

Acting 'Ghetto' in College

Contributed by Keona Prude -- Black College Wire
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Are you stuck in your hood mentality?

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While in college, you are bound to meet people from different backgrounds and cultural settings. One image becoming more apparent to me is the "hood" or "ghetto" representation. On a daily basis, I hear someone saying "I'm from the streets," or "I'm from the hood." Being from the hood is not a problem. However, when you cannot differentiate between what's appropriate behavior in a college setting because you are stuck in your hood mentality, that's when it becomes an issue. I, myself, grew up in an inner-city ghetto, but upon entering college, I had to remove that frame of mind in order to be successful.

Walking around campus, I hear several conversations that I deem unsuitable for young African American students in college. I hardly ever hear topics that will stimulate our minds, unless I am in class. Often, I find myself irritated by the conversations my friends have. They have no redeeming value or substance.

Also, when I use certain words, they look at me confused and baffled. They often say, "Stop using those big words." Since we are in college, I feel as if we should have accumulated an extensive vocabulary, but many of my peers have not. When I ask why they do not know certain words, they say things like "we don't talk like that in my hood." However, what they need to realize, is they are not in their hood anymore. We are in a place for higher education. In addition, I find myself correcting my friends on their word usage; they use the wrong word or use it completely out of context. It makes them sound ignorant, which can be very annoying.

Not only is speech an issue, but attire is as well. Norfolk State University often has VIP speakers and other important people on campus. Many students miss opportunities of their life because of how they look. No, you should not judge a book by its cover, but you should not look like you just got out of bed. When students get involved in school and semi-professional activities, certain things need to be cut out. Extemporaneous hair colors, tattoos, piercings and club clothes should be at a minimum. I am all for unique expression, but there is a time and place for everything. Several students complain about dressing up for presentations because they feel like it is a waste of time. I have even heard people say they do not own business clothes. When I dress up, I feel a sense of pride; I feel good about myself. Not only does it look nice, it makes me feel important and professional.

Where you came from should not be the determining factor of how you act, think or speak. Unfortunately, that seems to be case these days. We, as college students, need to grow up and realize where we are trying to go in life. We cannot accomplish certain things by acting certain ways; we are in college to practice for our future.

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Keona Prude writes for The Spartan Echo, the Norfolk State University student newspaper, which originally published this article.

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