

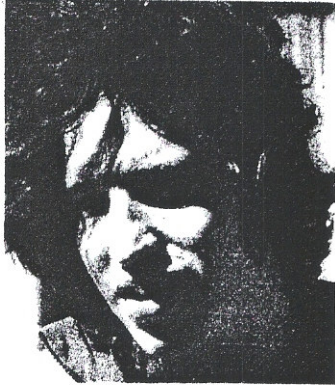
Interviewees voice concern on bias

By Abdul Aleem Seifullah

If a recent Bilalian News photo-opinion survey is any indication, very few Caucasians in this country have any racist feelings or attitudes — it's always the other person who does.

Bilalian News asked several Caucasian Chicago residents the following questions: has racism affected you? How have you attempted to overcome racist attitudes personally? How do you feel racism has affected this country? Do you feel that we will ever overcome problems of racism in this country?

Here are their comments:



Peter Blain, photo lab technician: "To a certain point I feel that I have conquered racism. But wherever you look, it's all around you so it's pretty hard to get away from it all, if you know what I mean. I was in the military and in the military there is everybody — blacks, whites, Latinos. So that helped me alot.

"Racism has had a bad effect on this country. It's caused too many hassles, like the the riots and a lot of other hassles. I don't think we will ever be able to conquer racism because you're always going to have the bigots and the prejudiced people. Never — at least I don't think so."



Chris Russell, film animator: "As far as racism goes, it's been present since I was a kid growing up. It was in the schools, high school and college. The older I got the better the problem seemed to get: the less of a problem it seemed to be.

"I guess with the younger people now we've gotten over a lot of it, but for us it was kind of there as we grew up. But we overcame some of the ideas,

some of the obstacles in just relating to people as people without really letting race interfere.

I would try to just get to know a person as a person, forget male and female, black, white, religion, whatever. You know, on a kind of individual basis knock down the walls, the bad feelings and negative attitudes.

As far as conquering racism, there are certain areas where it gets out of the control of the individual. As far as the business world and the political word is concerned, there's still a long way to go but I think we could overcome it if we really want to.

"You see, there are some people who probably don't even want to. Those are the one you have to get at."



Barbara Chaukley, real estate broker: "Well, I'm a WASP (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant) and I've never had to face it personally. One time in my life I was mistaken for being Jewish and I had to face unspoken bigotry and I found it uncomfortable and I didn't know what I was facing. It gave me an insight, perhaps, into how a person might feel when you just feel like yourself and you wonder why you're facing some kind of hostility and some kind of feeling that you don't understand.

"Otherwise, personally, it has not affected me. Personally, I send my children to a private school in Chicago but it's always been a mixed population of children so they have good friendships with a variety of children — students.

"So, I feel that I've tried to set up some type of relationship for my children so that they won't have to face some of the problems that our society currently is facing. In otherwords, they'll have warm individual feelings for individual people rather than seeing everybody as a group.

"As far as overcoming racism is concerned, I think that we are well on the way. I think it's a matter of individual maturing. It's not something you take care of in a mass and I see all around me things changing on all different levels.

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Burdens of Racism

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and the neighborhood started to pack up and move, by then I wasn't living there any longer, but the neighbors—there was a lot of animosity, hatred and fear that developed. Real estate speculators and panic peddlers and all of that then arrived on the scene, and there were incidents of violence that were blown up where someone was beat up by a gang or someone got their house robbed.

"So that by the late 1950s and early 1960s the neighborhood was completely different. The only ones who hadn't moved were those who couldn't move, those who were either too poor, sick or too old to get out.

BLAME THE SYSTEM

"So, it changed very quickly and I think that the hostility that was expressed by the whites against the blacks was a product of that whole thing—that they come in and they uproot us and we have to go and it's not fair and we lose the value of our house and the streets aren't safe and it's their fault. That was the usual, and a lot of it was connected with their being uprooted.

"My contact (with Bilalians) took place on the South Side. I was a priest at a Church on the South Side.

"When I was there in 1964, it was like 98 per cent white. When I went back in 1971 it was 98 per cent black. Most of my direct contact with racial

matters came from those years. Essentially the same thing was going on there that was going on before on the West Side," Mr. McClory observed.

"But there was a difference. On the West Side, that neighborhood and most of the people who lived there were there for a generation or two. They hadn't moved. I'm talking about the white people. There hadn't been much thinking about blacks.

"On the South Side, the people who were in that area, there were a great number of them who had moved two and three times before. They started out on the near South Side and as the neighborhood changed they moved once, then twice, then three times to escape the blacks.

BIASED ANECDOTES

"So, by the time they got out to 79th and Racine they were mad as hell. They were blaming the whole thing on black people and the anecdotes were going around about what blacks had done, what had happened to the streets, how the garbage wasn't collect and that people were shooting holes in their roofs.

"Having had that experience, I think that on the South Side, there was some element of goodwill and a more realistic attitude, I would say, on the part of some people that they knew what was coming and there was a greater struggle to prepare for the

changes.

"There was a big push in the area I was in, called the 'Organization for the Southwest Community,' which attempted to stabilize the community, blacks and whites—a very integrationist approach," Mr. McClory said.

To be sure, in the words of Marvin Klein, a salesman, the United States has gone a long way toward improving.

"...I think that if we can keep up the progress, maybe in 30 or 40 years, probably—maybe it will be a different story all the way around for everybody."

Many of those interviewed admitted that portraying Jesus Christ as Caucasian has harmed Bilalians as well as Caucasians.

G. Flint Taylor said he isn't conscious of the effect that the Caucasian image of Christ had on him but admits that "it may well be because it's certainly an aspect of racism in this country that the religion you are given is a white religion."

Earl Anthes said he has "a problem with the image of Christ pure and simple." He claims to be "a-religious. I can understand why others are bothered by it," he said.

The World Community of Al-Islam in the West, under Emam Muhammad's leadership, is spearheading the drive to get Americans to "abandon racial effects in the worship of God."