

Part VI of 'Life in Girls' Hostel'

Tells Divisive Nature of English House Mother at the University of Khartoum

By BAYYINAH SHARRIEFF

Last week, I wrote about the peace and love of Islamic unity in which I lived among 250 girls in the girls' hostel of the University of Khartoum. Now that you have an idea of that unity, it will be easier to understand how an English white woman of approximately 85 years of age could not possibly blend in harmony among the Muslim Sisters by enacting alien rules to govern them.

THE FACT that each Muslim girl considers other Muslim girls sisters, coupled with the fact that they were living in one compound, resulted in the girls considering this compound one large home. There were two girls assigned to a room (generally) at the hostel. But one seldom found only two girls in a room, except in the early morning or in the afternoon at nap time (2:30-4:30 p.m.).

The girls would collect in one or two rooms to talk, sew, listen to the radio or study. Many times one would find up to 10 or 15 girls in a room at one time discussing an event (past or future).

Often times one girl would be relating events in her immediate family to her sister colleagues at the hostel. But whatever the subject matter for conversation, the Muslim girls liked gathering in groups. Perhaps it was because they liked to see an open expression of their unity.

THESE girls compose a lively and happy group. Frequently their mothers or fe-

mate relatives would visit the hostel. When they did, they would bring large containers of food (usually the favorite dish of their girl) and bread and drink. There would be so much food that it was utterly impossible for one person to eat it all.

This was done so that the one could share her food with her sister students. On such occasions we would gather and have a small banquet with music, and perhaps two or three sisters would provide some entertainment. Such was the peaceful atmosphere of unity among the Muslim sisters.

That I was a foreigner to the Islamic society in the Sudan proved to be an interesting subject for my colleagues at the hostel. They frequently came to me to discuss religion, the American so-called Negro and the American society.

MISS Bryant (the English woman's warden) sent for me one day and asked about the amount of privacy I was having in the hostel. She told me it has been reported by Sit-Ruth (her Black Christian spy) that many girls were always in my room.

She tried to influence my way of thinking by telling me that the Sudanese girls were of an underdeveloped civilization and that they did not, as yet, recognize the desire of Westerners (of higher civilizations) to be alone on occasion.

I told her that perhaps my being new to the Sudan fascinated them; that perhaps they wanted to meet me to learn about the American society (I meant the Black man in America) for they only had seen images

of people from this society in films imported from America.

SHE told me of her intentions to enact a law on this. She had hopes of developing their society by dividing and keeping barriers between the girls. She did this by allotting only certain times of the day for them to meet with their colleagues. This time would be after 4:30 p.m.

She also put into law that female students could gather to converse only in the sitting rooms and on the lawns. She further made it a law that female relative visitors to the hostel could not enter the girls' rooms, and that they must meet only in the common (sitting) rooms.

This was a hard blow to the Sudanese girls at the hostel. There never had been any previous restrictions on their visiting one another in their rooms, nor any laws governing their time to meet in the common rooms, nor any previous laws governing female relatives visiting them.

MISS Bryant also had a brick wall built on one side of her house (which was lo-

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calced in the center of the hostel). This wall which divided the hostel into two sections, had a door with a lock to divide the girls and prevent them from crossing behind her house to their colleagues on the other side of the hostel.

This proved to be a difficult strain on the girls, for in order to eat or drink fresh water, we would have to get dressed, cover ourselves in the tobe (national dress) and go outside of the walled-in compound, into the streets to the other entrance of the hostel—for the dining hall was located on the other part of the hostel.

Now that I have heard the teachings of the Honorable

Eljaha Muhammad, and have come into a realization of God, myself, and the devil, I realize that it was in the nature of this white woman to divide the Blacks,

to keep them from uniting to be strong. I now realize that it is the nature of the whites to disrupt the peace among Black men.

To be continued

IN SPRINGFIELD, MASS.

SATURDAYS, 1:15 P.M.
ON RADIO STATION
WACE
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