Column/Simson L. Garfinkel

Losing heritage is cost of assimilation

The Tech printed a guest column May 11 by Kevin L. Dickens entitled "Social life hard for minorities." Dickens wrote about the problems he imagines that he and other minorities face here. While I am sure that there are many different unique problems, I do not think that Dickens addressed them.

In Dickens' second paragraph, he states that the social life of a black male student at MIT is abnormal or life hard for minorities. Dickens wrote about the problems he imagines that he and other minorities face here. While I am sure that there are many different unique problems, I do not think that Dickens addressed them.

Dickens evidently feels that blacks should only date blacks and women. It follows, then, that black women should only date black men, so that there is a pool of women for Dickens, and those like him.

Dickens would have been very happy in South Africa, where there were laws which prevented intermarriage between whites and blacks. The apartheid government recently changed these laws, but only after severe pressure. Dickens stated next that, either way, the results of MIT last year, "over half of this minority knew very little about blacks that is quite a thought. I just imagine over 160 black students in a predominantly white classrooms, virtually in effect a closed society, knowing nothing about each other.

When the stated goal of a minority community is assimilation and integration into the larger society, the partial loss of a cultural and ethnic heritage must be viewed as part of the cost. This process has happened to many upper class black families. It has also happened to Jewish families, Italian families and Japanese and Latin-Caribbeans in this country. Often, it is the children that regret the loss.

I am not black. I do not know what the goals of the black people are, if such a united group exists. But if the goal is inclusion in American society, then something must be lost.

Dickens says that many blacks at MIT have an identity problem because they are insecure or ashamed about being black. Perhaps that is so. Dickens says that this attitude has risen because there are 319 blacks in our black community. Perhaps so. But when Dickens says that the United States is the "second most racist nation on earth (behind South Africa)," I think he is overstating his case.

Kevin L. Dickens, you haven't seen racism until you've witnessed relations between Arabs and Jews in the Middle East, or French and English in Northern Ireland, or Koreans and Japanese in Japan. Perhaps you define racism as only discrimination of blacks by whites. You would have to, to make such a racist statement which does not acknowledge the existence of racism in other minorities.

In his second paragraph about blacks, Dickens makes a thinly veiled charge of racism against MIT. "Mandatory Coach O'Brien," he writes, "is a man who obviously does not place race on the basketball team issue. I believe race is a black.

To the Editor:

Dickens column was racist

I would like to first express dismay that you even printed Kevin L. Dickens' column in The Tech. He made certain sweeping generalizations that are bound to cause you and your feedback column for the rest of the year. I would like to offer my feedback in the form of an open letter to Mr. Dickens, as I know he has known since R/O week 1981:

Dear Kevin,

My column is Friday's Tech was outrageous. You said that "the best-looking black women at MIT seem to prefer white men." I was talking with a good-looking black woman last week. I read an article and she did not appreciate that statement. Kevin, you did mean to imply that any black woman at MIT who shows interest in black men is not good-looking? Hell, beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and if you have some algorithms for determining it, that is fine, but don't connotate your theorem to tell MIT that all of our beautiful black women are racist. (Furthermore, I do not differentiate just because one particular woman who shows no interest in you happens to be a black woman.)

Then there is your comment about some of the black students not knowing about some of the black students not knowing about blacks, basking some of your reasoning on geography. Well, Kevin, you know that I'm from Minnesota, and that there are not many blacks in my region of the state. Yes, I was out of touch with the black community the three years I lived in Minnesota, but when I came here and made an effort to establish rapport, you, Mr. Dickens, greeted me with abuse. But I did not worry, because my real friends, who already knew you from Project Interphase, told me to ignore anything you said. They were not concerned with who was "truly black." (And I surely didn't hear any "white-boy" crap when you needed help on those problem sets, did Kevin?)

I was not pleased that you referred to the USA as "the second most racist nation in the world." I have seen similar atrocities, I have seen dissidents, eliminate unwanted races or send hotbeds of revolutionaries to live at war-torn frontiers. I'm not saying the US has not done similar atrocities. I have seen an Indian reservation. Yet we have no laws in this country that differentiate us by race or religion. No Kevin, I'm proud to be an American, as are most blacks.

You didn't feel any questions about your identity come ask me, right? Because you are the judge of what it means to be "truly black." Does this mean that all blacks are homogeneous? You must be some kind of a racist fanatic. Maybe you should put together a club of all men except the blacks? I don't think so; I've heard your racist comments about many a white woman. Incidentally, many feminists are male, many feminists are heterosexually oriented, and quite a few of them are black and proud.

MIT may not be the best sports teams, but the guys who you enjoy it, which is what really matters, you wonder why Varsity does not want your awesom senator? Neither your letter nor your character tends any claim that they might be interested in the kind of teamwork necessary to play on any of MIT's intercollegiate squads.

You say "If you have any questions about your identity come ask me, right? Because you are the judge of what it means to be "truly black." Does this mean that all blacks are homogeneous? You must be some kind of a racist fanatic. Maybe you should put together a club of all men except the blacks? I don't think so; I've heard your racist comments about many a white woman. Incidentally, many feminists are male, many feminists are heterosexually oriented, and quite a few of them are black and proud.

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