

## Caucasians talk about

# The Burden of Racism

By Munir Umrani

"How can I be racist when I work with a black theatrical group?" Noreen Sulsky, a Chicagoan who lives in a mixed neighborhood on the city's North Side queried when asked if she thought she ever exhibited racism in her dealings with so-called "minorities."

"That would be impossible, wouldn't it, with me doing this now? I'm shocked that you would ask me that," she faltered.

Earl Anthes, a native of Iowa now living in West Memphis, Ark., seemed taken aback when confronted with the same question.

However, he admitted that he "was racist at one time" and still finds himself "tripping up on a lot of little things" although he has virtually gotten over "a lot of big things."

"I don't think you can grow up in America and not be racist, Mr. Anthes, a former Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) worker and co-founder of Independent Community Consultant, Inc., a non-profit research organization.

G. Flint Taylor, a native of Boston who now lives and practices law in Chicago said he wasn't "born a racist" but picked up racism as he got his formal education.

"That's what you get when you grow up in an all-white society," he offered. "I grew up in a suburb of Boston in a middle-class neighborhood where there were no black people.

"So, my views of black people were non-existent except for the kind of racist stuff I heard around the locker room at school."

Anne Braden, a highly regarded southern journalist who makes her home in Kentucky, said she noticed while growing up that Bilalians "were kept in virtual slavery" by Caucasians.

Ms. Braden, 40, said during a speech in Chicago, "Like so many other southern whites, once I'd been able to face the ugly truth about my society on the question of race, it was like blinders had fallen from my eyes and I could suddenly see the whole picture."

Trying to determine how many Caucasians see the whole picture and have had the blinders removed from their eyes is no easy task. In fact, it is virtually impossible.

### HONESTY DIFFICULT

However, what does come through is the fact that it is difficult to get people to be honest on the subject of race. It still is a touchy subject with many of those interviewed by Bilalian News claiming that they

harbor no racist feelings or have conquered their racism.

Then there are those such as the Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) as well as a number of other right-wing groups who make no pretense about their feelings toward so-called minorities.

In Houston one Nazi group said it is "beginning a battle by offering a \$5,000 prize for every non-white killed during an attack on a white person."

The group, which spewed its message in a tape recording heard over the telephone last year, also said it is "calling for an all-white war against Jews and other non-whites."

"I am sure you realize that illegal non-white immigrants have overrun our borders and have made us flee to the suburbs of our cities," the group said.

Institutional racism is still a problem in America as evidenced by the continued efforts of Bilalians and other groups to gain representation on fire departments, police departments and other government agencies commensurate with their numbers in the population.

However, those interviewed by Bilalian News probably would never join a Nazi or Klan organization, or deliberately seek to keep an individual from a different racial background from advancing.

But the racism is there, implied G. Flint Taylor whose clients are primarily Bilalians and Latinos.

### RACISM "BUILT IN"

"All white people got racism built into them," Mr. Taylor said. "You are not born a racist but you get it when you grow up in an all white society."

Mr. Taylor, who credits the late Black Panther Party leader Fred Hampton with starting him "on the long educative process" towards ridding himself of racism, said, "It is important for white people to stand up beside black people and help them legally when they need it."

"It was a long educative process which started when I started working here in the (peoples) law office and got to know Fred Hampton," the controversial attorney said.

"I went to his apartment on the day he was murdered (Dec. 4, 1969 during a pre-dawn assault) as he slept in his West Side Chicago apartment and spent the day collecting evidence and was totally affected by it."

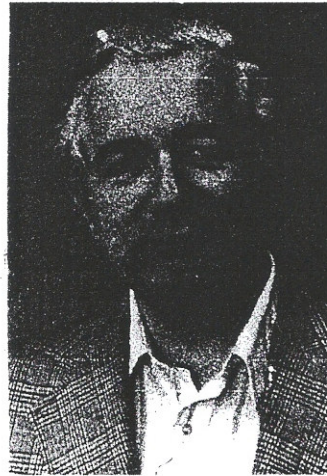
Racism, from a sociological perspective, has been defined as "the generalized and final assigning of values to real or imaginary differences, to the accuser's benefit or at his victim's expense, in order to

justify the former's own privileges or aggression."

This seems to have been recognized by journalist Anne Braden who said the "first thing" that she "noticed was wrong was the fact that black people were kept in virtual slavery," by Caucasians.

### AFFECTS ALL AREAS

Herbert Aptheker, editor of "Documentary History of Negro People in the United States" says racism and anti-racism "has



Robert McClory, former city editor of the Chicago Defender.

significantly affected all areas of the U.S."

This includes "history, foreign and domestic," and extends "from religion to education, from war making to treaty making, from the arts to politics, from trade union activity to women's struggles, from medicine to anthropology to psychology, from taxation policy to police practices, from jurisprudence to dramaturgy."

Earl Anthes of West Memphis, Ark. seems to concur with this opinion though in simpler language. "It's something that's manifested here in one way or another."

But recognizing that he was racist at one time and still may harbor vestiges of racism, how does one overcome it?

"I think that the best you can do is keep struggling with it and every time you find yourself doing racist things recognize it, back off, think about it and then change. But you can't avoid it," Mr. Anthes contends.

Based in the predominantly Bilalian Eastern Ark. Delta about six miles from Memphis, Mr. Anthes said when you see racism as a problem

and say "I don't want to be a racist, it becomes easier to resolve the conflict within.

"I would like to think that I have overcome racism but I still find little things. You get over a lot of big things but you find yourself tripping up on little things."

Ms. Sulsky said she has never been a racist, does not harbor any now and claims to have problems with "reverse discrimination" rather than personal racism.

"In my work, I would have problems with reverse discrimination," she said. "In my work, racism was in the black community which I think was pretty popular a few years ago."

"Have I ever been a racist? That would be impossible, wouldn't it, with me doing the work I'm doing now? In fact, there is one person I regard just like a flesh and blood brother.

"He's black," she said in what appeared to be an excited manner, "and he's been the kindest person in my life to me."

### BEAUTIFUL SURPRISE

Ms. Sulsky said she was surprised "how beautifully" Emam Wallace D. Muhammad, leader of the World Community of Al-Islam in the West "was dealing with the situation" when she recently visited the Honorable Elijah Muhammad Masjid No. 2.

She said she was afraid to visit the masjid prior to Emam Muhammad's leadership.

Emam Muhammad is perhaps the foremost champion of de-emphasizing racism based on skin color. He repeatedly emphasizes the dangers in color consciousness as a basis for superiority over people.

Robert McClory, author and journalist came from the West Side of Chicago and said he had "absolutely no contact" with Bilalians while growing up.

In an interview with Bilalian News reporter Abdul Aleem Seifullah, Mr. McClory, a former priest, said, "It was like Eskimos or something. We had no contact or very little thought about black people.

"In fact, there wasn't any—that I can recall—great animosity of hatred expressed toward blacks. They were like people from another civilization.

"I don't recall, as a kid growing up, hearing anti-black stuff, slogans or anything, largely because there was no contact," Mr. McClory, former city editor of the Chicago Defender, continued.

"Later on, when the black population started to move closer (Continued on page 5)