

Former student shares his experiences from the 70s

Krista Naposki
News Editor

Bryant Colson spoke last Thursday about his experience at Elon as the first African-American president of the Student Government Association and editor in chief of The Pendulum.

Amid candies and multicultural facts about Elon's history, Colson told tales of his time at Elon in The Zone.

"Life here just perpetuated family, that's really how we all made it," Colson said. "We were really a diverse group, we were as different as we were alike. We were first generation college kids, single parent households, but we were family."

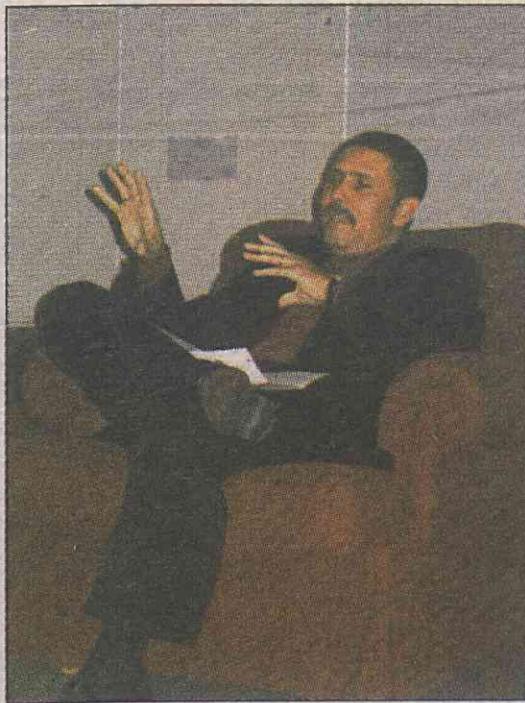
According to Colson, about 200 African-Americans attended Elon during his tenure from 1973-77, and most of them were athletes, unlike himself, Colson said. He didn't have any African-American professors, "my African-American history

teacher was Caucasian.

"I never allowed the weight of my race to be put on my shoulder," Colson said. "The point that I wanted to get across was struggle is a strong word, we just were doing what we were supposed to do. One made it, we all made it. It gave us a sense of purpose and a sense of family."

When Colson was SGA president Mary Carroll was named as the first African-American homecoming queen. But, according to Colson, later that year the yearbook did not mention anything about the homecoming queen. "She was so cool, it was almost unreal, and yearbook accolades didn't matter to her," he said.

In discussion about diversity at Elon, students talked about reaching out of normal boundaries. "Try to go support organizations that you wouldn't always support. Reach out and become more involved, start small and lead by example," said one student.



Krista Naposki/ Photographer

Colson, one of about 200 African-Americans on campus during his time, said Elon was a family to him, not a struggle. Colson was the first African-American president of SGA and editor in chief of The Pendulum.

Colson added that if events were less-label specific, people might not be intimidated from going to certain events deemed for particular groups of students.

In addition to student government and newspaper work, Colson helped with the Black Cultural Society. On weekends he would drive the bus so the choir could sing at nearby churches and get home-cooked meals.

"What I was always taught is you get out what you put in. It's easy to come to college and just be an awesome athlete or epitome of academia ... give what you want to get ... do all that you can do ... get all you can get," Colson said.

Elon was much different in the 1970s when Colson

went to school. Moseley student center sits on what used to be a parking lot for the Alumni gym and part of the Elon football practice field. Colson also helped change co-ed visitation rules. Previously, visitation was from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. Sundays. The door had to be cracked open and visitors couldn't sit on the bed in the room.

"It was very interesting. It was nice to see how Elon has changed over the years since he has been here. And see how different organizations got started. More events like this would help diversity," said freshman Sandra Kpodo.

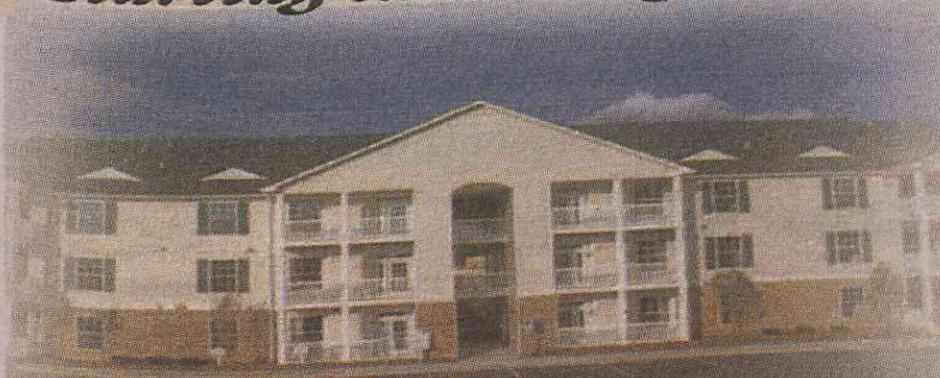
"The old adage is get involved, get involved, but do," Colson told students.

Colson's speech is part of "Continuing the Progress..." a Black History Forum with Multicultural Student Council and part of Alpha Phi Alpha's Forward March Week.

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