

A Tough Transition

Central Michigan Life || Wednesday, Feb. 23, 2011 ||

Adjusting to campus sometimes a 'culture shock' for black students

By **Randi Shaffer**
Senior Reporter

Many students would not list a culture shock as their primary experience when they first arrive at CMU.

But for some, the term is an understatement.

When junior Jessica Montgomery left her Detroit home to study at CMU, she was a little overwhelmed by the sight of campus.

"I would say it was a major culture shock," she said. "It's not that I haven't been around Caucasians (during) my life, but ... to see that (there were) so few (other black people) was just ... hard. It was an adjustment."

According to statistics from the registrar's office, the number of students registered as black at CMU in the 2010-11 school year is 889. The number of students registered as white attending CMU is 17,514.

Montgomery said transitioning into the different cultural atmosphere was made easier her freshman year, when she lived in Troutman Hall, home to students in the multicultural advancement program. She said she got involved with a multicultural program her first year here to get to know more people outside of racial boundaries.

"I really just try not to focus on skin color that much," she said. "Sometimes it gets hard. It's really not that hard anymore."

Kenya graduate student Allan Busaka said he has gone to school all over the world, including the United Kingdom and Australia, which he said makes adjusting to an international university setting easier.

"So far, it's been extremely friendly and people have been really cool," Busaka said.

He said the amount of information made available to students about diversity is outstanding. He added that his advisor is available when he needs her.

"I don't feel like I'm treated differently at all," he said. "At

► CAMPUS | 2B

CAMPUS

CONTINUED FROM 1B

least, not in class, not on campus and not outside when I go shopping. Overall I say, I mean, I've not felt uncomfortable, not once while I've been here. I've not even felt that I stand out. I feel part of the crowd."

As president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People at CMU registered student organization, Detroit junior Ricardo White said he doesn't rely on his skin color to inspire his involvement in the group.

"We're trying to advance everyone," he said. "(We're) trying to get rid of all discrimination. I'm saying it's the advancement of all people."

White said NAACP works with other registered student organizations on campus that are not traditionally black to hold educational and political panel discussions.

"Basically on campus we're just trying to show that we're here," he said.

White said he hasn't faced many issues because of his skin color.

"You get people that look at you funny sometimes, but a majority of times I don't have

an issue," he said. "You still get looks from time to time. Nothing that's a big racial issue, just moments you can tell where people aren't comfortable with you being black around them."

Detroit senior Amber Johnson said she works as president of the Collective Action for Cultural Unity RSO to end discrimination.

"We partner with other organizations to put on different programs that discuss different cultures," she said.

Johnson said she felt uncomfortable because of her race at times at the university.

Though she's never been a target of blatant racism, she said she has seen a few examples of covert racism, especially by servers in local restaurants.

"Being at Central at times takes me out of my comfort zone," she said. "I think that you definitely come across people that treat you differently."

Montgomery said regardless of whether a person is white or black, the transition to CMU all comes down to personality.

"It's been easy because I'm just a personable person," she said. "People are people, I just tell myself, so (I) won't get into white, black and all that type of stuff."

studentlife@cm-life.com