

## Fitting into society today means being yourself

Students should focus on self-expression rather than the shallow eye of society

You're "acting white."  
You're "acting black."  
The behavior of "being black" became apparent to me in grade school.

As a child, "acting white" meant getting good grades, speaking with proper English and dancing without rhythm. "Acting black" meant making bad grades, using slang and wearing braided hair.

Only people of my own race accused me of "acting white."

I now realize these are damaging stereotypes about the black and white races.

No individual of any ethnicity should be accused of acting outside of his or her race. Stereotypes are harsh generalizations that only describe a group according to appearance and behavior, not individual character.

UNC Asheville junior Melissa Talley is one of many students accused of acting outside of her race.

"I have been accused of trying to talk 'white.' At that time, I didn't understand then what I know now," Talley said. "Being raised in a predominantly white neighborhood, I have been exposed to an entirely different environment than those who grew up in a predominantly black neighborhood."

The number of black high school dropouts decreased, but the number of black students in college increased since 1990, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Because we can all agree going to college is a favorable choice in our society, more black people today of the upper and lower classes obtain degrees.



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"I believe the influence to our people, the black community, is not always positive," Talley said. "It's all right to encourage our young generation that education is important. However, in order to obtain this, we must abide to their standard of acceptance."

Talley refers to the standards of "being black" as looking, speaking and acting "ethnic" or "ghetto."

If some black people do not project a stereotype that would apply to them, they should not be criticized.

Many black stereotypes only seem to refer to those of the lower class, which include things like being criminal, poor, lazy and ignorant.

Society won't take a black person seriously if they dress, sound and act like a criminal on the street.

Therefore, "acting black" around other races encourages these stereotypes.

For example, if a black person said, "I like watermelon because I am black," it justifies the stereotype. Saying, "I like watermelon because it's tasty," justifies an individual belief.

Based on experience, performing black stereotypes is not always accepted, especially if you are the minority.

Due to the low percentage of black students at UNCA, "acting

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black" seems unnecessary.

This doesn't mean minorities should disregard the cultural traditions of their race, but if a black person walked into an important interview with baggy jeans and without speaking proper English, they're not going to get the job.

According to junior Adam Bryant, no one ever accuses him of not "acting white" or "acting black."

"Whenever I see people trying to portray stereotypes, it is done as a joke. Even though it seems comical, it also seems very serious," Bryant said.

Some black people find it funny to speak articulate, like a stereotypical white person, and some white people find it funny to use slang, like a stereotypical black person. In any case, these generalizations are not comical when used to insult a whole race.

"I think people hold on to racial stereotypes to try to cover up the fact that they might be racist," Bryant said. "Most people feel accepted within their own environment of people who look, talk and act like them."

In other words, some minorities try to act according to the standards of their society.

If white people listen to hip-hop or if black people shop at Hollister to fit in, so be it. Everyone should express themselves according to their own self-interest, not others.

"I think the media plays an

extreme role in reference to racial identity," Bryant said. "You always see the portrayal of a stereotypical black, Asian, Hispanic or white person. Why should one person be responsible to represent their entire race?"

A lot of people don't recognize the extreme measures some people perform to feel socially accepted.

The amount of cosmetic procedures among all minority races increases as the number of cosmetic procedures for whites decreases, according to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons.

Cosmetic procedures for all races include rhinoplasty, skin-lightening treatment, lip, breast and buttock augmentation, according to the ASPS.

Getting cosmetic surgery to enhance beauty is ridiculous. No one should do anything this drastic to alter their beauty.

Many minorities may say they don't fulfill Americans' notion of beauty, but everyone should be content with the way they were created.

The media tells society what they should and should not look like based on stereotypes. This needs to stop.

The stereotypes portrayed do not represent everyone in a race.

Stereotypes all around are negative and should not be used. There are too many people in this world to generalize and put everyone in a box.