

Life in a Girls' Hostel at the University of Khartoum

By Sister Bayyinah Sharrieff

(This is the holy name recently received by the former Sister Christine Wilson, writer of this column.)

After I had been at the University of Khartoum for about three weeks, the woman's warden (house mother of the girls dormitory) sent a message for me to report to her after the mid-day meal. I received this message about 2:15 p.m., after I had washed my hair and had pinned it up on rollers to dry. I put a long scarf on my head to cover the hair rollers, dressed, and went to see her.

SHE HAD just finished eating her lunch and her house servant was clearing the table as I approached her on the veranda. She looked up at me, and without a "good afternoon" greeting, demanded to know who did I think I was coming to see her with rollers in my hair? I explained to her that I had just washed and set my hair prior to receiving her message, and that my hair had not had time to dry.

I apologized to her for this flaw in my appearance, and expressed the desire that she understand my position and excuse me. I do not believe she heard me, for she continued to speak of my discourteous and disrespectful appearance.

She told me never again to come to her in this way, and murmured to herself how uncouth I was. I told her that it took me too long to set my hair for me to take it down to see her, when a scarf covered the rollers.

I ASKED her reason for

sending for me. She said she had been observing me closely and noted that I had not attended church service since I arrived in the Sudan, and that she was surprised by this neglect to keep up with my Christian obligations.

She informed me of her intentions to write my parents of this and that it was a disgrace for me to call myself a Christian.

I had not expected Miss Bryant (the woman's warden) to speak to me on this subject and was astonished by her speech. I could not imagine why she thought I was a Christian, without my ever telling her so. She said that I had neglected to visit and talk to her, and that she did not think my attitude was as it should be—and that I should show more respect for her position. She said this with a smile.

ANGRY, I told her that I did not consider myself a Christian, that I did not believe in Christianity that I did not attend church in America prior to my leaving America, adding that I did not intend to do so in the Sudan either. I also informed her that I seriously doubted my parents would try to force me to attend church in the Sudan.

I excused myself and left her company.

Before a week passed, two Coptic students, residents in the girls' hostel, came to my

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room. (The Coptics are people who practice the old Egyptian Christian religion which reached its height in the 6th Century A.D. They are descendants of the old Egyptian Christians. They are very light in color and dress very much like the people of Western societies.)

They invited me to attend a Bible School session to be held in English. I told them my feelings towards Christians, untrustworthy, and spoke to them of the missionaries who have caused division in the Sudan among the Southerners and the Northerners.

THEY SAID Miss Bryant had told them to come to me with their invitation, that I was probably lonely and upset by being in a Muslim country. She told them I needed Christian friends who would understand my Christian background.

The Muslim girls always had been more than friendly to me, and extended their friendship to me as soon as I arrived at the hostel. They assisted me in every way that I could have needed assistance. Whenever I expressed a desire to have a piece of

fruit, or even money, I would find it on my bed, in my cubbard, or on my desk before the day was over. I would have no idea, who left it for me.

These girls did not wait for a "thank you" for their thoughtfulness. The desire to give in order to please another person is extremely high among the Sudanese. If and when I questioned them, they laughed and asked if I was pleased with what I found.

NOW THAT I am a follower of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, I have been able to see very clearly (through his teachings) that this white woman's intentions were to use me as an instrument to play her directions on a scale to which the girls would listen. That is, she wished to use my black skin, and seemingly Sudanese features (as I have mentioned in previous articles, the Sudanese closely resemble the American so-called Negroes and their color ranges from very black to light brown) to get in among the Muslim girls so as to have them do as she wished, by following my example.

To be continued