

KIM STOCK

Childhood originality vanishes

Excuse me, I'm looking for originality. I don't know where I lost it or how I lost it. I'm not even sure if I ever had it.

No, I take that last statement back. I'm pretty sure I once possessed originality, but I haven't seen it since I was a young girl wearing pigtails and Mary Janes.

I kind of remember what it felt like to be creative. In kindergarten it was easy to let loose with the Crayolas on gray newsprint while sitting on the brownish-orange carpet eating apples and peanut butter.

Back then, no one cared if I colored my jungle animals in blue and black. My neighbors applauded my stick people that had huge heads on tiny bodies. We all knew people didn't look that way, but somehow when you're five years old, you don't care.

Here's the problem: I can't figure out if our loss of originality stems from caring too much about norms or from not caring enough about creating new things. Whatever the case may be, originality is a thing of the past.

Turn on the radio. Do the songs sound familiar? Chances are, they're the same songs you heard years ago, but they're now being performed by different groups.

I hate to knock the genius of our current musicians, but doesn't anyone try to create original works? I had to laugh when I heard that "I Swear" song being done country-style and as a bubble-gum-pop tune nearly simultaneously. Every song has the same, "I love you baabey, please don't leave me" message that gets old after hearing it the 20th time.

I also don't know why grunge is



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so popular. Seemingly intelligent college students spend a lot of hard-earned tuition money at the Gap so they can look like they raided the Peoples City Mission. What is so original or cool about looking homeless?

On the flip side of the fashion spectrum, students on this campus who wear the same letters on their chests look amazingly similar. Most of the girls wear their hair tied up in cute baseball hats or held together by exaggerated bows and scrunchies. The boys are more creative in their dress, because no matter what the occasion is, they always wear fraternity T-shirts. It's hard to have style when you're trying to look like everyone else.

Of course, I can't forget the media. What was once a hot issue keeps reappearing in every possible form. Yes, I'm talking about the ever-popular O.J. Simpson double-murder case. This should be treated like a tragedy, because (let's not forget) two people were violently murdered and will never again see sunlight. The media has turned that fact into a profitable circus.

From the New York Times to The Examiner, every issue has been examined, re-examined and re-re-examined. Sure, the race issue may play a part in this whole mess, but

how many articles and television stories are going to dissect this to death? It's about time the media came up with a new subject to cover.

If you look in the "Politician's Dictionary of Terms," you will find that the term "originality" does not exist. Politicians borrow quotes and ideas that already have been borrowed. Nothing original or inspiring seems to have come out of a politician's mouth since John F. Kennedy's "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country."

Then again, it's not like we can expect politicians to have original thoughts when other people write their speeches.

Originality is a beautiful thing of the past. Now, I can't think of a single creative thought with which to leave you. Oh well, don't stop thinking about tomorrow, because there's a rainbow behind every cloud. Maybe, if we get a little help from our friends, we can again gain back the originality that left us.

So, turn that frown upside down, and think like the little engine that could: "I think I can, I think I can."

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E. HUGHES SHANKS

Magazines lose 'black money'

I once heard a fashion magazine editor say, "There just isn't enough black money to support having more black models on our covers."

I thought, "Damn! I didn't know my money was colored."

I was shocked at the idea. I was so upset that I spent the next two weeks walking around thinking: That means all the money I've spent during my entire life was "black money" — at least to some zipper-brained, number-crunching jerk who probably is stupid anyway.

I thought, gimme a break! Why worry about the color of a model on the cover? You can't automatically judge a magazine by its cover, can you? I wondered who would complain about such a thing, anyway? Iman? Naomi Campbell? Grace Jones? Sade? They're all black, and they seem to have gotten plenty of work.

But wait a minute. Not one of them was an American. I wonder what that means.

The editor went on to say sales dropped 17 percent when a black model was on the magazine's cover. How much "black money" is there anyway? Theoretically speaking, doesn't the fashion industry lose black money by not putting black models on the cover in the first place?

There is no doubt in my mind that I would have purchased gobs and gobs more magazines if only they would have had more blacks on their covers. NOT! I guess I spent my black money somewhere else. So, ha ha Vogue! You never did get my black money. But maybe it's not too late.

If it weren't for tobacco advertisements on magazines' back covers, the fashion magazines could put black models there. That way, they wouldn't lose that 17 percent, and they would gain from the black



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money, because a black model would always be on the back cover.

This is assuming, of course, that blacks respond to the cover the way this editor implies whites do. But wait a minute. Blacks probably don't want to be on the back cover. But that is a whole different subject.

Strictly economically speaking, it would seem that by putting a black model on the cover, the fashion magazine industry is knowingly taking a loss. It is just a plain bad business practice. I wondered if they also would lose money by getting rid of the tobacco ads and replacing them with a black back cover.

My objective became to figure out a way to get black models on the covers and keep the tobacco companies happy. I smoked two packs of cigarettes a day for 10 years. I can sympathize with the industry. I don't want to just wipe them out. Besides, lots of black families make their living picking tobacco.

Some of those families probably have children who grow up wanting to be models. So, if the tobacco companies would just put their ads inside the magazine, like on Page 1, maybe it would work. Maybe even a black American model who picked tobacco as a child could one day be on the cover of Vogue.

The question was, "Is there enough black money to support a black back cover on Vogue?"

Just think, instead of having essay contests, the Phillip Morris company could move its tobacco product ads to the inside of magazines and allow black models to be on the back cover. That way, everyone would be happy. Well, almost everyone.

There is still the inevitable complaint that putting black models on the back cover is discrimination. I agree, it is. Maybe every once in a while, the editors could tell the printers to switch the covers around and the printers could tell the grocery stores and newsstands to flip the magazines over. That way, the 17 percent who don't buy black-cover magazines wouldn't find out until they got home. I'm sure that they wouldn't just return it.

With a black model on the cover, more blacks would buy fashion magazines for sure, right? Wrong! Blacks haven't had the luxury of shopping by color. We've had to buy whatever came our way, because that's all there ever has been.

My guess is that, economically speaking, there isn't enough black money to boost the sales of fashion magazines, regardless of what the cover looks like.

If there was, we wouldn't be asking the question. DUH! Strictly economically speaking, that is.

Shanks is a graduate student and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

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