

Human Relations Specialist Says Racial Intolerance on Increase



Dr. Dapo Sobomehin—"Racial intolerance and violence is on the increase."
by Jerry Garner

Photo by Richard J. Brown

The recent racial attack upon three Black men in Howard Beach, New York, by a gang of white youths, that resulted in the death of one of the men, is an example of the rise of racial violence that is occurring across the country says Dr. Dapo Sobomehin, a human relations specialist with the Metropolitan Human Relations Commission. "In my opinion, from my observation and from the cases that come to my desk as a human relations specialist, I would say racial intolerance and violence is on the increase," said Dr. Sobomehin.

He attributes some of the increase on the words and actions of public officials. "It starts at the top when Attorney General Ed Meese openly fights against affirmative action. While opposition to affirmative action can be portrayed as an effort to create a color blind society, when translated into the reality of a race conscious world, it conveys an attitude that the current problems of minorities to act those hostilities out. Especially when the social and economic policies of the government are placing more and more of the minority population into economic hardship. As always, when the going gets tough, as a scapegoat is sought, and for many the targets are those minorities who, with affirmative action, are taking scarce jobs," said Dr. Sobomehin.

Dr. Sobomehin said even those with scarce jobs appear to take this insensitivity and then hostility to heart. "Although no one can say what exactly motivates them, I have received two reports recently of school teachers acting aggressively against African-American students. One student was strapped to the blackboard and another was slapped in the face." Furthermore, he said the atmosphere created during the last six years of the Reagan administration give no ample cause to ponder on what is becoming of this society and the strides we have made in civil rights and improved human relations.

Dr. Sobomehin said the ultimate question is where do we go from here? "Do we take purposeful action to reverse this dangerous trend, or do we sit back and observe, waiting until the situation worsens, rots and decays into wide-spread violence? Does history indeed have to repeat itself?"

Dr. Sobomehin said he is extremely concerned about the African-Americans in this society. "For the past 300 years they have not yet tasted the full blessing of this society, 'the land of the free.' When, if ever, do they become free?"

Despite denials by the U.S. Justice Department Civil Rights Division, violence-spawned bigotry and prejudice is not disappearing in the United States. Last September, the National Institute Against Prejudice and Violence told a gathering of law enforcement, human rights and community leaders at a conference in Crystal City, VA, that "acts of racism on the increase, may in fact be more virulent and destructive than once thought."

The Institute, based in Baltimore, was established in 1983 and receives funding from the state of Maryland. The organization has been studying racial and religious violence across the nation. Contrary to popular belief, incident of racial and ethnic violence results in far more physical and emotional harm than the public assumes. A pilot study by the Institute found that one-fourth of the acts of intimidation based on race or ethnic origins are physical assaults against individuals. Here are examples of such physical assaults which are occurring nationwide.

- Stanley B. Reed, a Black security guard, who was married and the father of a small child, was stabbed to death by a white man in Portland, Oregon, as he rode his bike along Northeast Union Avenue in

Tips For Expectant Parents

Prepared Childbirth Association will offer a one-night program of tips for expectant parents on Thursday, January 27, 1987, from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. in Conference Room 3 of St. Vincent Hospital, 9205 S.W. Barnes Road, Portland. Topics include newborn care, purchasing practical clothing, equipping a nursery on a budget, and choosing a doctor for your family. The instructor is Glenda Peterson, R.N., a former public health nurse. Cost is \$5.00 per family, and preregistration is required. Call PCA at 245-3196 by January 23rd to enroll.

Stop—Look—Read

The New Partnership in Mental Health: Families, Professionals and the Patient is a workshop sponsored by Delaunay Mental Health Center on February 12, 13, 1987. The first day is a survival skills workshop for families in which current understandings of schizophrenia and its treatment are presented. Professionals will attend both days for a workshop of psychoeducational approaches to working with families. The workshop leader is Jan Larson, MSW, Director, Family Education and Support Program, the Menninger Foundation, Topeka, Kansas. For registration information, call Delaunay Mental Health Center, 285-9871. Delaunay is pleased to offer this workshop during its 25th year of serving the community.

Veteran's Benefits & Concerns

David Collier and representatives from a variety of Veteran's organizations will be available to hear your concerns and questions at a meeting to be held Wednesday, February 4, from 7 until 9:00 p.m. at Sunnyside Community School, 3421 S.E. Salmon.

Refreshments will be provided. Male and female vets are welcome. For more information, contact Bob Morris, 280-6228.

route home from work. Two white men were convicted of Reed's death. A witness of the murder testified in court that the two defendants wanted to "break in" the blade of a new hunting knife with the blood of a nigger.

- Ramiro Lopez was gunned down in Cedartown, GA, by an unemployed white construction worker in 1981. His attacker allegedly told the Mexican immigrant, "You're the reason I don't have a job."
- Michael Donald, a 19-year-old Black youth, was killed by two Ku Klux Klansmen in Mobil, Alabama, in 1981. After killing Donald, they left his body hanging from a tree. One of the defendants involved in the murder testified that Donald was abducted at random and killed because he was Black, to "show Klan strength in Alabama." Both defendants were found guilty of murder, one received a sentence of life in prison, the other received a death sentence.
- Vincent Chin, a Detroit man of Chinese descent, was beaten to death with a baseball bat in 1982 by two unemployed white auto workers who thought he was Japanese. The two men blamed Japan for problems in American auto industry. The Chin's case drew national attention after the men responsible for this death were convicted in a state court but sentences only to probation. The sentences were denounced by Chinese communities and civil rights groups. Later, one of the men was convicted in federal court of violating Chin's civil rights. But a federal appeals court overturned the conviction last September. George Hendrix, the newly elected president of the Portland Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), also faults the Reagan administration for the rise in racial tension and violence that is occurring across the nation.

Hendrix said in a recent interview with the Portland Observer that "the Justice Department has been doing things to create a climate in which racial intolerance can occur." He said what happened in Howard Beach was an example of the racial tension that "lurks just below the surface throughout the country."

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