

The Glory of The “Good Old Days”



Columbia Alumni News Cartoon¹

¹ Alumni Federation of Columbia University, Inc. The Columbia Alumni News. University of Michigan June 1, 1923. #519 (p.465). <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015080166567&view=1up&seq=519>.

Columbia Alumni News continues to be a staple of the alumni experience at Columbia University. Although the official publication of Columbia Alumni has evolved from its previous forms, the practice is fundamentally similar to its traditional predecessors. In essence, the publication serves to connect the alumni community with their alma mater, informing them of achievements, events, and general Columbia-related news. In the early twentieth century, the Alumni Federation of Columbia University managed the Columbia Alumni News publication, which was “published weekly during the school year, and once in June” and focused on Commencement.² One hundred years ago, Commencement events were radically different concerning the inclusion of Alumni and their memorable traditions. These events were effectively the pinnacle of the Alumni experience, embodying the Columbia school spirit. As soon as the school year began, Columbia Alumni would initiate preparation for the attendance of Commencement day activities, both of which were captured and broadcast by the Columbia Alumni News publication.

The Columbia College Commencement of 1923 was the third commencement in twenty years that had experienced a downpour of rain during its programming.³ This weather interference interrupted the baseball game that was scheduled to be played on the South Field, which today encompasses the Butler library, the Butler lawn, and the remaining south field lawns.⁴ Although before everyone attending the game “scurried for shelter” and got “drenched,” the luncheon and costume parade “were successfully carried out according to schedule.”⁵ For this Commencement, the luncheon joined the costume parade as an outside venture, which contributed to the importance of a clear sky.⁶

² Alumni Federation of Columbia University, Inc. The Columbia Alumni News. The University of Michigan. #9 (p.1). <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015080166567&view=1up&seq=519>.

³ Alumni Federation of Columbia University, Inc. The Columbia Alumni News. The University of Michigan. #525 (p.481). <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015080166567&view=1up&seq=519>.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Alumni Federation of Columbia University, Inc. The Columbia Alumni News. The University of Michigan. ##547 (p.503). <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015080166567&view=1up&seq=519>.

Despite the “bad weather,” preceding the alumni luncheon around “three o’clock came the Grand and Glittering Costume Parade.”⁷ The costume party was the main attraction and draw for Columbia Alumni at the Commencement celebrations, engaging former students from all generations to return to a college environment and, for the older classes, explore the Morningside Heights campus. Labeled as “The Hilarious Parade,” this annual event embodied outrageousness, intending to be the utmost enjoyable alumni activity.⁸

Group costumes took on clever names such as “SS Columbia,” in which the class of 1904 incorporated their children and dressed as sailors, or the “1914 Middies,” referencing their midshipmen costumes.⁹ In similar creativeness, the class of 1908 “Gets Out” for Commencement day, dressing as “convicts with their warden.”¹⁰ These costumes were designed to incite laughter, however, the vast majority of the costumes congratulated and featured in the Columbia Alumni News presented a bigoted idea of humor. For instance, the classes paraded around the South Field dressed as Chinese, Egyptian, and Turkish people “in hilarious humor.”¹¹ The Alumni News exclaimed “the 1903 sheiks make a splendid spectacle,” referring to the winners of the “costume parade prize” who dressed as Arabs.¹² The groups flaunted their props, mocked their new skin color, and engaged in elaborate stunts such as resurrecting a king “from the arid Egyptian wastes.”¹³

As the parade came to an end, the Commencement attendees packed tightly into the stands in preparation for the baseball game. As pictured and recalled by the Columbia Alumni News,

⁷ Alumni Federation of Columbia University, Inc. The Columbia Alumni News. The University of Michigan. #525 (p.481); #528 (p.484).

<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015080166567&view=1up&seq=519>.

⁸ Alumni Federation of Columbia University, Inc. The Columbia Alumni News. The University of Michigan. #503 (p.451). <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015080166567&view=1up&seq=519>.

⁹ Alumni Federation of Columbia University, Inc. The Columbia Alumni News. The University of Michigan. #550 (p.506); #552 (p.508).

<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015080166567&view=1up&seq=519>.

¹⁰ Alumni Federation of Columbia University, Inc. The Columbia Alumni News. The University of Michigan. #550 (p.506). <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015080166567&view=1up&seq=519>.

¹¹ Alumni Federation of Columbia University, Inc. The Columbia Alumni News. The University of Michigan. #551 (p.507). <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015080166567&view=1up&seq=519>.

¹² Alumni Federation of Columbia University, Inc. The Columbia Alumni News. The University of Michigan. #549 (p.505). <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015080166567&view=1up&seq=519>.

¹³ Alumni Federation of Columbia University, Inc. The Columbia Alumni News. The University of Michigan. #551 (p.507). <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015080166567&view=1up&seq=519>.

“The Decennial Class, arrayed as Ku Klux, staged a lynching party on South Field. The straw victim was so heavily saturated with kerosene it broke the gallows and fell in a flaming heap to the ground. In the background is shown a part of the filled stands, the picture having been taken just before the hour scheduled for the annual Pennsylvania-Columbia baseball game. Ten minutes later the downpour of rain sent everybody scampering for cover.”¹⁴

The Commencement activities wrapped up with an alumni dinner at Baker Field but were ingrained in the pages of the Columbia Alumni News.¹⁵ The Alumni Costume Parade is the embodiment of the outward expressions of white supremacy at Columbia University, instilling an intergenerational membership dichotomy that consolidated around whiteness while ostracizing the “other.” Within this schema, the white gaze is mechanized as an extension of this communal intolerance. Columbia University, each year for Commencement, became a stage for a racist projection of its identity, solidifying the notion that the institution was solely for the consumption of white people through the performative misrepresentation of non-white people.



Costume Parade 1924 South Field¹⁶

¹⁴ Alumni Federation of Columbia University, Inc. The Columbia Alumni News. The University of Michigan. #552 (p.508). <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015080166567&view=1up&seq=519>.

¹⁵ Alumni Federation of Columbia University, Inc. The Columbia Alumni News. The University of Michigan. #553 (p.509). <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015080166567&view=1up&seq=519>.

¹⁶ Columbia University Archives. Alumni Class Records, 1850-1989: Photographs, 1911-1934. Series I, Box 1. University Archives, Rare Books and Manuscripts Library, Columbia University Libraries.



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THE VIGILANCE COMMITTEE OF THE KLAN IN ACTION.—The Decennial Class, arrayed as Ku Klux, staged a lynching party on South Field. The straw victim was so heavily saturated with kerosene it broke the gallows and fell in a flaming heap to the ground. In the background is shown a part of the filled stands, the picture having been taken just before the hour scheduled for the annual Pennsylvania-Columbia baseball game. Ten minutes later the downpour of rain sent everybody scampering for cover.

Columbia Alumni News showing the costume and stunt of the class of 1913.¹⁷

The Cultural Attitudes at Columbia University

The Alumni Costume Parade was not the only instance of performative racial misrepresentation at Columbia University. Consistent with American popular culture, the Columbia community had engaged in the theatrical practice of minstrelsy for decades before the tradition of the Costume Parade actualized.¹⁸ Student events revolved around performative misrepresentation, employing minstrel tactics as means for

¹⁷ Alumni Federation of Columbia University, Inc. The Columbia Alumni News. The University of Michigan. #552 (p.508). <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015080166567&view=1up&seq=519>.

¹⁸ John Scott Butler. A Darkened Past: The Role of Blackface Minstrelsy in Forming the Columbia Community. Columbia University and Slavery Seminar. May 11, 2018. Page, 3. <https://columbiaandslavery.columbia.edu/content/dam/cuandslavery/seminars/hist-3518/2018-projects/Butler%202018%20-%20A%20Darkened%20Past%20.pdf>.

entertainment at formals, dances, and performances.¹⁹ For instance, a discontinued Columbia tradition known as the Sophomore Show—typically referred to as the Soph Show—was a performance in which members strictly comprised Columbia College students of the sophomore class during each respective academic year. The Soph Show of 1902 “was preceded by a minstrel show,” in which, according to the Columbia Spectator,

“there were only two end-men, C. Young, and R. Camp, but they were well stocked with jokes, a little more original than usual, which were well received. An innovation in the shape of a solo entitled "My Castle on the River Nile" by C. Young who was dressed as an African warrior with a lion skin, shield and spear was very good. L. Camp made a hit with his "Hoodoo Man" and the effect was very realistic when the lights were turned down.”²⁰

The white perspective of Black and African people was a pervasive exercise within campus entertainment. These distorted characters are the manifestation of the white gaze within campus humor, which intrinsically delineates non-white people as comically inferior. Embodied in the annual depictions of non-white ethnic and racial identities, this notion is fundamental to the myth of white supremacy of which Columbia students and alumni formed a generational collective.

The cultural attitudes displayed by the Columbia Alumni Parade reinforce the racial and ethnic exclusivity of the university. During his University Presidency, Seth Low envisioned Columbia College as an integrated part of New York, aiming for the “student population to represent the social composition of the city.”²¹ His admissions policies engendered a large New York and Jewish presence within the school student composition. Four years prior to the lynching party staged on the South Fields, President Nicholas

¹⁹ John Scott Butler. A Darkened Past: The Role of Blackface Minstrelsy in Forming the Columbia Community. Columbia University and Slavery Seminar. May 11, 2018. Page, 3-4. <https://columbiaandslavery.columbia.edu/content/dam/cuandslavery/seminars/hist-3518/2018-projects/Butler%202018%20-%20A%20Darkened%20Past%20.pdf>.

²⁰ Columbia Spectator. Sophomores Go to Englewood. Columbia Daily Spectator, Volume XLV, Number 31, 11 February 1902. Columbia Spectator Archive. <https://spectatorarchive.library.columbia.edu/?a=d&d=cs19020211-01.2.24&srpos=16&e=-----en-20--1--t xt-txIN-hoodoo----->

²¹ Columbia College. Columbia College Today: Run to Glory. 2001. Pg 140. https://archive.org/details/ldpd_12981092_043/mode/1up

Murray Butler, Seth Low's successor, "helped to develop the notion of "selective admission," whereby a college conveyed its distinction and prestige by turning away qualified students. Application forms were modified in 1919 to inquire about family history; the forms asked not only for the candidate's place of birth, but his religion, his father's place of birth and his father's occupation. The application also required a photograph of the applicant and an interview."²² Butler's vision for the school "favored the traditional model of a boarding college for which dormitories were essential," despising Columbia's "metropolitan condition" as he cultivated a "self-contained campus, more disconnected from the city."²³ His admission policies directly reflected his cultural attitudes as he aimed to "reduce the number of New Yorkers who attended Columbia College, because New York City students were disproportionately from immigrant families and Jewish."²⁴ The establishment of "selective admission" and the creation of a largely residential college through the investment in dormitories "separated the wealthier, often Episcopalian students whom Butler valued more highly."²⁵ This reduced the New York student composition from 54 percent to 23 percent and the Jewish student population from around 40 percent to 20 percent by 1930.²⁶ The notion of prestige takes root in the selectivity defined by these discriminatory admissions policies, coinciding with the adoption of the core curriculum that same year, which became the college's "uniquely saving feature, its *raison d'être*."²⁷ These collegiate reforms at Columbia blurred the line between prestige and exclusion, cultivating a community of intolerance within a clannish campus.

The intolerant school culture fostered by the exclusionary admissions policies is evident in the performative misrepresentation of the Alumni Costume Parade. The class of 1913's "Ku Klux" costume contains a complementary aspect. Marching in three divisions around the South Field, the class broke itself up into groups named the "Booker T. Washington," "Kosher," and "Pope's Own" divisions.²⁸ Each

²² Columbia College. *Columbia College Today: Run to Glory*. 2001. Pg 140.

https://archive.org/details/ldpd_12981092_043/mode/1up

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ McCaughey, Robert A. *Stand, Columbia: A History of Columbia University*. Columbia University Press, 2003. 285

²⁸ Columbia Alumni Federation. *Columbia alumni news*. v.14 1922/1923. The University of Michigan. #552 (p.508). <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015080166567&view=1up&seq=552>

respective group represented a group that the Ku Klux Klan targeted in the 1920s, representing Black people, Jewish people, and Catholic people with the names listed above respectively. The cultural attitudes proclaimed by this demonstration concur with President Butler's admissions policies set into motion four years prior. With the administrative shift to isolate the campus from non-Anglican communities, the “lynching party” symbolized the prevalent white supremacy within the school culture. The class of 1913’s demonstration of overt hatred and exclusion, explicitly lists the groups it deems as exterior to the school community.

The Glory of The “Good Old Days”

The Columbia Alumni Commencement Parade was the vehicle through which generations of Columbia students coalesced into a cohort united by the basis of exclusion. In its June 1st, 1923 issue, the Columbia Alumni News stated that “The Stage Is Set for Columbia’s Biggest Commencement.”²⁹ The cover of the issue featured a picture and remark of “The 1922 Costume Parade on the Library Plaza, just before its entrance on South Field. And they say this year’s parade is going to beat it.”³⁰ This particular parade in 1923 was “claimed by many to have been the height of splendor and brilliance in the way of Alumni parades.”³¹ The Alumni gathered within Hamilton hall after the luncheon where they were split amongst their respective classes, changing into their coordinated group costumes.³²

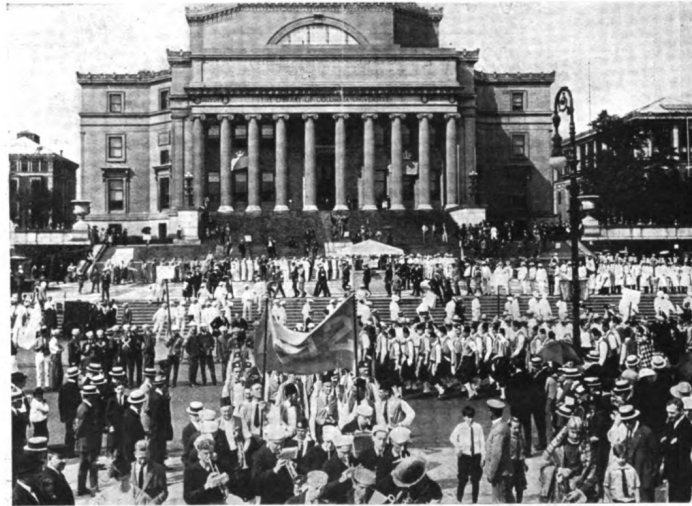


²⁹ Columbia Alumni Federation. Columbia alumni news. v.14 1922/1923. The University of Michigan. #509 (p.456). <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015080166567&view=1up&seq=552>

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Columbia Alumni Federation. Columbia alumni news. v.14 1922/1923. The University of Michigan. #528 (p.484). <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015080166567&view=1up&seq=552>

³² Columbia Alumni Federation. Columbia alumni news. v.14 1922/1923. The University of Michigan. #547 (p.503). <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015080166567&view=1up&seq=552>



© Underwood and Underwood
The 1922 Costume Parade on the Library Plaza, just before its entrance on South Field. And they say this year's parade is going to beat it. Remember the date—next Wednesday, June 6.

Columbia Alumni News image and description³³

The parade began with an orderly procession around the South Field, in which the older alumni classes lead the way. In the Alumni Newsletter, the introductory remarks of the 1923 costume parade documentation stated “The Older Graduates Led the Parade.—Although Commencement Day this year was not honored by the presence of the Older Graduates in numbers “fifteen hundred strong,” quite a few did get up to Morningside to add to the festive spirit of the occasion and the glory of the “good old days.”³⁴ The historical epithet regarding the “good old days” is employed in this statement as means to describe and celebrate the “glory” of the “Older Graduates” of Columbia College. As Columbia calls back its alumni into a moment of reunion, the costume parade provides a stage for an intergenerational display of performative misrepresentation, providing the basis for the comical exclusion of exterior groups in accordance with white supremacist values. The prevailing ethnic and racial misrepresentation of the parade irrespective of generational boundaries provided a manner of consolidation, unifying the Columbia diaspora and community as largely belonging to a homogenous racial and ethnic group. This social foundation promotes the notion that Columbia College is intended for the consumption of Anglican white

³³ Columbia Alumni Federation. Columbia alumni news. v.14 1922/1923. The University of Michigan. #509 (p.456). <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015080166567&view=1up&seq=552>

³⁴ Columbia Alumni Federation. Columbia alumni news. v.14 1922/1923. The University of Michigan. #549 (p.505) <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015080166567&view=1up&seq=552>

people. Thus, the performative misrepresentation of race, ethnicity, and culture present at the parade is the vehicle for the unification of this campus identity around whiteness.

The cultural attitudes expressed in the alumni costume parade represent the intergenerational ramifications of performative misrepresentation within the Columbia diaspora. Every commencement, Columbia College graduates flocked to the Morningside campus for the alumni-focused events, leaving their jobs for the day as they reminisced on their college experience, bringing their professional expertise while reconnecting with their alma mater. In the 1923 costume parade, members of the class of 1913 represented more than Columbia College, having a decade to polish their careers. The class “Ku Kluxers” included the class president Walter Ruprecht among professors, neurologists, lawyers, and a New York Supreme Court Justice. The “lynching party” goers consisted of prominent engineer Adolph Syska, known for designing the “mechanical systems of United Nations headquarters” and co-founded the engineering firm Syska Hennessy.³⁵ Other notable individuals were the New York investor and philanthropist S. H. Scheuer, Columbia Medical School neurologist Hyman Osserman, Columbia professor Gerald S. Shibley, former valedictorian and prominent lawyer Ralph S. Harris, and New York Supreme Court Justice Emil N. Baar.³⁶ Their participation in this event as an act of promoting school spirit demonstrates the exclusionary cultural attitudes of the school transcend the campus, disseminating throughout professional institutions outside of the campus community.

The Myth of White Supremacy

³⁵ New York Times. Adolph Syska, Engineer, Dies. Published May 12, 1961. <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1961/05/12/118038337.html?pageNumber=29>; Syska Hennessy Celebrates 90 Years of Success in NYC and Beyond. Mann Publications. https://mydigitalpublication.com/publication/frame.php?i=492284&p=&pn=&ver=html5&view=articleBrowser&article_id=3071244

³⁶ New York Times. S.H. Scheuer, Legislator's Father. October 25, 1979. <https://www.nytimes.com/1979/10/25/archives/sh-scheuer-legislators-father-escaped-stock-crash.html>, New York Times. HYMAN OSSERMAN, A NEUROLOGIST, 70. June 18, 1963. <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1963/06/18/80711955.html?pageNumber=37>, New York Times. Dr. Gerald S. Shibley Dead at 91. May 13, 1981. <https://www.nytimes.com/1981/05/13/obituaries/dr-gerald-s-shibley-dead-at-91-specialist-in-infectious-diseases.html>, New York Times. Ralph S. Harris Is Dead at 71. July 1, 1961. <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1961/07/01/118915852.html?pageNumber=17>, Wikipedia. Emil N. Baar. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emil_N._Baar, New York Times. EMIL N. BAAR, 94, JUSTICE AND LEADER OF REFORM JUDAISM. November 13, 1985. <https://www.nytimes.com/1985/11/13/nyregion/emil-n-baar-94-justice-and-leader-of-reform-judaism.html>

The cultural attitudes expressed in the costume parade were not exclusive to the alumni community. The Columbia Spectator recount of the Columbia University Southern Club's annual competition was the source of discontent for one of the earliest instances of Black resistance to the usage of racialized terms in campus media. In the spectator article released on August 1st, 1919, the Southern Club congratulated and boasted its Columbia College members representing the state of Georgia for winning the stunt competition in an intramural event. In the Spectator summary, the "winning stunt... showed a scene at a Georgia camp-meeting, where a congregation of devout "darkies" had gathered to hear the exportation of one of the brethren."³⁷ In 1919 at Columbia University, the performative misrepresentation known as minstrelsy was not unusual to conduct, considering many performance clubs and events featured minstrel shows regularly. However, the August 6th edition of the Columbia Spectator featured a "communication" by activist, minister, educator, and civil rights leader Herman Dreer, writing about his discomfort with the newspaper's usage of the word "Darkey," labeling it an "insult and source of violence."³⁸ Herman Dreer was many years post-undergraduate in 1919, enrolling in the summer session of the Teachers College as an educator.

In 1919, the Columbia University Teachers College had an established pipeline for Black people to enroll in the college as students during the summer session. Amassing Black teachers and educators from around the nation, the summer session at the Teachers College is one of the first large-scale Black engagements in Columbia University history, numbering around "one hundred-fifty colored students" in 1919 according to Herman Dreer's communication.³⁹ Herman Dreer amended the Spectator's word choice offering the words "colored" or "Negro"—begun with a capital" as the non-offensive labels.⁴⁰ He

³⁷ Columbia Spectator. GEORGIA CARRIES OFF STUNT HONOR. Columbia Daily Spectator, Volume XLIII, Number 67, 1 August 1919.
<https://spectatorarchive.library.columbia.edu/?a=d&d=cs19190801-01.2.8&e=-----en-20--1--txt-txIN-dark-ey----->

³⁸ Columbia Spectator. Communication RESENTS USE OF WORD. Columbia Daily Spectator, Volume XLIII, Number 69, 6 August 1919.
<https://spectatorarchive.library.columbia.edu/?a=d&d=cs19190806-01.2.14&e=-----en-20--1--txt-txIN-dar-key----->

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

specifically notes that he does “not object to the program of the Southern Club or to the news item concerning it,” but addressing the Spectator he was

“chagrined bitterly by your permitting the work "darkey" to appear in a paper of a cosmopolitan university to describe a group, which is the incarnation of sacrifice for the undeserving. I am sure you know the prevalence of this evil tho probably unaware of its humiliation. When I heard Bishop Charles D. Williams use "darkey" in Saint Paul Chapel July 13 when I heard a student use it in one of my classes and learned that one of the professors had used it in his, I concluded that the offense was general.”⁴¹

Dreer explains the “humiliation” he encounters regularly within all facets of Columbia’s institutions, hearing the word “darkey” thrown around by members of the campus community. Recounting his personal experiences as a Black student, he recalls the ubiquitous degradation perpetuated by the extensive usage of racial epithets. Concluding his communication, Herman Dreer proclaims “as long as this exists, America is no democracy, but an aristocracy, with its slavery and vices reigning without a rival. Let us not drift apart in thot or deed. Let us reach the supreme in man. Let us cooperate for a lasting peace, for the security of life, and righteousness.”⁴² Although speaking about the broader American racial dynamics in the wake of the race riots in Chicago, he is referring to Columbia as a microcosm of this unrest. Dreer argues that America remains aristocratic resulting from the exclusion of racial and ethnic groups through the usage of insulting epithets and terms. Thus, Columbia is an aristocratic institution, promoting the exclusion of non-Anglican communities through the usage of words like “darkey.”

The Columbia Spectator prefaced Herman Dreer’s communication with a retort from the newspaper titled “On Being Insulted.”⁴³ In relation to the ill-feelings Herman Dreer associated with the

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Columbia Spectator. ON BEING INSULTED. Columbia Daily Spectator, Volume XLIII, Number 69, 6 August 1919.
<https://spectatorarchive.library.columbia.edu/?a=d&d=cs19190806-01.2.13&e=-----en-20--1--txt-tx|N-darkey----->

word “Darkey” as well as the connection to the racial discontent of the Chicago race riots, the Spectator states

“Mr. Dreer is suffering, we are afraid, from a too sensitive temperament, The word "darkey" has been applied to the Negro for a century as a term of humorous and sometimes affectionate meaning in contrast to other words of contemptuous implication. The word is established in song and story and verse; the best writers of the Negro have used it without offense —Joel Chandler Harris, to mention one. Stephen C. Foster, whose songs of the South are nearly immortal had no scruples about the word although he was one of the "cultured folk.”⁴⁴

Not only does this response invalidate the feelings of humiliation and insult that Herman Dreer experienced, but the Spectator also cites the creator of the Uncle Remus character and the most prominent minstrel producer respectively as people that use the word “darkey” in an endearing and “affectionate” manner. The Spectator concludes, forcefully declaring that “Before Mr. Dreer assumed the task of speaking for twelve million other colored citizens, he should have consulted the meaning and usage of the "offensive" word rather than his own personal prejudices.”⁴⁵ The Spectator as a newspaper engaged in discourse with Herman Dreer due to their rejection of his communication, diminishing a Black perspective through the justification of the usage of the word “Darkey” to describe Black people. The defensiveness of this retort reflects the established social and cultural attitudes reinforced by the Columbia community, in which homogeny is nurtured. Consequently, disruptions or subversions of the white supremacist myth are met with immediate backlash. This exchange, therefore, becomes a symbol of white fragility with respect to this culture of exclusion and selectivity crafted by the college and perpetuated by generations of students and alumni that carry the social and cultural attitudes that are considered racist in the contemporary lens.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

The alumni costume parade was a fixture and staple of the alumni experience for decades. Although the practice was eventually phased out of operation, its legacy remains an expository feature of Columbia College's identity. The 1923 "lynching party" was a flagrant reminder of the exclusionary school culture, becoming a beacon of bigotry in higher education. However, this was not the only cross-burning on the Morningside campus. Less than a year after the class of 1913 participated in the costume parade as the Ku Klux Klan, the Klan burned a cross in front of Furnald Hall targeting Frederick W. Wells: "first black student to live in Columbia's on-campus housing during the academic year."⁴⁶ These instances of hateful demonstrations defined the membership of Columbia University. The Columbia community revolves around the degradation of external identities, perpetuating a bastion of bigotry through pervasive institutional discriminatory policies and traditions. In order to redress the legacies of this intolerance, an examination of prestige and selectivity is required, being the ideological facade and active justification for exclusion at the university.



Costume Parade 1924 South Field⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Thomas Germain. "Bright Spots Giving Sign in A Dark Sky." Columbia University and Slavery Seminar. <https://columbiaandslavery.columbia.edu/content/dam/cuandslavery/seminars/hist-3518/2017-projects/Germain%202017%20-%20Bright%20Spots%20Giving%20Sign%20in%20A%20Dark%20Sky.pdf>

⁴⁷ Columbia University Archives. Alumni Class Records, 1850-1989: Photographs, 1911-1934. Series I, Box 1. University Archives, Rare Books and Manuscripts Library, Columbia University Libraries.



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A HAPPY ARAB.—J. R. Fort, '03, hears that his Class won the Costume Parade Prize.



© Wide World

THE 1903 SHEIKS MAKE A SPLENDID SPECTACLE.—These lively Arabs, ninety strong, with their Arabian ponies sent over specially for the Class' Twentieth Reunion, created quite a stir, and set a precedent that twenty-year classes will find it difficult to uphold.

Costume Parade 1923⁴⁸

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⁴⁸ Alumni Federation of Columbia University, Inc. The Columbia Alumni News. The University of Michigan. #549 (p.505). <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015080166567&view=1up&seq=519>

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