



**ASK DEANNA!**  
*Real People,  
Real Advice*

Ask Deanna! Is an advice column known for its fearless approach to reality-based subjects!

Dear Deanna!

My relationship feels dead. In the beginning things were exciting but now everything is boring. I'm not motivated to do my hair anymore, I don't feel like dressing up and sex is the last thing on my mind. Now that I look my worse, my boyfriend has become active, he goes out all the time and has really come out of his shell. He doesn't pay me any attention and when he does, he seems to be somewhere else. Are these signs that we need to end this relationship?

Hurting and Confused  
Benton Harbor, MI

Dear Hurting:

You're living the classic case that involves women let themselves go and then lose their man. You need to wake up and realize you look a mess and your boyfriend has chosen to keep living. He hasn't changed other than the fact he may have another woman because he's almost sick of you. If you want this relationship, get your act together fast because he's on his way out. The clock is ticking but you can turn things around with effort, and positive thinking.

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Dear Deanna!

My son is dating a woman my age. The problem is the fact he's a senior in high school and she is divorced with two small children. I understand my son is at the age where he may be experimenting sexually, but he's a baby compared to her and I don't like it. I'm cordial to his girlfriend but I'm at my wits end. She is starting to brainwash him and I hit the roof when I heard she is bragging on his anatomy. What can I do without doing something that will land me in jail?

Tammy  
Dallas, TX

Dear Tammy:

Your son has fallen victim to a played out garden tool that doesn't have many options left. You could kick her door off the hinges, drag your son out and give her a beat down. But since you have to be civil, you can stop this by pressing charges and filing a restraining order to keep her from your son. In the meanwhile, focus on your son and help him understand what's going on. You also need to buckle down and help him clearly see his future that includes college and a career and not this woman with her built-in baggage.

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Dear Deanna!

For the first time in my life, I am happy with a man I feel is my soul mate. He is everything I imagined and I can even live with his flaws and shortcomings. I love him dearly but he is overly critical and is very hard on me. When I make mistakes, he treats me like a child. He talks about my hair, my make-up and the way I eat. He is a great guy and I know he means well. How do I let him know how this makes me feel without jeopardizing the relationship?

Maria  
Charleston, SC

Dear Maria:

You're a star struck groupie in this relationship. As soon as he gets tired, he'll drop you like a hot coal and move on to another woman. If he sincerely cared there wouldn't be any feelings of disrespect, ridicule or one-sided criticism. You need to take the risk and tell him how you feel and that you won't tolerate his treatment. If he's willing to heed your advice that's a good thing. If he turns out to be a pig then realize he doesn't give a damn and keep it moving.

Write: Ask Deanna! Email: askdeanna1@yahoo.com or 264 S. LaCienega Blvd. Suite 1283 Beverly Hills, CA 90211 Website: www.askdeanna.com.

# Contest puts Black techies to test

By Fred Green Jr.  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

On the campus of Howard University, students from various fields and institutions of higher learning gathered together for the 2007 Microsoft Media Skins Challenge. The theme of the competition is "culture through innovation."

The Skins Challenge is a collegiate student competition to create original Windows Media Player skins or user interfaces. The competition is open to all registered students at universities and colleges with a National Society of Black Engineers chapter. At least one student on the team must be a NSBE member.

Before the challenge can be appreciated, and for the skills, talent and dedication of the participants of this competition to have perspective, it's important to understand what a media "skin" is.

Like many aspects of technology, many people use media skins but are unaware that they are doing so. Viewers of DVDs, listeners of CDs or MP3s, especially on a computer, all use a visual, graphic interface to control the actions of the recorded media; that is the media skin. The look and layout can sometimes be selected from several options.

A good media skin should convey a special meaning or theme related to the particular media you are using. For example, when watching a Disney DVD, say, of Snow White, the controls, menus and sub-menus should all relate in some way to the movie. However, since most people only watch a DVD a few times, all media skins have to be easy to use, with the controls clearly marked with universally recognized symbols, while still fitting into the overall theme.

Most people don't notice the media skin but all would miss them once they realized that the alternative is screen upon screen of white backgrounds with black letters to read, when trying to find the chapter selection option to get to your favorite scene on your favorite DVD.

Don't let the technical requirements scare you. If you take a minute to look into the teams competing, you will find that they cover a broad spectrum of majors and interests. This year even saw a local high school team granted special permission to compete.

These soon-to-be college



2007 Microsoft Skins Challengers: Amber Liverpool, Feven Tesfaye, and Onyeka Tesfaye performed well in the contest.

students did so well that the competition now has a high school division.

This year's team from Eleanor Roosevelt High School in Prince George's County, Md., boasted as its members Amber Liverpool, Feven Tesfaye, Onyeka Tesfaye, along with Dr. Todd Shurn (Ph.D. Howard University) and Windows Media Program Manager Keith Toussaint make sure participant have access to plenty of technical support and know-how.

The judging and team re-

quirements are pretty basic; each team must have a minimum of 3 members and a maximum of five. Most teams are in the 3-4 member range. The media skins are judged on artistry, visual appeal (2D vs. 3D, color/contrast), craftsmanship, compelling design, player functionality and design consistency. The skin also must have all the basic player features such as a progress bar, volume control, equalizer, video screen, play list area, visualizations, sound effects and close/minimize/full

screen mode. Each skin must utilize Windows Media Player 9 or greater. The latest version of the player is Windows Media Player 11, rolling out with Microsoft's newest operating system Windows Vista.

This year's top finalists came from Norfolk State, Indiana, Perdue, Howard and George Washington University, with Indiana and Perdue teaming up to take third place with their skin called "Jaguar." Second place was won by Norfolk State with an entry called "Inventor's Desk" with various drawers and items on the desk controlling different functions.

A very aggressive and high-tech looking "Yin and Yang" symbol took first place and was submitted by the team from Howard University. This skin, in addition to controlling the media player, also gives the listener a tour through the Chinese zodiac and explores the finer points of what constitutes Yin and Yang. The team members consist of Edwin Andrews, Kharim Ames and Headley Murray. Though many have come close, Howard remains

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