Washington

"Before a group can enter the open society, it must first close ranks."
Stokeley Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton

"The thing that makes you exceptional, if you are at all, is inevitably that which must also make you lonely."
Lorraine Hansberry

"To the ordinary American or Englishman, the race question at bottom is simply a matter of ownership of women; white men want the right to use all women, colored and white, and they resent the intrusion of colored men in this domain."
W.E.B. DuBois

"Men are not women, and a man's balance depends on the weight he carries between his legs."
James Baldwin

"Whatever we believe about ourselves and our ability comes true for us."
Susan L. Taylor

Both tears and sweat are salty, but they render a different result. Tears will get you sympathy; sweat will get you change.
Jesse Jackson, African-American civil rights activist

He who is courageous enough to take risks will accomplish nothing in life.
Muhammad Ali, African-American professional prize fighter

I don't know the key to success, but the key to failure is trying to please everybody.
Bill Cosby, American actor and comedian

Life loves to be taken by the lapel and told: "I'm with you kid. Let's go."
Maya Angelou, African-American poet

Hold fast to dreams, for if dreams die, life is a broken winged bird that cannot fly.
Langston Hughes, African-American poet

Success doesn't come to you...you go to it.
Marva Collins, African American Educator

Do the right thing.
Spike Lee, African-American film director

Just don't give up what you're trying to do. Where there is Love and inspiration, I don't think you can go wrong.

Ella Fitzgerald, American singer

Not everything that is faced can be changed until it is faced.
James Baldwin, African American author

How far you go in life depends on your being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving, and tolerant of the weak and strong. Because some day in life you will have been all these.
George Washington Carver, African-American scientist

I can do something else besides stuff a ball through a hoop. My biggest resource is my mind.
Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, African-American professional basketball player

The greatest education in the world is watching the masters at work.
Michael Jackson, African-American singer

If a man is called to be a street sweeper, he should sweep streets even as Michealangelo painted, or Beethoven composed music, or Shakespeare composed poetry. He should sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will pause to say, "Here lived a great street sweeper who did his job well."
Martin Luther King, African-American civil rights leader

I don't think of myself as a poor deprived ghetto girl who made good. I think of myself as someone who from an early age knew I was responsible for myself, and I had to make good.
Oprah Winfrey, American TV host

You have to expect things of yourself before you can do them.
Michael Jordan, African-American basketball player

In all our deeds, the proper value and respect for time determines success or failure.
Malcolm X, African-American author, activist

Mix a conviction with a man and something happens.
Adam Clayton Powell, African-American politician

I feel that the most important requirement in success is learning to overcome failure. You must learn to tolerate it, but never accept it.
Reggie Jackson, African-American baseball player

To me, we must learn to spell the word RESPECT. We must respect the rights and properties of our fellowman. And then learn to play the game of life, as well as the game of athletics, according to the rules of society. If you can take that and put it into practice in the community in which you live, then, to me you have won the greatest championship.
Jesse Owens, African-American Olympic Champion

Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.
Martin Luther King, African-American civil rights leader

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Professor, AAHM co-chair discusses importance of Black History Month

Shawn Whitsell sat down with Tyson King-Meadows, of the Political Science department, to discuss the importance of Black History Month. King-Meadows is the co-chair of MTSU's African American History Month Committee (along with Bonnie Shipp) and he also teaches African American studies. This is his second year at MTSU.

Shawn: How has the AAHM committee experience been?
King-Meadows: We've had the opportunity to create programs that reflect the diversity of the African American experience. We had a wonderful time planning, talking, trying to pick the right speakers, all for the theme of "Creating and Defining Community."

Q: Why is it important for us to acknowledge Black History Month?

A: We have to know who we are as Americans, and who we are today is not only the summation of who we were and all the contributions that embody that, but also where we think we're going. A group of individuals who thinks that one group is unimportant are incomplete. So we have to make sure that the MTSU/Murfreesboro community understands that black students, black faculty, black adminis-

trators are a visible and viable component of this community. That's one of the reasons we have the black alumni reunion on the 16th, to tell black students, "this is who could be when, not if, but when you graduate."

Q: What are some of the month's highlights?

A: Congressman Harold Ford is coming on Feb. 20. That's important because he was the keynote speaker at the 2000 Democratic convention. He brings a message about making our American democracy strong by understanding our interconnectedness. That's really what Black History Month is about, to show how interconnected the American people are culturally, economically, politically, socially, religiously. There's no separation, this is just a month to illustrate these components.

Sonia Sanchez is coming on the 26th. She brings a feminist, internationalist experience to the struggle for human and civil rights. Black history is not just a celebration of what's going on with African American males, because unfortunately it's usually taught from a male perspective. So she brings that other voice, to say women have contributed and this is how black women have contributed specifically. And this is how people outside the contiguous

United States have contributed.

The Gospel Extravaganza on the 3rd [is] to show that religious aspect of the African American experience. We express ourselves through song, not only as black people but as human beings.

Bruce Bridges is coming on the 14th and he's going to talk about black students getting away from the "ghetto" mindset and why they think they can't achieve, and what they can achieve is rap music and basketball.

There are so many other things that black students can think about. It's good to come to MTSU and think about being the next Puff Daddy or Quincy Jones but they can be the next Ronald McNair. We have a McNair scholarship program. They can be the next Cornell West, the next Johnnie Cochran, the next Mary Francis Berry. There's so many things that a person can but you just have to expand your mind.

Q: Why do you think some black students feel limited to sports and music?

A: Because people lie to them and they lie to themselves. We have ESPN, ESPN 2, MTV, VH-1, BET, CNN, C-SPAN, and you don't see a lot of black figures and when they report news, they're not reporting good news. So, we as blacks, we only see a small segment of our

experience, and we only think we can have that small segment. Then we lie to each other when we degrade one another for academic success and it doesn't happen as much as some black conservatives would like to think but it does happen.

Instead of us saying who got an "A," and celebrating that, we say silly stuff like, "you must be the teacher's pet" or "you must think you're white" or "you must think you're better." So we lie to each other and we're not able to achieve that way. Bruce is going to talk about getting beyond that.

Q: How important do you think it is for people of other races to celebrate Black History Month?

A: I think it's very important. Whites can only know themselves by knowing more about the African American experience. You can't know about rock n roll unless you know about blues. You can't know about blues without understanding the enslavement experience...so it's very important. It's also important for [those who are] non-white and non-black to participate as well because we understand the African American experience, we understand that Native American were excluded

See Professor, 5



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Activist, poet to visit MTSU



Staff Reports

During Black History Month, poet/activist/teacher Sonia Sanchez will visit MTSU. Sanchez will share her poetry on Feb. 26 in the Tennessee Room of the JUB at 6 p.m.

Sanchez

Born Wilsonia Driver in 1934 in Birmingham, Ala., Sanchez lost her mother to death while still an infant. She later moved to New York with her father, where she grew up and later attended Hunter College.

After getting her Bachelor of Arts in 1955, Sanchez completed one year of the graduate writing program at New York University before withdrawing.

Sanchez had been writing poetry as a child and after being introduced to political activism in the '60s, she began contributing to such publications as *The Liberator*, *Negro Digest* and the *Journal of Black Poetry*, *Black Dialogue*.

She published her first book *Homecoming* in 1969, releasing *We a BaddDDD People* a year later. The militant stance Sanchez took in these books was heavily inspired by the teachings of Malcolm X.

While putting efforts into her political and social writings, Sanchez also raised children and taught at a number of colleges and universities.

The world renowned activist/poet/teacher/playwright has published a wide collection of literary works also including *I've Been a Woman: New and Selected Poems*, *homegirls & handgrenades* (1984), *Under a Soprano Soprano Sky* (1986) and her most recent *Shake Loose My Skin*. She has written the play, *Uh Huh: But How Do It Free Us?* (1975) and has edited her anthology, *Three Hundred and Sixty Degrees of Blackness Comin at You* (1972). The anthology is a collection of poems created by some of her creative writing students in Harlem.

Her literature and social activism for the rights of African Americans and women have earned her the Lucretia Mott Award, American Book Award, Governors Award for Excellence in Humanities, National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship, Outstanding Arts Award from the Pennsylvania Coalition of 100 Black Women and numerous other awards.

Sanchez is currently on staff at Temple University in Philadelphia in the departments of English and Women's Studies. She also tours the world giving lectures, reading poetry and performing workshops. ♦

Poetry by Sonia Sanchez

Haiku

we are sudden stars
you and I exploding in
our blue black skins

To Anita

high/yellow/black/girl
walken like the sun u be.
move on higher.
those who
laugh at yo/color
have not moved
to the blackness we be about
cuz as Curtis Mayfield be sayen
we people be darker than blue
and quite a few
of us be yellow
all soul/shades of
blackness.
yeah. high/yellow/black/girl

walk yo/black/song
cuz some of us
be hearen yo/sweet music.

This is the time for the creative
Man. Woman. Who must decide
that She. He. Can live in peace.
Racial and sexual justice on
this earth.

This is the time for you and me.
African American. Whites. Latinos.
Gays. Asian. Jews. Native
Americans. Lesbians. Muslims.
All of us must finally bury

The elitism of race superiority
The elitism of sexual superiority
The elitism of economic superiority
The elitism of religious superiority

Professor: Education about Black history lacking

Continued from 4

from America so we have to celebrate that heritage as well. There are many connections between Native Americans and African Americans. We also have to understand the Asian Americans who came over here, some of them involuntarily, to work to build America up. We can share that experience from the enslavement experience so it's very important that we help each other understand that America is the summation of all these things that have occurred.

Q: What would you say to someone opposing Black History Month?

A: This month evolved from Carter G. Woodson's notation of a day, then eventually a week, to celebrate the achievements of African Americans. Unfortunately, the educational system doesn't provide that. Until there's actual equity in the educational sys-

tem, where everyone's contributions are articulated, you're going to need set aside programs to say, "this is what has been done before."

The average middle or high school text begins with enslavement and ends with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. That's not the diversity of the African American experience, the African American experience begins in Africa way before enslavement, and enslavement didn't destroy African culture.

There were Africanisms. People brought over their own culture and they retained it. That culture is infused in America so you should know about it. But if you didn't get a chance to know about it, here's a month of activities across the nation to understand Black History Month, which is everyone's history month.

There's women's month, Native American month, Latino American month. That's because we want to celebrate everything. ♦

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Black History Month**

Events during Black History Month

Thursday, Feb. 1

Unity Luncheon - Honoring elderly unsung heroes who have made outstanding contributions to the Middle Tennessee community. The honors include Priscilla Brown, Annie W. Huddleston, Mary E. J. Mills, Tillman William Payne II, Nancy Bryson Vaughan. This event will be held in the Tennessee Room of the JUB from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Admission for the general public is \$12 and \$6 for students.

For more info, contact Sherrie Murray at 898-2987.

Friday, Feb. 2

Expressions: Open Mic Poetry and Spoken Word - This event will be held at 5:00 in the Cyber Café and is sponsored by the African American Students Association. For more info, contact Shawn Whitsell at 898-4121.

Saturday, Feb. 3.

Gospel Extravaganza starring Lorraine Morris-Brown with special guest William Richardson (pianist). The hosts for the evening will be Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.

Monday, Feb. 5

Karla Winfrey/"Entrepreneurialism in the New Millennium" - Winfrey, president and creator of Colored Christmas, is an Emmy Award-winning television journalist. She has been a consumer reporter and show host at stations such as WSMV (Nashville), WABC (New York) and KDFW (Dallas). This event will take place in the Tucker Theatre at 6 p.m.

Tuesday, Feb. 6

Brown Bag Lunch - "Obesity and the Young African American Woman" - Speaker: Dr Cheryl Ellis, Peck Hall 222 at 12:30 p.m.

Wednesday, Feb. 7

Ralph Wiley will be making visits to classrooms. Wiley, author of *Why Black People Tend to Shout* and *What Black People Should Do Now*, is a controversial critic of American culture. He "fulfills the role of artist as agitator," taking an ironic and unblinking look at African American life.

Thursday, Feb. 8.

AAMH Keynote Address: Ralph Wiley - "Black Community for the New Millennium." BAS State Farm Room at 7 p.m.

Monday, Feb. 12

The African American Student Association will present a discussion on racism. Students will discuss various forms of racism on campus and in the world in general. KUC 322, at 6 p.m. (this event was originally scheduled to be a forum on male/female relationships).

Tuesday, Feb. 13

Leroy Moore, Poetry/Performance - Moore is an African American poet, writer and activist on issues of racism and disability. His readings, lectures and workshops are a mixture of personal, historical, political and cultural experiences and the raw reality of being Black and disabled in the U.S. BAS S328 at 7 p.m.

Wednesday, Feb. 14

Faculty Workshop: Leroy Moore - Wednesday, 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., Faculty Senate Lounge. Speaker: Dr. Bruce Bridges. Sponsored by Alpha Phi Alpha. Bridges is the author of "The Ghetto Mind" and the "The Roots of Geography," and is in demand internationally as a speaker and expert in the fields of history, geopolitics, and multicultural systems.

Thursday, Feb. 15

Birmingham Civil Rights and Institute Field Trip - Sponsored by MTSU Dept. of Social Work. Contact: Dr. Margaret Fontanesi-Seime at 898-5766, Mr. Robert Rucker at 898-2510. Leaving at 7 p.m.

Friday, Feb. 16

Distinguished Black Alumni Reception - Alumni Center at 7 p.m.

Saturday, Feb. 17

Diamond Ball - \$25 per person, formal attire, sponsored by the Murfreesboro Alumni Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. Proceeds will benefit scholarships for area high school students. For more info, call 849-1873. Smyrna Town Center at 8 p.m.

Sunday, Feb. 18

Hayden/Beethoven Choir Concert - Soloist: Dina Cancryn, conductor: Ralph Bundage. Wright Music Hall at 3 p.m.

Tuesday, Feb. 20

Go to High School, Go to College - Sponsored by Alpha Phi Alpha, Kappa Xi Chapter. KUC Grill at 8 a.m.

Health Fair - 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., JUB Tennessee Room

Brown Bag Lunch: Reflections of a Sojourn in Nigeria - Speaker: Dr. Adonijah Bakari. Peck Hall 222 at 12:30 p.m.

Speaker: Congressman Harold Ford, Jr. - Ford was elected to the House of Representatives in 1996 at age 26 and reelected in 1998 with 80 percent of the vote. Ford was the keynote speaker at the 2000, Democratic National Convention. BAS State Farm Room at 7 p.m.

Hayden/Beethoven Choir Concert - Soloist: Dina Cancryn, conductor: Raphael Bundage. Wright Music Hall at 7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, Feb. 21

School Children's Luncheon - Speaker: Nathaniel R. Howse, Jr. Howse received both his B.A. and J.D. degrees from Loyola University of Chicago. In private practice for over 20 years, Judge Howse has extensive experience in both the criminal and civil courts. Recognition of writing contest winners. JUB Tennessee Room at 11:30 a.m.

Thursday, Feb. 22

Debate: (Dis) Unity Among Black Students - Sponsored by the African American Student Association (AASA). KUC 322, 4:30 - 6:30 p.m.

Friday, Feb. 23

Expressions: Open Mic Poetry and Spoken Word - Cyber Café at 5 p.m.

Monday, Feb. 26

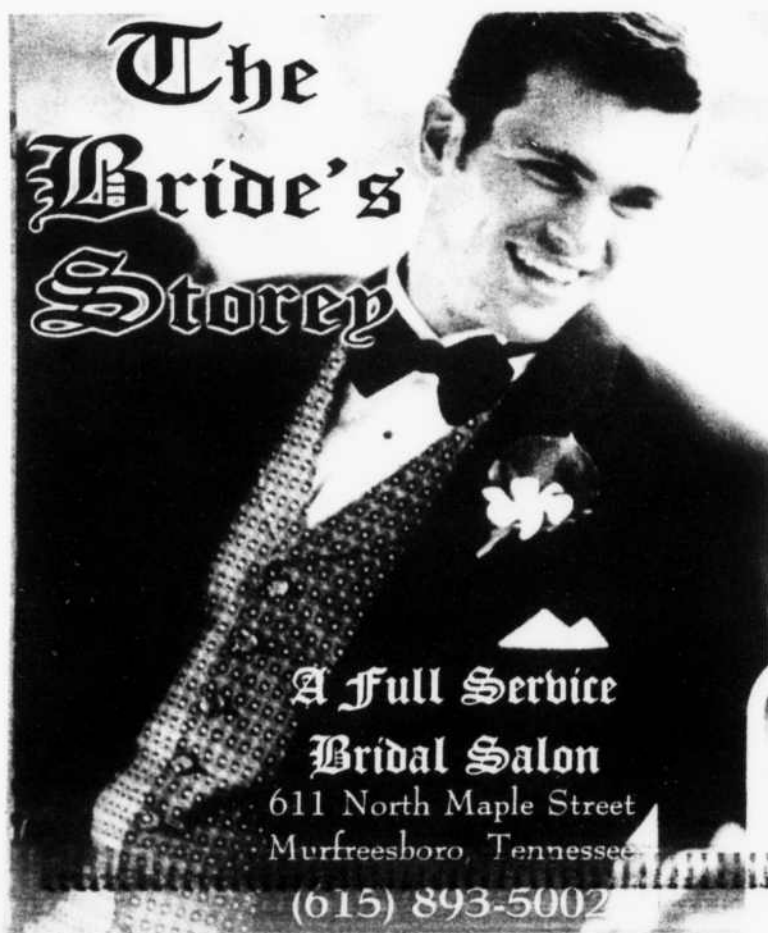
Sonia Sanchez, poetry reading - Sanchez is a writer, professor and activist who speaks on issues related to the African American experience, women, literature and culture. Winner of the 1995 American Book Award in Poetry. JUB Tennessee Room at 6 p.m.

Tuesday, Feb. 27

Tennessee Supreme Court Justice A. A. Birch "Race, Politics and The Judicial System" - JUB Dining Room C at 12 p.m.

Wednesday, Feb. 28

Quiz Bowl - \$5 entry fee. Contact Amy Staples at 898-2569. LRC, TV Studio (1st floor) at 3:30 p.m.
Pleus Awards - Alumni Center at 6 p.m.



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OVERNIGHTS WITH BOB PARLOCHA

Remembering the neglected heroes

By Courtney McMillian
Daily Pennsylvanian (U. Pennsylvania)

(U-WIRE) PHILADELPHIA - It is amazing how certain aspects of African-American history have been accepted by all of America, while other parts have been disregarded. Ken Burns, in collaboration with Wynton Marsalis, recently produced a 19-hour documentary on jazz music, entitled *Jazz*, and as Burns pointed out, "(jazz) is the only music America can take credit for."

Burns' film goes into extensive discourse about such African-American greats as Count Bassie, Sarah Vaughn, Billie Holiday and many more.

However, while talking with a friend of mine recently, he expressed his lack of knowledge of African-American history and his position why, even now that he is in college, he has not sought to learn more.

He said it was because, in grade school, he was not taught much about African Americans, other than some of their early history. All he knew, in fact, was that African Americans were once the economic backbone of America — as slaves and cotton pickers.

Sadly, he went on to say, "Who would

want to identify with a history where all the people did was to pick cotton?"

I was appalled, but I kept my cool during this conversation and gave him a quick lesson in African-American history.

"Did you know," I began, "that Africans who were brought to America were some of the world's smartest people?" I'm sure you've heard of the movie *Amistad* — it was based on a true story.

The movie is about Africans from different tribes, who spoke different languages and were captured as slaves. While chained together in the bottom of a ship, they learned how to communicate with each other and cause a revolt:

"That takes intelligence and bravery," I continued. "And what about the Underground Railroad? Blacks on plantations would make quilts and hang them on their clotheslines for runaway slaves making their way north. The quilt would point them in the direction of freedom."

"Not only was the runaway slave's life in danger, but if the 'master' had figured out the true purpose of the quilts, the person who made them would have been in trouble too."

By this point, the look in my friend's face

was almost one of disbelief. I kept going.

"Let us not forget Medgar Evers, the first field secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, who was gunned down in front of his home," I said. "All of these people died not knowing you, or me, but were willing to risk their lives for the fruits of equality and justice that you and I are beginning to enjoy."

"There are countless other African Americans — nameless, faceless people of history who died by lynching, in marches and by guns — all in the name of freedom and equality for all. But you choose to have selective knowledge because you don't want to hear about cotton?"

His response?

"I never really thought about it that way."

Some of the most beautiful products of the lives and deaths of blacks throughout history are jazz music, the poetry of the Harlem Renaissance and rap music.

African Americans created these venues as methods of expressing the hardships endured during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

And many of these hardships were during the Reconstruction era, when black slaves were trying to redefine themselves outside of

slavery and faced opposition from white America. Others died to have the same opportunity before the Civil War.

All of the positive aspects that arose from that era came at the price of hundreds of lives. And you can't thank God for that gift without thanking him for the men who laid down his life to give it to you.

America's education system has managed to minimize the face of black people, using people like Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr. as convenient examples of an entire race. By doing so, they obscure the rest of America's history — the part that includes black people — by relegating all other African Americans as nameless and faceless tools of economy.

Now that we are out of grade school, it is our responsibility — white and blacks alike — to educate ourselves about the people whose shoulders we stand on today.

Everything has a past, and this is a past that is relevant to all of society. In order to move in a positive direction through life, we must be aware of our history.

As they say, "If you don't know where you've been, you won't know where you are going."

Think about it and educate yourself. ♦

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www.universitycourtyard.com

All inclusive rent including:
- Electricity
- Water and sewer
- Local telephone service
- Dish cable TV
- Fast response
- Individual lease
- One and two bedroom floor plans
- Completely furnished
- Study desk available between
- Large closets with shelves
- Full size washer and dryer in
- every unit
- Fully equipped fitness center
- Community room
- Resident lounge area