UNCONSCIOUS PREJUDICE

Griffin Sees Negro Dehumanizing

By JAMES DOYLE
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Guilt for the dehumanization of the Negro lies in man's inability to keep his prejudice in check, not in the prejudice itself, which was unconsciously assimilated during the white man's youth.

This statement was made by John Howard Griffin, author of "Black Like Me," in a talk last night in Baker College. He went on to point out that the error in the past lay in failing to act rationally for fear of the expected outcome. And, moreover, the race problem must be resolved within our generation if we are to prevent fratricide.

Griffin stressed that the problem in communication which caused the racial double standard stems from childhood absorption of certain traditional conceptions which become inherent characteristics of the white man's system.

Dark Skinned Life

Griffin pointed to his own difficulty in freeing himself from these concepts not only intellectually, but emotionally and physically. He was capable of freeing himself totally from the white misconceptions only by taking up the often expressed challenge of Negro intellectuals: actually living the life of a dark skinned man.

His life among the Negroes gave Mr. Griffin a totally different picture of the Negro than he had ever envisioned as a white. He experienced the raw reality of violence in the lives of those Negroes that attempted to climb out of their dismal past. These were the "uppity" Negroes that were fighting the system. He felt the apathy that results from forced unemployment which is a direct result of skin color and not of personal qualifications.

Griffin's qualifications had always been good enough as a white, but black they were never sufficient to overcome the moral and mental presumptions blindly attributed to the Negro race as a whole.

Distrust of White Men

Only because of his dual life was Griffin able to understand that the stereotype attributed to all Negroes is a mystique the Negro is forced to accept due to a distrust in the motives of white men. Too often the Negro has been used against himself by the white man and as a result the Negro has grown immune to the soliciting of the GWB (Good White Buddy).

Griffin made an ironic comparison emphasizing the grave misunderstanding between the races. He explained that the white man is continually releasing biased statistics to support his belief that as a race the Negro is basically immoral. The Negro, on the other hand, when in the protection of his home, talks of the white as the most immoral of races for their lack of humanity in understanding their fellow men.

In concluding, Griffin pointed out that both the suppressor and the suppressed were to be the victims of this massive dehumanization. He compared our situation to the racial struggle in Germany where the racism of the SS and other hard core Nazis was in the end to make them victims of their own crimes.