

Part IV of 'Life in a Girls' Hostel' at University of Khartoum in the Sudan

By Bayyinah Sharrieff

One has a choice in the Sudan—to sleep outside under a starry canopy or inside a room. The beds are light in weight and can be carried or rolled outside of the bedroom onto an adjacent veranda. The homes are surrounded by high walls providing an abundance of privacy.

MOST OF the year, with the exception of the two months, December and January, one need only have a thin sheet for covering. It is quiet during the night, and one finds sleeping outside a peaceful retreat from the hot day.

At the University of Khartoum, Sudan, we girls rolled our beds outside practically every evening. Every girl was supplied with sheets, bedspreads and one blanket.

December of 1964 was a very cold winter around Khartoum. One blanket was not sufficient for those who wished to sleep outside. Sleeping outside was a new adventure for me and although the nights grew colder as they grew older, I continued to sleep in the night air. Leila, a student of medicine, and I often would put our beds together so as to share our blankets, and thus be warmer.

ONE afternoon I was given a message to report to Miss Bryant, the woman's warden, and already having had a few clashes with this old white woman, I dreaded having to meet with her again. I found her relaxing on her veranda in a bamboo lounge chair sipping a lemonade.

She smiled as she greeted me. (This was a new approach and it made me uncertain of what to expect from her.) She told me that it had been reported to her that I had been sleeping with a girl, Leila.

I told her that we were both cold and that we put our beds together so as to share our blankets and thus have the benefit of two blankets. She told me that although the rules said each student was to have only one blanket, that she had extra blankets and I should have come to her and told her of my need for another blanket and that she would have given me another one.

AFTER SHE had issued me an extra blanket, I told her that Leila also needed another blanket, and asked her to give one to Leila, since she had extra blankets.

She told me that the other girls had families in the Sudan, and that they were to give them what they needed. However, since I had no family there, I should take her for my family. She then told me of her hopes to improve the behavior and manners of the girls at the hostel and that she also had hoped I would help her in reaching the girls, for I seemed to find easy favor among the Sudanese.

I told her that Leila needed a blanket just as I did, that her family was poor and that perhaps they could not afford another blanket. She said if Leila needed another blanket she should come and ask for it herself—otherwise, she would not issue a blanket for Leila.

I WENT to Leila and told her what Miss Bryant had said regarding her having another blanket. Leila was extremely angry and said that she would freeze before bowing to that white foreigner. She told me that she was from a proud family and people, and that they would not beg any white foreigner for anything.

I was surprised by Leila's reaction. I could not, at that time, imagine how one

would suffer with cold rather than bow down to the white woman, who was, I thought, her superior.

After three weeks passed I noticed that I could not find the extra blanket. I thought perhaps one of my Sudanese friends had taken it as a joke. After asking the cleaning woman about it, I was told that Sit-Ruth, Miss Bryant's Black Christian spy, had taken it. I went to Sit-Ruth, and she informed me that Miss Bryant had told her to do so.

THEN I went to Miss Bryant. She said she had been expecting me. I inquired about the extra blanket. Her reply was, "of course," she had told Sit-Ruth to take the blanket. Did I think I was a privileged character to have two blankets, when everyone else had one?

Stunned, I asked if she had forgotten our conversation of three weeks ago. She then picked up a copy of her rules and shoved it into my hands to read. I refused to read the book and before I could leave, she said that she had expected me to visit

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NEW YORK

Alone of all
has a vivid aw

Communications

DETROIT—(NPI) The lack of communication between white and Negro communities in the United States was the first thing which Fr. Edward Schillebeeckx, O.P., the Netherlands' famous Dominican theologian, discovered upon his visit to the Motor City. Here to give a formal address at the Detroit Institute for Continuing Education, he was given in turn an informal address by members of the East Side Voice of Independent Detroit, a "black power" group.

VISIT
MUHAMMAD'S MOSQUE
FORT LAUDERDALE, FLA.
670 N. W. 22nd RD. (upstairs)
WED. & FRI. 8 P.M.
SUN. 2 P.M.



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her, and three weeks had passed since she had last spoken to me.

I realized then that taking the blanket was a form of punishment, because I did not bend to meet her wishes. I left her presence without a further word.

NOW THAT I reflect on this — after coming into the knowledge of God, myself, and my enemy, as taught by the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, Messenger of Allah, and looking deeper into this incident, minute as it may seem — I realize that the smile of introduction from this old white woman was to induce me to think of her as a friend and then by

extending token gifts, which were in reality necessities, have me work and labor for her in her evil ways.

Hers was the same pattern used by our slavemasters in enticing our foreparents into captivity. Hers was also the same pattern that our slavemasters' children use today to bind us economically in a net of necessities.

MY refusing to take her smile and show need of her token gifts was a refusal to accept enslavement to her bidding.

I now can understand why Leila refused to go to the white foreigner begging for what I thought was a necessity.

To be continued