

JOKES AND BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS

A Collection with Interviews

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The intent of this paper is to present jokes told by black Americans which relate to the black view of white Americans and of some aspects of white culture. The main purpose of collecting jokes of this sort was to discern why the informants tell the jokes, how these jokes relate to black American attitudes about white America, and how the informants feel these jokes serve their purposes and the needs of their audience. Much attention has been given to the ensuing conversations with the informants in hopes of eliciting from them their attitudes toward the jokes and their opinions on the "black problem" in this country. Thus we may be able to see some ways in which this pressing problem might relate to the types of jokes being narrated. It is hoped that the reader will achieve a greater understanding of why these types of jokes are being told by black Americans. It is also to be hoped that a greater awareness and understanding may be achieved by whites about blacks in America through the ideas and attitudes expressed. Indeed many of the attitudes reflected in this paper are among the dominant lines of thought expounded by the Black Power movement in America.

THE JOKES AND THE INTERVIEWS

INFORMANT 1: RONALD TYLOR*

The first group of ~~three~~ jokes was collected from Ronald Tylor on November 4, 1968. Mr. Tylor is a 23 year old graduate student at Indiana University. He is a native of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and gives his religion as Orisha Voodoo. The jokes were collected at the apartment of the informant, although I had originally discussed collecting possibilities and his general attitudes earlier at a dance. The informant told the jokes over tea and coffee, and afterwards we discussed why he felt that while people were "funny."

The Jokes

1. There's this uh- black cat from the north, ya know, he's a bad nigga, and he went down to the south, ya know, driving his uh- white Eldorado Cadillac, and he drove into this gas station in Southern Indiana. Right in front of him was another black man in an old beat-up pick-up truck. And the filling station attendant walked out and he said uh- whatcha want boy? And the black cat in the pick-up truck said uh- gimme a dolla wortha regula. And the station attendant said, gimme a dolla's worth of regula - what? The black man said, ah uh, please mista charlie. So mista charlie gave him a dolla's worth of regula and charged him a dolla fifty and said naw git on out a heah boy. So the black cat in the pick-up truck left. So then the nigga from the north, he pulls up in this uh- white Eldorado Cadillac, in his sharkskin suit, silk socks, Stetson hat, Stacy Adams shoes, just clean, you know. And uh- right away the white boy is really impressed, you know. So the nigga reaches over and pushes a button and the window

*The names of the informants have been changed.

slides down a little bit and the white cat say, whatddyah want boy? And the nigga say uh- fill it up. And the white boy say fill it up, what? He say fill it up man, I ain't got all day, come on, fill it up. The white boy say, fill it up, what? With gas, fool, come on I ain't got all day. So the white boy went inside the filling station and he got his rifle and he came back out with his rifle and he looked dead in the nigga's eye and he pointed over at a bush about 200 yards away and he said, nigga, see that fly on that bush 200 yards away? And the nigga say, yea, I see it; so the white boy took the rifle, aimed and fired and he killed this fly without touching the bush and he looked back at the nigga waitin for the nigga to respond with uh- if you please mista charlie but instead the nigga pushed this button and rolled the window all the way down and leaned over and pushed a button to the glove compartment, and pulled out a saucer. And he said hold that boy, to the white cat, and he reached over to his glove compartment and pulled out an apple and he reached in his inside coat pocket and he pulled out a razor and he threw the apple in the air and he grabbed the razor and sliced around in the air with all kinda fast beautiful motions so quick and so fast, that he peeled the apple, cored the apple, and sliced it so thin in that split second with that razor, that when it hit the saucer it was applesauce. And the white boy said, what uh- what was that uh-regula or ethyl?

2. There's this nigga who went to the 'Sip,' you know, uh- Mississippi, that is, and uh- he was wandering around to different restaurants and things like that, after the civil rights bill had passed, you know. So he sat down at one restaurant counter and the waitress said uh- I'm sorry but we don't serve niggas here. And he said, well, you're going to serve me and she said well I'll go get the manager, so she went and got the manager and the manager came over and he said uh- Ain't you heard what the waitress said, we don't serve niggas heah. An the black cat said well look, you're going to serve me cause I'm the president of the local chapter of the NAACP and if you don't serve me we're going to picket your store and we're going to sit in here. So the white dude said, ahh, ahh, all right, I'll serve ya, I'll serve ya, what you want? The nigga said, I want a fried chicken. So he said, ahh, all right. So while the cook was frying the chicken the manager went over and talked to some young toughs about town and then he went on back inside. About twenty-five minutes later, the chicken was done and the waitress brought it out and sat it on the nigga's plate. And the nigga put the little napkin around his neck and about that time about seven or eight toughs that was standin' in the corner, walked up and surrounded the nigga, you know, and he's sittin' there and he looked and he saw 'em. And they said, goan nigga, goan, its yo chicken, you ordered it, goan, but the manager told us, whatever you do that chicken, we goan do to vou. So the black man looked around at 'em a coupla times and he picked up the salt and he sprinkled salt on the chicken, put the salt down and he looked at 'em a coupla times and he picked up the chicken in his hands and he rolled it around, and around in his hands til the tail was up, and then he kissed it, smack. And he looked at 'em a coupla times.

3. They workin' down in this general store, ya see, down some where, in some southern state, they all alike. And uh- aw, this was a real hick town. The dudes around the general store would sit around, you know, and be talkin' nonsense. So they were all sittin' around one day, so uh- one day, one of 'em (all of 'em were white) proposed that they would have a penis weighing contest since uh- the manager had just got a new scale for weighing meat,

so they decided to have a little contest, you know. Course there was po' Sam over in the corner, he was the nigga they had hired to do all the work, you know, sweeping the floor. So they said come on, everybody put in their dolla, you know, there was about twenty of 'em I suppose, so everybody put in a dolla and the one who had the heaviest one would get all the money. So po' Sam was over there workin' and they said, come on over here Sam, put you dolla in. But he said, naw, naw, thats alright I don't want to get in on it. They said, come on Sam, put yo dolla in, you wanta keep yo job heah? He said, aw yea, I wanna keep my job. So he put his dolla in cause they figured they was just goan git another dolla from another nigga. So anyway they started weighing and there's this one cat in town, his name was John the lover, you know, and John the lover was supposed to have the biggest thing around. So he threw it on the scale and his thing was fourteen pounds. And they said, damn, John, you sho got a biggun, John, look like you done won all the money. Yea, but, then there was ole Sam, Samuel, not Sam the sweeper; this was a white boy named Sam and he figured he was a lover too cause he slept with everybody's wife in the county so he figured he musta had him somethin'. So he threw it up on the scale but it only weighed about thirteen and a half pounds, you know, so he said, well I guess uh- uh- I didn't win that so everybody figured that ole lovin' John had all the money, you know. So they went around weighin' and everybody had various weights around eight pounds, nine pounds, etcetera, etcetera. Then somebody said, aw wait, we done forgot ole po' Sam the sweeper. So they said, come on over here Sam. And Sam said, uh- uh- naw, naw, that's alright, that's okay, I don't want to get in on it. Come on over here Sam, you want to keep yo job? Sam said, aw yeah, I wanna keep my job. They said, okay Sam, weigh it. So Sam took it out and threw it on the scale and it broke the scale, boy. So they said, damn, look like ole po' Sam done won all the money. So they gave Sam the money and Sam went runnin' home to Nellie his wife. So he broke in and said, Nellie, Nellie, look at all the money I done won down at the general store and Nellie say, Sam you been gamblin'? He say, naw, naw, Nellie I waten gamblin'. She say, how you win this money? What you doin' wit all this money? How'd you win this money? He said, uh, well uh, uh, uh, uh, we had a contest. She say what kinda contest was it? He say, it was a duh, uh, uh, a, a, dick weighing contest. She say, you mean you done won all this money showin' yo dick? He say, HUH, I only showed half of it.

The Interview

Collector: The jokes that you told me you knew at that dance, where did you first hear them?

Informant: Oh, around; I can't really remember exactly where I first heard them. Oh I think usually at bullshit sessions, you know.

C: I see; why do you usually tell them and where?

I: I tell jokes about white people cause they're funny. I tell 'em when I'm with the fellas. Depending on the company though, I sometimes tell 'em around females, you know, when we're all high.

C: Because white people are funny or because the jokes are funny?

I: Well, because number 1, white people are funny and number 2, because the jokes are funny. Well, a lot of the jokes aren't necessarily funny. The jokes a lot of times are not on white people. Many times they about black people, uh- on Chinese or Jews or something like that. But, sometimes, you know, it's a way of relief. If you can laugh at someone then you don't

have to hate 'em so much.

C: Oh I see; I take it that you don't particularly care for them?

I: For whom?

C: White people.

I: Oh I don't mind them. They're negligible you know.

C: I see; they're negligible?

I: Um hum.

C: Why have you gotten so wrapped up in this black nationalist movement?
Oh I don't really mean wrapped up

I: Oh, I'm definitely wrapped up in it. That's a good statement. Well, because I don't believe we're going to get anything through white America. I don't believe that we're going to get anything unless we can address the power structure in America as a group of people, you know. As long as we have these little fractionated and divided organizations they don't really constitute enough numbers to really make any demands on the government. And it's obvious that the government is not going to do anything for us. It hasn't done anything, oh let's see, for about say for 200 years when it could have. It's not going to do anything for us now.

C: Oh yes, I remember, not too long ago, that I had told you that I had gone to hear the lecture on the "supposed myth of black sexual superiority" and you told me at that time that I should have stood up during the lecture and told everyone that black men are sexually superior. Don't you remember telling me that?

I: Oh, yea, you started expounding about the sexual myth, and I said you should have told the lecturer that all of it's true, you know. Because it is true despite how it became true, you know, uh- no matter what you say about well uh- a person's body is a person's body. But if its wrapped up in somebody's mind that this particular body is superior uh- more superior than this particular body and everybody thinks that, then the body IS superior. It's like God, you know; everybody thinks there's a God.

C: Would you say that it's all psychological, then?

I: I wouldn't say that its ALL psychological, but I

C: Then, exactly what is it that you're trying to say?

I: Okay; well, it goes into a big long, long, thing about uh- how black people were allowed to use their bodies, you know, I mean slavery, etcetera, etcetera, you know, they became menial people you know, and uh- the white people they didn't do any work, didn't use their bodies and they tried to excell in the area of the mind. And they became very unused to using their bodies, you know, and uh- like they can't dance, you know, I don't care what you say, you know, there's a lot of 'em who will get out and try a little thing but they really can't dance, you know, and it wasn't until the twist came along that they really tried dancing and the Beatles, you know; before then they wouldn't even try. And uh- it's just that black people have been conditioned to, you know, responding physically and white people have been conditioned to intellectualize across the experience and over the experience, you know, and try to pretend that a man is defined by his ability to use fourteen syllable words, instead of his ability to beat somebody's ass, you know. And if you're superior in this aspect of the body, the strength of the body, then I suppose quite naturally you'll be superior sexually, you know. And even if this weren't true, it's so

hung up in everybody's mind, black and white in America, that for all practical purposes all the mythology is true.

C: What about yourself? How do you rate yourself as far as sex is concerned?

I: Rate myself? I don't understand what you mean.

C: All right then, what category would you put yourself in if there was a grading scale from good to bad, using the numbers one through ten?

I: I couldn't do that, I mean I've never rated myself like that before. I don't like comparisons.

C: All right, fair enough, then do you psychologically feel you are superior sexually or physically, or just how do you feel about YOURSELF, SEXUALLY?

I: I've been told that I'm quite good.

C: Have females actually come out and told you that?

I: Yeah.

C: What about that joke in which Sam wins all the money because of his huge size?

I: What about it?

C: Well you use comparisons in that joke; if you don't like comparisons then why do you use them in your jokes?

I: Ah hell, jokes are meant to be funny.

C: In that same joke, what does Sam mean to you?

I: White Sam? the white or black Sam?

C: The black man that won all of the money. Do you think he is the typical stereotype?

I: Yes, I guess I might say that he is, you know. Most white people think that we are big, black, stupid and ugly. And I guess that ole po' Sam kinda would fall in that category. But in a way, Sam is actually the smart one though, after all; he did win all the money. This all sorta fits in with what I said earlier about white people being so damned funny.

C: How is that?

I: Well they try to dance like niggas, you know, and they look funny trying to dance like niggas, you know. And uh- they're really stupid in assuming a lot of things that they assume which makes them very funny, you know, like there were people on that Black America series on TV who went along saying that uh- oh when they had the nigras on their plantation that the nigras were happy, you know, and they danced and did all that, you know, and this ole fool couldn't see that the reason that the niggas was dancin' and singin' while they were using their sledge hammers was so that they could get rid of some of their ambition and some of their desire to use the sledge hammer on this white boy, you see. And of course they thought the niggas was happy you know, but it was really a cover up for what they were really thinking, you know. Just like ole po' Sam; he was smart cause he only showed half of his, uh- rod, you know. He didn't want them dumb white boys to know how powerful he really was.

C: I see, I see. What does "John the lover" mean to you? Why do you think that was important enough to be included in the joke?

I: HMM, let me see; well, for one thing them white boys and girls are

pretty promiscuous. I hate to generalize like that but they always talk about black people having such low morals and all that, you know, they seem to forget that we as a group of people are only products of our environment, you know, and since we only had them to copy from it was only natural that some of us might follow suit. They blamed us for what a lot of their "genteel society" folks was actually doing behind each others' backs. It was them who first brought about that "double standard," you know. "John the lover" simply personifies the hypocrisy of their society.

C: Okay, I understand. Do you feel that "John the lover" typifies the whole of their society?

I: Yeah, I would definitely say the majority. It brings attention to their degeneracy.

C: What would you say was the most important function of that joke or what aspects of that joke do you think really come across when you tell it to someone else?

I: Well, actually, the most important things about that joke is the fact that it shows how dumb them white suckers really are. Here they are with nothin' to do so they have a silly ass DICK weighin' contest. The niggas are all out workin' too hard to be thinkin' about having such a stupid contest. Plus this, they end up losing all of their money to that big nigga who is supposed to be the epitome of "nigga-ness." And lastly, it shows that sexually they ain't worth a damn and that "stupid" nigga has won on all three counts.

C: Are you happy for "nigga Sam" then?

I: Yeah, in a way, but he still wasn't as domineering in that joke like he should have been. Like, in that first joke I told, that nigga from the north really made that white boy look like a fool.

C: Oh yeah, I see what you mean. By the way, why did you call him a "cat"?

I: Well it's cool to be called a "cat," you know, hip, or the new term is really "in."

C: I take it that you really approved of the actions of that black cat from the north?

I: Yeah, I really do. For one thing, he's the typical stereotype that whites have about city niggas, you know. They think that all any nigga wants to do is to make a little money and then spend it all on a big car, like that Cadillac. Only in the joke, it shows that that city nigga ain't so dumb after all. Also he's clean to boot.

C: What do you mean by "clean?"

I: You know, uh- really dressed sharp, uh- pressed, let me see, he really knows how to dress with good expensive clothes that match. In other words, he dresses with very good taste.

C: O, I see. When you mentioned that he was a "bad nigga," does that mean the same as cool or clean?

I: Yeah, about the same.

C: What does that black man in the pick-up truck mean to you or what makes him important?

I: He typifies the "black sambo" type, you know, the old accomodating "colored" man. He's important because he shows that there are two types

of blacks in this country today, the passive "uncle Tom" type and on the other hand you have the type of black man who isn't going to take any shit from anybody. In a way, this last type sort of fits in with my views on violence.

C: What type of violence?

I: You know, organized to help the black man in this country. To help him get that white monkey off his back.

C: I don't understand what you mean. What do you mean by white monkey?

I: I mean that white leech that's been bleeding my people dry. He's been promising a whole lot but he ain't done nothin' yet.

C: Why did you put an emphasis on the word "colored" in your statement about the passive accomodating colored man?

I: Because as I said before, there are two types of blacks in this country, the so-called colored who would prefer being called colored since it doesn't seem so close to black and more closer to being white. And then there's the black man that's proud of being black and being called black; he doesn't try to assimilate his cultural value within the mainstream of the white society by trying to be something he ain't and by demeaning his own values by attempting to replace them with something that is close to whiteness. What does colored mean? It means something that's mixed. Even though I know that as a race we are quite mixed physically, as a cultural entity we are quite unique and distinctive.

C: I see what you mean. How does that black cat in your joke fit in with your views on violence? Do you think that would really solve the problem?

I: The way it is, is that being in America and being defined as an American citizen and being granted by the Constitution uh- the rights of an American citizen in America, then there's no reason for me to be able to exercise these rights. But violence is not the issue; the only issue is my rights and I'll go to any resort necessary to obtain my rights. In that joke about the dude from the north, well that cat is simply showin' that he ain't afraid of nothing. And that's the essence of the whole black problem in this country today. Blacks, I'll say most blacks, especially our generation, are no longer afraid to stand up and take what belongs to us through our association with this country and that is simply the rights that were defined in the Constitution. Even though this joke depicted a northern nigga, it's true of all the blacks in this country today, except for those few who haven't made up their mind on whether or not they want to play white or be proud of what they are. Even in that second joke I told you about that black man going to that restaurant in Mississippi he showed those whites that he was no fool. No type of threats are going to stop us blacks from showing the rest of the world how hypocritical and sick these white Americans really are.

C: I noticed that when you referred to particular white persons you spoke of them as being "boys" or that "White boy." Do you say this because many whites have called black men "boys" for so long? What is your reason for saying this?

I: No, not really. The reason why I say this is because I define a man as number 1, somebody who will protect his women and uh- someone who treats other individuals as men. And these white boys don't protect their women. All they protect is their dollar, and they treat everybody else as though they were devils.

C: In your first joke you said that the gas station was in Southern Indiana, was there any particular reason for using Southern Indiana?

I: Yeah, for one thing, as far as I'm concerned Southern Indiana is grossly prejudiced. In fact, there aren't too many places in the north that aren't. Also the gas station attendant typified how ridiculous these whites really are. The fact that he placed so much value on the blacks saying "if you please mista charlie."

C: What about specific whites that you know? How are the white students in your classes? Do they fall in the category of most of the whites you described in the jokes?

I: Well, no. Not all of them at least but then those few only get to know you on a very elementary level. They don't care to really associate with you outside of class because their true opinions of you have already been formed a long time ago, when they were kids.

C: Do you know any that you would call friends?

I: No, there aren't any that I would call a friend. They're entirely too two-faced. You could never depend on them if you were in a tight squeeze.

C: How do you think those jokes would be received by your black peers? Do you think your black brothers would like them?

I: Oh, I know they would. Mainly because even though they are jokes and meant to be laughed at, they paint quite an ugly picture of what has evolved here in America among the two races. I'm sure that you could find actual instances of similar if not the same circumstances that have actually taken place. Like I said before, a black man has to laugh in order to keep his sanity.

Observations on Ronald Tylor's Jokes

There is one theme which dominates two of the jokes told by Ronald Tylor. This dominant theme is the sheer foolishness of the whites involved in the first two jokes. Although this same theme is present in the third joke, it does not assume a central role in this last joke. In the third joke it might be called a counter-theme running concurrently with the major or most important theme. In many cases these minor themes aid or influence the significance of the major or dominant theme.

In examining joke 1, I found that it was significant because of the many counter-themes running through it. One counter-theme of this joke is the fact that the Negro from the north is so "clean," to use the informant's phrase. The fact of the Negro being so well dressed serves to demonstrate a stereotype which most Negroes can readily identify. He is a figure quite familiar to the average American black and there is something about him which draws contempt as well as admiration. Even with all his finery, he is still not highly regarded in the black community, as he represents a pimp figure or even the image of gigolo or gambler. Even Tylor, despite his admiration for this character, realizes that this type of Negro is one of the "typical" negative stereotypes harbored by whites. This is clear when he states: "They [whites] think that all any nigga wants to do is to make a little money and then spend it all on a big car--only in the joke it shows that that city nigga ain't so dumb after all." This is, however, a stereotype that many middle-class blacks also have of their lower-class brothers. Mr. Tylor also felt that even though the black "cat" had these possibly negative attributes, this black "dude" was

still "smart." He made the gas station attendant too, feel, and act foolish.

It is clear that Tylor feels alienated from the Negro in the old pick-up truck. Yet this character is made to look humorous in a rather contemptuous way. He is what Tylor and most blacks today would call a "typical Tom." Likewise, the gas station attendant is definitely a stereotype of what many blacks would call a "red necked cracker." He is not only dull-witted but also sadistic and receives obvious pleasure and a sense of superiority from the subjugation of his black victims. He appears ridiculous to the point of absurdity because he places so much value on being called by a particular respectful title. Another important counter-theme in this joke is the black "cat's" use of the razor. The Negro has long been regarded as quite skilled and adept at using razors, knives, and other cutlery. The black "cat" fits well into this Negro stereotype since his agility with the razor helps him to perform an impossible feat, that of changing an apple to applesauce in front of the awed attendant. That the black's more primitive weapon defeats the white's rifle would appear to be a factor also.

The second joke, which also uses the dominant theme of revealing the absurdity and foolishness of whites, is somewhat similar to the first joke in that it also uses "typical" stereotypes. These stereotypes are the waitress, manager, and the young toughs in the restaurant, and all represent that part of southern white America which was so greatly publicized during the numerous civil rights marches and sit-ins which took place in the south a few years ago. This joke, which portrays the aggressiveness and bitterness of the whites involved, also demonstrates the reserved "coolness" of the Negro NAACP president. Since Tylor mentioned that this Negro ventured into the restaurant after the civil rights bill had been passed, it is evident that this particular Negro is using his position and his threats to assess the value and power of the recently passed bill. When the NAACP president appears "cornered" by his white antagonists, he remains calm and calculating in the face of potential disaster. He kisses the tail of the chicken, thus indicating that these white roughnecks could just as well kiss his ass. Thus the NAACP man saves face at the same time that he saves his own "ass." Once again the whites look ridiculous in their attempts to threaten a black man. These white stereotypes fit well into the "cracker" category and thus the joke helps the black man justify his fight for equality by featuring disreputable, violent and openly hostile whites.

This joke functions as a mild tension reliever for the black telling the joke as well as for the blacks listening to it. It is not as aggressive in nature as the first joke, but it does illustrate the same kind of "ultra-cool," "cunning" black "cat." However, this black "cat" is a respected man in his community.

The third joke is similar to the first two in that it also uses stereotypes, and has as one of its themes the foolishness and absurdity of whites. In this joke, however, the above theme is not the dominant characteristic of the joke. The dominant theme here is that of sexual superiority. This joke is significant because one of its main characters is an accommodating "Tom" type, "po' ole nigga Sam." The Negro, Sam, has a twofold function. He does represent the contemptible "Tom" but nevertheless redeems himself by triumphing over the whites and then by telling his wife Nelly that he

only showed half of his private parts. Thus he exhibits his crafty and cunning character. By acting dumb and, as Tylor put it, as "the epitome of 'nigganess,'" Sam becomes a symbol of sexual superiority woven more or less within the stereotype of the black "buck."

An important counter-theme is one in which "John the lover" and white Sam symbolize the supposed promiscuity of many whites. Not only is this supposedly inherent in lower-class whites, but is also supposedly prevalent among the "high society folks." As before, the "cracker" stereotype appears in this joke through those whites who are "sittin' around and talkin' nonsense" in the rural general store. They appear ridiculous in that they decide to have an absurd "dick weighin'" contest. By using black Sam to get his money they figure on once again outsmarting a "po' nigga." However, they themselves are taken over by their own game.

Nelly, Sam's wife, is another stereotype, of the chattering, questioning, domineering black woman. Not only is she not appreciative of the money Sam has received but she must know every detail as to how he acquired the money. She functions as an extra catalyst to make the joke funny.

In this type of joke, the listeners more or less expect that "po' ole Sam" will outdo all the whites by his huge size. However, the fact that he only showed half of himself indicates that Sam did not want to show his true sexual power. This aspect of Sam's personality is what Ronald Tylor feels is particularly "smart." He outsmarts the whites by winning all of the money, but he also is crafty enough to realize that by revealing his true sexual potential he might only make himself more vulnerable to the maliciousness of the whites. In a sense, this last part of the joke is related to what Tylor said about why many Negroes conspicuously danced and played in the old south. He states that "the reason that the niggas was dancin' and singin' while they were using their sledge hammers was so that they could get rid of some of their ambition and some of their desire to use the sledge hammer on this white boy." In relation to this last part of the joke, Mr. Tylor's statement helps us to realize that there has always been an attitude of crafty guile in the everyday relations that many blacks have had with whites, especially in the south, an attitude definitely reflected in much black folklore.

It is difficult to surmise the effects that these jokes would have if told in the presence of a group, black or white. I can only guess that if these jokes were told in the presence of a black group they would probably be interpreted in much the same way that Tylor interpreted them. It would no doubt be interesting to record the reactions of whites after they had heard the same jokes. But to speculate here on their hypothetical reactions would be pointless.

INFORMANT 2: KEITH NEWTON*

Keith Newton, who related four jokes, is a native of Raleigh, North Carolina, and was at the time of collection (December 16, 1968) an undergraduate student at Indiana University. Mr. Newton is 22, Black American, and a member of no particular church, although he regards himself as "fairly religious." The jokes were collected at his apartment after the informant and his girlfriend had finished dinner. Present also were two white friends of Mr.

*The informants' names have been changed.

Newton. As we sat around I asked if anyone knew any jokes and both of the informant's white friends told several, after which Mr. Newton told his four. All of the jokes were recorded, but those told by the whites were not in any way racially "tinged." The whites seemed to enjoy Mr. Newton's jokes, but had left before I conducted my interview with him.

The Jokes

1. One time there was this girl and her mother, they stayed together, her father was dead. And the girl's mother always told her that when she got sixteen, she would let her go out on her first date. So it just so happened that the girl turned sixteen and the big girls were having a party, ya know, and she wanted to go out with the big girls. And it just so happened that she went out with a colored boy that night. So the girl's mother waited up that night waiting for her daughter to come home. So, finally that night about 12:30 the girl came home and she just walked slowly past her mama. Her mama say, chile, what the matta wit you, come here. She say, what you want mama. I want you to tell me everything that happened tonight. What's wrong? Why you acting so strange? The girl say mama, my new dress is tore, my titties are sore, and I don't think I'll be able to pee no more.

2. One time there were these two hillbillies that stayed up in the mountains, a granddaughter and her grandmother. And the granddaughter got a colored boyfriend from near by. And uh- she wanted to have sex with her boyfriend but she couldn't think of a way that she could to it without her grandmother finding out about it. So she finally told her boyfriend that she was going to cut a hole in the floor and for him to come that night and stick himself up through the floor and she was going to get on him. So that night about nine o'clock she cut a hole in the floor, and sho 'nough he came and stuck himself up through the floor and she got on him. And they were having a good time. Finally, the grandmother came in and said, granddaughter, what in the world are you doing? Get out of here. And the boy was under the floor and he didn't know what was going on so he just left himself sticking up in there. So the old grandma looked around and she didn't see nobody lookin' at her, so she took off all her clothes and she jumped on. And it started getting good to the dude under the floor and after a while he just started risin' and risin' so the grandmother said, granddaughter, granddaughter, come here quick and bring the axe. The granddaughter came in with the axe and said, what you want me to do, chop it down? The grandmother said, hell, naw, chop a hole in the ceiling, I'm goan ride this mutha-fucka to heaven.

3. One time there were these three men left on this island alive and they didn't have but one sandwich. Since they knew they were going to die, they all agreed that all of them could not eat the sandwich and get full so they decided that they would go to sleep and whoever had the best dream would get the sandwich when they woke up the next morning. So the next day they got up, ya know, and the white man say, well, I dreamed I had eight million dollars and I was the richest man in the world. The other two men said, ahh, how can you dream that you had eight million dollars and be the richest man in the world? That ain't no good. So the Jew man say, I dreamed I had ten beautiful wives and all of 'em were treatin' me good. So the other two said, ahh, that ain't no good. So the white man and Jew man said, black man, what you dream? He say, I dreamed you all were trying to shit me so I got up and ate that sandwich.

4.. There was this honky family and this man had a daughter who had just turned sixteen. And her father had always promised her that when she turned sixteen he was going to have her satisfied. So his daughter said, daddy, daddy, you know what you told me, that when I turned sixteen you were going to have me satisfied. So her father said alright. So her father went down to the corner to look for a suitable man. First, he sent a honky man to his daughter but she say, daddy, he too little. Next, he sent a Jew man to his daughter but she say, daddy he too fat. Finally, he sent a black man to his daughter and said that he was just right. So the girl's father waited on the corner. He was waiting for them to get through. So after a while it was about twelve o'clock midnight. And finally his little son came runnin' down to the corner and said, daddy, daddy, you know that black man you sent home, well, he done satisfied sister, sister sue, mary lou, he done packed me and he waitin' on you, so get yo ass on down there.

The Interview

Collector: Why were most of your jokes racial jokes? Did you tell them specifically because your white friends were here?

Informant: No, I don't think so. I suppose I told them because I just know more racial jokes than any other types.

C: Why is that? What reason do you think has helped you to remember so many racial jokes?

I: I really don't know, I guess it could be because racial jokes during this day and age are just funnier, that's all.

C: Okay. Why do you tell these types of jokes?

I: To get a laugh.

C: Why do you think other black people might tell these same jokes or other types of racial jokes which would be similar to these?

I: Well there's a reason for it. I would say that jokes are basically the verbal transmission of a particular people's experience. So I would say that these black jokes which are derogatory towards whites simply tell you something about black experience in this country as far as white people are concerned. The jokes that I told, the racial ones that is, are part of a myth that has been perpetuated by whites against blacks and one that blacks have partaken of and have come to dislike. These jokes represent a true feeling, a human feeling. But it's the kind of thing that's self-defeating. These are negative jokes. It's a kind of thing where black people turn hate against themselves because they were not able to externalize the hate that they felt for their white oppressors. So they started to hate themselves and they adopted this sort of superior sex attitude about themselves. This was only a carry-over from the established principle of white supremacy which said that black men were very animalistic and sexually charged and this kind of thing.

C: If you feel that these jokes are self-defeating and negative, then why do you tell them?

I: Well, because they're funny and to get a laugh.

C: I see. Well, what do you think about the myth that black people are supposed to be superior sexually? You can be very truthful.

I: (Laughs) Oh, I'm going to be truthful all right. A black person is

not superior sexually. A man is what he thinks he is. And this is what the consequence of slavery and exploitation has been. It has been one that breeds super humans. As of now, black people probably could be sexually superior although I doubt it, because everybody shares a common human experience which is devoid of color, and I think sex is one of these things. It's functional. It's of man to be sexually oriented. But I don't think that there's a necessity for black men to be superior but I think it's one of the possible effects of exploitation of a superior complex which trapped them in the socio-economic position which blacks are in.

C: I don't mean to be personal but what do you think about yourself? Do you think that sexually you're really good in comparison to the average white man?

I: I think it all relates to understanding oneself, of one's environment and where one came from. I don't compare myself with anyone, especially somebody white. I, you know, I, seek to know myself. I think I fulfill this pretty well, in all terms, in all aspects. So that I'm not concerned whether I'm equal or superior to a white cat. That's not the basis of how I judge my sexual life. It's really immaterial. And this is what black pride is about. This is what throwing off the chains of three hundred years of servitude is about. It's about coming to realize that your being is not contingent upon a white experience.

C: You mentioned that you would not want to compare yourself sexually with anyone. Then you said that you especially would not want to compare yourself to somebody white. Why is that? Why did you say, especially somebody white?

I: Okay, that's relatively an easy question. Uh, for all these years that I mentioned, three hundred or so odd years, we were trapped in a white experience, a white life-style and through this we were never fully able to realize our being, our life-styles. So that, once you have conquered that, once you realize that you do have a distinctive cultural pattern, a distinctive cultural experience on a black basis then this is addressing oneself to the question of color and realizing that there remains a humanitarian point of view devoid of color. When black becomes positive, then at that point you have conquered the white experience. So that, THAT becomes negated, so that you dedicate yourself then to defining yourself within yourself. Which says that if I have to compare, then I compare among my own. Because I am black and I relate to black. So that when I say ESPECIALLY A WHITE PERSON, this means that that is a phase past. That's the first phase of rediscovery. That's an identity that was lost through three hundred years of subjugation. The primary task of every black person in this country today, and that is the thing of not divorcing oneself from white culture but to realize that the white culture has taken on an assumed role. This has been put on top of what we are. So to divorce oneself from that is to look back into the base and look back into the beginning. I guess you could say that in a sense it is "a going home."

C: Alright, you said that you don't think that black people should divorce themselves from white culture so I take it that you're not a separatist.

I: Oh, I'm definitely a separatist.

C: Well, if you are a separatist then how do you explain what you said about white culture?

I: (Laughs) Okay, let's examine separation. Separation doesn't necessarily mean geographic relocation or all these things. What it means in terms

of relating to our present condition and in terms to this country, is that black people, Spanish people, Italians, everybody who happens to dwell in this country can call themselves an American, and in this we have a common bond, a common bond, and in this we have a common experience, the American experience. So when I say separation I do not mean geographic separation, though I would not fail to advocate this either, you know. But it does mean that blacks have a right to define themselves and to determine their destinies. It means that black people must determine who they are and where they want to go and they must do this from a black base, from a black perspective. Then all groups in this country must realize that they have a common stake, a common point of experience, which is the American one. This means that everybody looks across the board and realizes that as a black I can realize my blackness and cannot relate my blackness in totality with your whiteness and etcetera. But this means that we look at each other saying that we do not understand each other fully but that we can work to understand the common experience, the American experience. And that's, that's very definitely separation. Very definitely separation. I think that this is the sort of utopian atmosphere that we would seek to achieve. I think in the interim we will have to strive for uh- geographic separation, partitioning and all that.

C: Keeping in mind what you said about separation, what do you personally think about interracial dating and marriages?

I: I think uh- anybody who can't deal with his own before self-discovery is deluding himself or herself. Anybody who cannot deal with his own people through self-discovery is experiencing a hell of a psychological trauma. I'm not saying that interracial dating or marriages are wrong. I think it is wrong if the people involved have not come to the discovery of themselves. Anybody that's black and dating a white person, if he has to compromise any of his black being to experience a white thing, well then I think he's definitely lost. I know, I'm speaking from personal experience.

C: I see. If you had a daughter would you mind her marrying someone white?

I: (Laughs) Yeah, I'd mind. But in that position as a father all I would be able to do was offer counsel. I would just hope that I had raised her well enough so that she would understand herself well enough so that if she went into that type of situation she would definitely know that she was black and anybody that took her, if the cat was white he would understand that she was black first. He would not look at her as being a white woman in a black skin.

C: What about your friends that just left, do you think that they would be that understanding?

I: Yeah, I think so. I've known them for quite a while and I really think that they do understand the racial situation in this country. Of course they are exceptions.

C: How do you think they really felt about those jokes you told? Do you think that you might have offended them?

I: No, I don't think so. Hell, we always kid around like that. That's certainly not the first time. They understand.

C: I see; what if they had started telling jokes about black people, do you think that would have bothered you?

I: Naw, naw, I don't think that it would. Like I said, we always kid around like that.

C: Why did most of the jokes that you told demean white sexuality?

I: Oh, I don't know, it just makes the jokes funnier, that's all.

C: Those jokes that you told about the young girl going out with the Negro boy and the one about the grandmother having sex with her granddaughter's boyfriend and also the one where the father finds a man to satisfy his daughter - well, do you really believe that whites are that promiscuous and have such low morals?

I: No, not really. Like I said before, the jokes are meant to be funny. But I do know that a lot of white girls are pretty wild that way. They are pretty forward.

C: How do you know that? That's a pretty rash statement.

I: Well, I basically know from my own experience. I've dated quite a few in the past. And the ones that I've dated were pretty blunt about a lot of things, especially sex.

C: But couldn't you say that you would find that among any race and not just one in particular?

I: Yeah, that's true, but I've found that white girls are just more willing to jump into bed. A lot of 'em do it because of that sexual myth, and then a lot of 'em do it because they feel it's the thing to do and then a lot of 'em do it because I think they think that's what most black boys expect them to do. Black women are much harder to get in bed. I don't know how they react to white men though; they probably act just like them white girls do to us black boys. I guess it's because we're all opposites. They say opposites attract, ya know.

C: Hmmm. In that one joke you said that the sixteen year old girl came home from her date and told her mother that she wasn't able to go to the toilet any more and that her breasts were sore - why is that? What do you think her colored boyfriend had done to her?

I: Well, as far as that joke is concerned, that black boy had really put it on her mind.

C: I don't understand, he had put what on her mind?

I: (Laughs) His ... you know, his ..., they had intercourse. And he really did the job.

C: Oh, I see. Do you think a white boy could have really done the job?

I: Oh, yeah, I suppose he could. It's funnier to use a black boy since most people think black men are supposed to be sexually superior.

C: Do you really think that hillbillies don't care who they have sex with? That joke about the grandmother having sex with her granddaughter's boyfriend was pretty low.

I: I don't really know what they actually do, but you know how you hear that real low class people and high society people will do anything. Well, in a way I don't doubt that.

C: Do you mean in relation to white people or would you include low class Negroes?

I: No, not really. I've heard that a lot of low class blacks will do most anything but I know that there are some things that they won't do.

C: And what's that?

I: Well, just to mention a couple, I'm pretty sure that they don't engage in oral sex and I'm also pretty sure that there aren't any black grandmothers who would have sex with their granddaughter's boyfriends.

C: What makes you think that that's true of whites?

I: Oh, I don't know, it just seems like something that a hillbilly might do. But then, it's only a joke.

C: In one of the jokes you used the word "honky" to describe a family - what does that mean?

I: It's just a way of relating to whites, like they been relating to us and callin' us niggas.

C: I see; then it's a derogatory term then?

I: Yeah, in a way it is.

C: In that joke about the black man satisfying all of those people - what does "pack" mean?

I: It's a street term for anal intercourse.

C: I see. What does that joke mean to you?

I: It just shows how this black man was so superior sexually that he could satisfy all those different people and was still waitin' for more.

C: Do your jokes always receive such a good response?

I: Oh yeah, everytime I've told them I've had a lot of laughs from them.

C: Have you ever told those jokes in the company of other whites with whom you were less friendly?

I: No, as a matter of fact I haven't.

C: What do you think would be the reaction of the average white man who heard these jokes told by a black man?

I: Well, I really don't think they would like those jokes. (Laughs)

C: Why is that?

I: Well, nobody likes to hear derogatory statements about their own kind, whether the statements are true or not or whether they're just jokes. I know that they tell jokes about us that I would not particularly want to hear them say, but then I probably would laugh at the same joke if it was told by another black man.

C: What about your friends though? Those fellows that were here?

I: Oh them, oh well, they're different. They understand, like I said before, they are a little more intelligent.

C: I see. In that joke about the three men on the island with the one sandwich - well, why do you think that's funny?

I: Well, mainly 'cause most whites are so interested in makin' that dollar that they think about it so much that they end up starvin'. (Laughs)

C: I was under the impression that Jews are always concerned about making money. How is it that in your joke he was so interested in women that he dreamed about them?

I: Oh, I don't know. I guess it was just the way I said it. But you could

change the joke and make it different, depending on what you wanted emphasized. In fact, you could change it so the black man was made to look like the fool. I'm sure that's how a white person would do it. They would probably tell it so that the black man was interested in only having sex or how many broads he could screw or somethin' like that.

C: I see. In general, how do you feel about white people?

I: I dislike the image of what white stands for. I dislike the atrocities that I've seen committed against the vast majority of the people of the world. I dislike violently what white people stand for. In terms of white people I recognize the possibility of them being humanized. I see them as human forms, people who have not yet been civilized. People who are striving to become human beings. So I pity white people in general.

C: So, you're saying that they are not civilized but you do see them in their human form?

I: Yes.

C: But basically you don't feel that they are civilized.

I: Yeah, yeah, I guess that's one way of putting it. A civilized man is one that practices what he preaches. A man who respects people. Civilization could, but only a small part, be measured by technological advances and these sort of things such as we've evolved in this country. It's only civilized in terms of the manner that it's used. It's a world of white machines that happen to be in human forms who possibly could become full-fledged human beings and join the world of civilization. But this has yet to come.

C: How do you feel about Don and Mike? (Ed. note: the whites present at the joke telling) Wince they're white, how do you feel about them? Do you feel that they're uncivilized?

I: On a person to person basis I don't think you can say that they are uncivilized. Let me say this; I made a generalization about the image of white America and I said that it was an uncivilized and savage one. I think that there are people within that general context that have been able to solve certain problems, who have been able to look at themselves through various means and found that there is a common human experience and though we can't relate to the same music, though we can't relate to the same styles, we can relate to life itself and we can establish friendships on these bases. That's how I respond to these two fellas.

C: I've noticed that lately a lot of black men refer to white men as boys, you know, there seems to be an emphasis placed on saying "white boy." Why is that? Do you have any idea?

I: Well, part of it is revenge. Yeah, since they've been used to calling us boys I suppose it's our way of getting back at them. However, the best of us, Le Roi Jones, Donald Lee, uh- most black writers have come to realize that there has been no - and even white people are beginning to point this out - that there has been no assertive male image in the white world - in the white society. The pattern has been one of a FAGGOT, you know. From the time of the European ascension, you know, they started out with them cats wearing a whole lot of powder and perfume and stuff. True, you've had some men - possibly men. But the image that has been given off by the white society has been one of a faggot male. It is a matriarchal society. You come to realize that the backbone of the white society is female oriented. So when a lot of black men speak of those whites as being "white boys,"

there's a reason for this. One of the reasons why black male images were not allowed to exist and why so many slaves were castrated for looking at white women was that these white faggots recognized the intrinsic male image of the black. You look around and you see uh- this is what your fashion trends tell you. This is what the esthetics of the white race tell you, their books, their music, the way they wear their hair, men's furnishing, you know, colognes. And then you look at the white woman, and you see she's wearing pants, you know. Women in the white society own 70% of the wealth and determine which way it's used. And then you see the ads on television, you need a woman to sell a cigarette, you need a woman to sell cars, you need a woman to do this, you need a woman to do that, you know. It's a very female image dominated society. So it's a very real thing to say that there is a "white boy." Yeah, let's not call him a boy, let's call him a "white thing" that possesses the ingredients of being a man, you know, but has no sense of direction, that has no sense of manhood.

C: All right, then you're saying in a sense that as far as heterosexual love or heterosexual relationships are concerned, in your opinion or the opinion that you've gotten from the white culture, you feel that heterosexually, black people are superior. Right?

I: No, I, I didn't mention the word superior. I said that heterosexually, in terms of a man image and a female image - and you can draw correlations from any body of knowledge, you know, on both sides, from the black view and from the white view. From the black view drawing from the esthetics that have been established in folklore, music, and what little written body that has existed, you get the fact that there has always been very definitely a male image. The image of a man, of a woman lamenting for a man. Then you look at the other side of the spectrum and you see from the ascension of Europe and through the period of colonialism, you see the English High Court in wigs and pettipants and frivolous things like that. This fag image dominates, you know. And then you come to realize what the woman's role has been. The woman in the white society has been almost a dualism. She's been part man, part woman. And then you come to realize that in 1968, this year, the number of movies that come out dealing with the theme of homosexuality. Not black homosexuality; since blacks have participated in this white experience there has been that problem. But those people who have been able to divorce themselves from the white experience, coming back to black, establish an identity of male and female. Just look at the Catholic church and the popes in terms of what the male image is, in terms of nature itself, they are against that trend, they are against nature. They are a bunch of PUNKS. Celibates, who go around saying "don't mess with women," who are very passive; they are feminine oriented. You can see what effect this had on slavery and the black man, the fact that he was castrated and lynched for looking at white women or in trying to assume the leadership in founding a black family, you know. It was due to the fact that there was no counterpart in the white race, there was no white male image strong enough to deal with the male image of the black man in this country. When you are not able to deal with a problem on the basis of understanding, because you have not defined yourself as a man, and you see a man and you realize that he could usurp you, you have to kill him to preserve yourself and this is what was done.

C: Okay I see. I don't understand why you mentioned the cologne though. I know a lot of black fellas wear cologne, you know, like Jade East, Canoe, Dante, Brut, and others.

I: Okay, I, I, I'll deal with that. Uh- its not what you wear, you know. It's not what you partake of, it's the manner that you relate this to yourself. Black cats wear a lot of things, you know. Some black cats are really sharp dressers, but there aren't too many black cats that don't deal from a man's standpoint. There's not too many black cats that get bossed around by black women. There's not too many black cats that don't hesitate to walk out the door if they find it necessary. In short, there aren't that many black cats who don't portray a positive male image. They don't run behind their women, you know, they lead the pack. You might take issue with this and say that most sociologists have said that the Negro family was a matriarchy; well, that's true up to a point. But it wasn't really a family unit 'cause that male was not there. That male was out being a male, preserving a male image, and, if necessary, he did it on the block. But rather than be what the white man had become, he walked out. Okay, he smoked pot and drank and in many cases became a drunkard - well as far as I'm concerned, that's very definitely a positive male image.

C: Are you saying, then, that black men could not assert themselves as males in the home?

I: That's part of it, yeah, white society and their economic deprivation and all these other factors had the influence to kill any Negro or any black who challenged the system in terms of going out and being able to support a family, or of taking his family out without fearing for his life, and fearing for the lives of his family for the very fact of being black. He could not go out and get a job therefore he could not support a family. So he walked out to the block and spent a hundred years on the block. He waited on the block until that fag image of white society had weakened. You know, the whole white system crumbles, but it doesn't crumble because of pressure exerted by black people. It crumbles because it was defective in the building. Of course there is some black pressure on it, but this is only a response and reaction to the internal decay of the white world. However, if you're not thoroughly aware of all the channels, and incuts and outcuts, you could very easily disagree. But I assure you that this is a point that has been picked up and is being expanded every day.

C: Do you think white people are funny? You know, funny in a cynical sense.

I: I think that they're sort of pathetic. I don't think you can use the word funny in relation to them. I don't think they know how to relate to life. They're too busy tryin' to make that dollar.

C: Oh yes, there was another thing I wanted to ask you about one of your jokes. In one of the jokes you mentioned that the Negro boy under the floor started rising, what did you mean by that?

I: Well, you know, he started to get larger. I think it's significant because that's what white people expect.

C: I don't understand. What do you mean?

I: They think that black men are supposed to be extraordinarily large so the joke is funny because the dude gets larger and larger right in the act.

C: What was the point behind the black man who ate the sandwich while the other two fellows slept?

I: Oh, the fact that he outsmarted them, I suppose. While they were dreaming about money and women, he ate. (Laughs)

C: Even though you said that those jokes had a negative aspect to them,

did you enjoy telling them?

I: Oh yeah, I always do. Even around my few white buddies like Don and Mike. They're not stupid, they know how their people are.

Observations on Keith Newton's Jokes

Three of the jokes collected from Keith Newton, numbers 1, 2, and 4, can be grouped into a single category, mainly because the dominant theme running through all three is one of sex. They deal with promiscuous white families who have little regard for the sexual welfare and safety of their daughters and granddaughters. Also, these jokes are similar in that all the families involved appear to be southern or hillbilly in character.

Joke 1 is common and can be used to refer to black sexual superiority or really any other type of racial sexual superiority. This joke can best be understood by the words of Keith Newton, to the effect that "that black boy really put it on her mind," or, in other words, "he really did the job." It supposedly describes how well the black boy handled himself sexually. He handled himself so well in fact that the white girl was quite worn out when she returned home. From the informant's viewpoint it seems that this is the masculine thing to do. Joke 2, which also deals with sex, is oriented a little differently from joke 1. It deals with the low morals of a granddaughter as well as her grandmother. The promiscuity of the two is extreme. The fact that the black man under the floor starts "risin' and risin'" illustrates the size and power of his penis. It also brings into focus the alleged sexual superiority of black men in general. The jokes serve to help reinforce the black sexual superiority myth in the minds of many blacks.

Joke 4, which is sexually oriented, involves a father and his daughter. The father, after promising his daughter that he will have her "satisfied," proceeds to find a suitable male for her. Naturally, since a black is telling the joke, the white man is unfit, obviously because of his small size. This factor, as far as most blacks are concerned, would make him incapable of satisfying anybody. The second may, the Jew, is too fat. The third man, the black, is, of course, "just right," although what "just right" means is not completely spelled out. The fact that the black man takes so long with the white man's daughter simply testifies to his prowess as a lover and the supposed prowess of all blacks as lovers. The black man's ability to satisfy so many different people in so many different ways is another testimonial to his superior abilities.

Even though all three jokes deal specifically with black sexual superiority, I think it important to note that the most important factor in these jokes (according to the informant) is the promiscuity of the whites involved. It is ironic, I think, that he should feel that this factor is what really makes the jokes funny. If these same jokes were switched around and told by whites, I am sure that black promiscuity might well be similarly expressed.

Joke 3 can be changed so that the black man is made to look foolish. It serves the purpose of illustrating how much smarter the black man is in comparison to both the white man and the Jew. The fact that the white man dreams about money is indicative of how many blacks feel about whites who covet the precious dollar. The fact that the Jew is made to dream about women is not so important (and, indeed, seems inconsistent with the usual

Jewish stereotype in jokes), since Mr. Newton states that the order could be arranged so that either white or Jew could fit in the same category. This joke simply functions to show that the black man refuses to be fooled by the trickery of the two whites involved. It also illustrates, as I stated in the analysis of Mr. Tylor's jokes, that a state of crafty guile has existed between many blacks and whites. This is exemplified by the fact that the black man eats the sandwich while the two white men sleep.

These jokes were received quite well by the small group who heard them at Mr. Newton's apartment. The two white students, Mike and Don, seemed to truly enjoy the jokes as a form of humorous expression. In attempting to understand how these two young men actually felt about these jokes, I can only surmise that the jokes probably helped them feel more secure in terms of their relationship with Keith. Since they could laugh at some aspects of their culture and not be offended, or at least see the humor, they had achieved or were in the process of achieving what Newton called "relating through the common experience." I think that they laughed at the absurdity of the jokes and accepted them on the basis of their humorous content.

It is quite obvious that Newton felt that he could tell these jokes in their presence and still receive hearty laughs. His justification for doing so was because these two young men were "exceptions," that they were a little "more intelligent" than the average white American and could easily relate to Keith's blackness and the black humor inherent in the jokes. As far as the stereotypes in the jokes are concerned, I think that both whites only focused on the absurdity of the situations involved and probably never realized that Keith actually felt that there were many whites who were just as promiscuous. It would have been interesting to note their reactions when Keith stated: "I do know that a lot of white girls are pretty wild that way," or that "white girls are just more willing to jump into bed" than black women. But making assumptions or guessing at what might have been said or done if the interview had been carried out under different circumstances is useless from an objective standpoint.

SOME FINAL REMARKS

In attempting to assess the total value of the information compiled in this paper, I have run into difficulties because of the varied beliefs and ideas of the informants. I think the most significant factor is the fact that the reader participates in ideas that are of great importance to the American public. Through the statements of both informants the reader is given a quick glance at many of the tenets inherent in the Black Nationalist movement in this country.

At first I felt that this could not be done by simply interviewing two informants. I felt that I needed more information from more informants (say, about ten) to give the reader more of a cross-section of opinions in a particular area. However, after thoroughly examining both conversations I found that, even as short as they are, there is one significant factor in both. In Ronald Tylor the reader gets what I think is a fairly good example of a steadfast militant. Perhaps he is not a Stokely Carmichael or an H. Rap Brown, but the seeds of discontent are there just the same. In Keith Newton, the reader gets a fine example of a black person who is unable to compromise with himself. He hasn't made up his mind whether or

not he wants to be militant (even mildly militant) or more moderate in his actions and viewpoints. His ideas may seem contradictory. Newton speaks about blacks and whites being sexual equals - "A man is what he thinks he is." - and later he speaks of "white America's faggot male." Ronald Tylor at least admits that he feels that "It's [black sexual superiority] so wrapped up in the minds of blacks and whites in America that for all practical purposes it's true." Keith Newton has some white friends because those he has are "exceptions" to the rule. Ronald Tylor speaks of having no white friends at all. In short, we see two individuals who are part of an important social and political trend, yet who represent different points of view within that trend. To a point they reflect some of the problems dividing black Americans and preventing them from achieving a greater cohesiveness.

Yet their jokes, though they are in many ways different in terms of both style and content, show a common interest in that they all direct laughter at aspects of America much hated in black society. These jokes and others like them displace wounded pride and anger and replace it with a certain joviality. Thus the jokes, insofar as they evoke laughter, underscore the value of humor as a "defensive mechanism." Yet insofar as they reflect unpleasant social realities they emphasize the facts of the black experience in America and the unanimity of the black response to an oppressive system.

[Miss Cross, an undergraduate student at I.U., is interested in Black Studies.]

TAKE NOTES IN THIS SPACE: YOU WILL BE QUIZZED.