

# Racism

**It was with some misgivings that The Times assigned a series of interviews that took a hard look at racism in our city. The editors are satisfied that the opinions represent a valid cross-section of the community and these opinions are expressed on this page without editorial comment**

Stories by Connie Rae

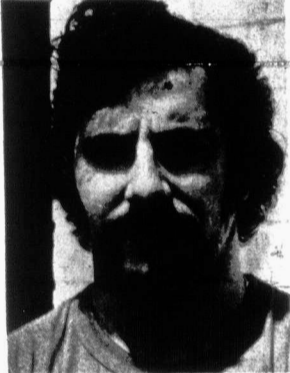
Is there racism in Mississauga? According to a survey conducted at Malton's Westwood Mall, yes, indeed there is.

An earlier survey at Square One indicated most people felt there was some racism directed at the Pakistani people, and we ran into one family who had been the butt of racial abuse involving painted slogans on their car and a rock thrown through their front window.

Our survey in Malton indicated more. Although a survey of 20 people cannot be taken as indicative of the rest of Mississauga, or even accurately indicative of Malton, it reflects certain ethnic attitudes.

Our survey uncovered Italians who hated Pakistanis and blacks, Italians who hated Pakistanis and white Anglo Saxon Canadians, racial rifts at Westwood Secondary School, Pakistanis who mistrusted the press and said they were "no longer passive," and blacks who felt whites discriminated against them, feared them, and that the news media were stirring up racial problems by bringing the racial problems themselves to the fore.

Guilio Sebasta, an Italian who works in the mall, admits he's prejudiced against blacks and Pakistani people



Guilio Sebasta: "I don't like Pakistanis and I don't like blacks!"

(although that wasn't the terminology he used to describe them). "They're too much; I've never seen a Pakistani or black working in construction. Italians come here to work but they sit in offices. If a cop stops them to give them a ticket they scream prejudice and are often let

off because of that.

Another Italian, 21, who declined to give his name, said, "You'd better believe there's prejudice." He said a lot of his friends were blacks and in general the Italians and blacks got along "very good". They hung out in the same places in Malton. "Blacks hang out with Italians because Italians are friendlier than Canadians."

Socrates McDowall, a West Indian, said he felt there was prejudice against the Pakistani people. "I've seen fights here lots of times outside the mall between young whites and Pakistanis. Three or four young white guys will go up and bump a Pakistani and start a fight — I've seen it five or six times."

One youth from the West Indies said he didn't notice any prejudice. "It doesn't really bug me."



The Westwood story: Rhonda Martin (left) says she's prejudiced against George Teichert (left) or Stewart Rogers (right), grade 12 students at Westwood secondary school in Malton.

Three grade 12 students from Westwood Secondary School had differing viewpoints. Stewart Rogers said there were fights — the blacks against the whites and the Italians against the whites. "One white guy who kept shooting off his mouth against blacks got beat up by the blacks and learned his lesson. He had it coming to him," he said.

George Teichert said there was prejudice. Because of some fights, the mall doesn't allow any teenagers to hang around. They get kicked out pretty fast, he said.

Rhonda Martin, felt that there was "not that much prejudice", at least not among her friends. When you walk past the blacks they make smart remarks in

their own language and nobody knows what they're saying, she said. "The blacks don't like our music," she added.



Maureen Hamilton, visiting from Jamaica: "Canadians don't even bother to be hypocritical like the English, but they don't like us either — you can feel the vibes."

Maureen Hamilton, who was visiting from Jamaica had found that in the four days she's been in Malton, "yes, there is prejudice. I don't find Canadian people very friendly. They're a cold sort of people who won't even be hypocritical and feign that they like us and you can feel the bad vibrations."

An Italian said "the blacks sit on one side of the cafeteria, the Italians on the other and the whites in between or mixed

in. The Canadians call us wops and we call them cokes." All the youths agreed there was no racial discrimination from the teachers and they said the school recently held a sock hop and all ethnic groups joined in.

Another Italian complained that the blacks break cars up in the mall and slit the tires.

A white, who declined to give his name, said there was prejudice, directed against the Pakistanis. "They just happened to come over at a bad time, when there are no jobs. The discrimination is just due to bad timing," he suggested.

Mrs. P. L. Hudson, a resident of Goreway Drive who came to Malton from Jamaica four years ago, was more direct. She said Jamaicans found it more difficult to get jobs and it was "not the lack of skills, but the color of the skin. My children complain that kids call them Negro. I tell them other names to call the white kids, but I can't tell you what they are," she said good naturedly. "I know Canadians don't like us," she added.

A Pakistani woman declined to give her name, "for fear the paper would 'manipulate' her remarks. She finally told us she was a Malton resident very much involved in community activities — the Malton Community Council and the South Asian Canadian Association.

"Community groups have been working very hard to prevent racism. They are

taking the necessary action through the school and the parents to cope with any problems. It is a whole concerted effort of all racial groups and I'm very optimistic of the results," she said.

"Racism is here, but we have been successful in preventing more. We live in a good community and have the situation under control. It is evident, with the appointment of Bhai Sahib Ubale as human rights commissioner, that the Pakistani people are intelligent and not dummies."

Chand Mathur, also an East Indian, said her teenager was "very upset" by racial remarks in school. Mathur related two incidents where she worked, at Simpson Sears in Rexdale and at a Mississauga post office, where she suffered racial taunts from teenaged boys and girls working there. "They harass you and make it difficult to work," she said. She added that she had complained to the manager, who has reprimanded the teens for writing racial slurs. It's not all that easy to pass racial slurs, she added.

Another Pakistani woman said although she had the strong moral upbringing to shrug off racial slurs ("I'm strong, I know I'm good and I don't give a damn about the remarks"), but her nine-year-old son didn't have the same strength and it "hurts him."

Racial games are common in the schools, she thought, because her son wanted to play a game one night with his father. The game goes like this: "Let's play a game. Say black. Then the other person, presumably a white child, says 'I'm not black, you're black.'"

She also noticed her son asked her three-year-old to move away from the front of the television set. The words just rolled out: "Move out of the way, you Paki." "He must have heard it a thousand times at school and it hurts," she said.

She added that the teachers were very good about assisting with any such problems.

Peter Hagan, a police constable who works in the Toronto area, says he thinks the situation in Malton, where he lives, is



Peter Hagan: police constable who lives in Malton: "I think the racial problems are worse here than in Metro. Everywhere I go I hear 'black this, Paki that! We're all people, for Pete's sakes.'"

worse than in Metro. "Everywhere I go I hear black this, black that and Pakistani this — mostly among the teens. They don't seem to realize they're people first."

A member of the West Indian Rastafarian cult "religious, not violent" who calls himself Dread Lion ("That has significance to those who follow the faith") says that the problem is one of fear. "White people fear blacks. The more the subject gets talked about, the more people think about it, and the worse the situation becomes," he said.

The biggest problems were in school, says the 21-year-old youth, who wears his hair in dread locks (which is the way it grows naturally). He says teachers tried too hard to find solutions to problems that didn't even exist. "They were over cautious. Everybody knows it's (racism) there but when you bring it up, people try to hide it.

"In school we used to have whites who 'rowdied' up our dances by being

violent. Blacks have trouble getting groups to sponsor them in different interests.

"We're not interested in hockey and we'd like our own clubs but nobody is willing to sponsor us. They're afraid of us. I read racism into certain things I see. For instance, the police will be called to remove a black off the premises, even if he isn't doing anything. A white kid can drive like a maniac and spin his tires around and be a danger to people, and all he gets is a reprimand from a teacher.

Dread Lion says he's a musician who smokes marijuana because it's a natural peaceful drug "good for contemplation." True Rastas believe in descendants of King Solomon and the violent gang Rastas are "wolves in sheep's clothing," he says. "Blacks often get kicked out of school because there's a communication problem with teachers. I want them to respect my opinion and they get angry. I got kicked out for refusing to pick up somebody else's garbage. They called the police to take me out of there," he said.

Two Grade 13 students at Westwood Secondary School indicated that the



Brian Morgan, of Indian origin and Sandra Lobo of Pakistani origin, both Grade 13 students at Westwood, say the prejudice isn't bad. "The higher up in school you go, the more tolerant the kids become. It's worse for little kids and our parents, and anyone who wears a turban — look out!"

higher they went in school, the less obvious the problem became. Sandra Lobo, a Pakistani, and Brian Morgan, from India, said there is racism to some extent and there is a lot of Italian and white fighting. "One or two guys got into a fight and it started a 'rumor' (group fight) with the Italians and blacks against the whites."

Sandra says she's always been treated equal but her little sister gets more abuse. Morgan pointed out that the Sikhs who wear turbans because of their religion (a sign of reverence) get the most abuse because they are so obviously different.

White people don't like this, he says, and points out that "few people can say



Michael Ross, 21, Woodlands area: "Things were bad when I was in school but Canadians are getting used to having us around and things are getting better."

they're not prejudiced at all." Michael Ross, 21, a West Indian who lives in the Woodlands area of Mississauga, said he doesn't find any prejudice now. It was tougher when he was younger in school when people weren't used to blacks being around. Now that there's lots of us, everybody gets to know each other, he says.

## "Members of all groups must sit down together..."

"Racial discrimination is a cancer that's got to be stamped out for the benefit of the children of every white man, every yellow man and every black man," said Inspector James Harding of the criminal investigation branch of Peel Regional Police.

"We are a multicultural society and have to come to terms with it. Members of all groups must sit down and do their utmost to prevent racial unrest," said Harding, a member of the Mississauga Task Force on Human Relations.

"The blame for racism lies with everyone — the white community the imported Canadians, the brown, the yellow and the black. We all bear a degree of fault and we all must work to prevent racism," Harding said. "Every racial group is different and each group has every right to be proud of their culture and heritage which spans centuries. We are all totally different," Harding said.

### RASTAFARIAN REBELS

Talking about racism, however, is a tricky business and sometimes pointing out a truism can be attacked as a racist remark. When Inspector Harding recently pointed out to the Mississauga task force on Human Relations that West Indian people are more inclined to be violent, it should be pointed out that Harding was referring to the criminal element with which he deals.

"Although I didn't call them that, I was referring to the criminal element of the Rastafarian group," Harding said in an interview last week.

"The majority of black African and West Indians are good law abiding citizens who are a benefit to Canada," he said. "There's no way I would offend them."

The criminal element of the Rastafarian cult, however, is the "most dangerous" group I've seen in my 22 years on the police force," Harding said.

In Peel, they've been responsible for knifings, homicides, attempted homicides, shootings, robberies and soliciting white girls into prostitution.

### ABUSE AIMED AT PAKISTANIS

Harding was involved in the setting up of multicultural organizations in Mississauga in the fall of 1976.

The East Indian people (reputed to be about 25,000) in the Brampton-Bramalea-Malton areas were being racially victimized. Their homes were assaulted by egg throwing and obscenities were written in paint on their properties, Harding said.

Children were having a hard time at school and women were having a hard time in the shopping plazas, he said.

Harding said that the East Indian people have taken the brunt of the abuse possibly because they are a passive, proud people and it is not their nature to fight back in any way other than by writing the Attorney General.

### ETHNIC EFFORTS

Because of the efforts of minority groups, racial incidents have been cut down and brought a measure of tolerance and understanding to the community, he said.

It is Harding's feeling, however, he says, that black people would not come to the authorities with charges of racial discrimination, "but that doesn't mean it isn't going on," he said.

The Mississauga task force on human relations is taking a positive approach and the leaders from three multicultural organizations will get down to the "grassroots problems," Harding said.

All we need is a little understanding, he added.

## Mixed communities are not always racist

Carole Berry, secretary for the volunteer Malton Community Council, says there are "not really racial problems in Malton, but rather misunderstandings and problems because of varied racial backgrounds."

Malton has a large number of Italians, West Indians, East Indians, Maltese and Malton Community Council was set up to assist these groups, she says. It was initially funded by a Canada Works Program to promote inter-ethnic relations and the council may be applying for a summer works grant to carry on summer activities.

Part of the problem, Berry says, is that the ethnics have such varied tastes. When attempting to organize dances, different races are interested in different types of dancing, so you have to organize evenings according to the type of music, although

this isn't always easy to do.

West Indian peoples aren't ready to dance reggae (a type of dance) until about 10 p.m. whereas other groups want to disco starting at 7 p.m. and want to be wrapped up by 11 p.m. Other groups favor heavy rock, so the type of music very much dictates who comes, Berry says.

Cliff Gyles, president of the Black Development Association, an organization which was started to assist West Indian children having difficulty in school because of their dialect, says he has never seen any evidence of racial problem in Malton. He has had close contact with the school board and other parents. "I think criminal data would indicate that more whites per population are involved in crimes than blacks per population," he said. Refer-

ring to the recent murder by a Rastafarian, he remarked. "One murder does not condemn a whole race. There are a lot of white people involved in murders and such things as rapes — why single out a single race?" he asked.

We can solve our own problems right here, locally, he said.

A female member of the Malton Community Council of Jamaican origin was not quite so tolerant. She called the suggestion that blacks are more violent "outrageous, deploring and ignorant. We've never had any problem in this community in any form in any way," she said.

"White people should keep their noses out of our affairs. Everyone has a right to live the way they want to live, but saying such things about West Indians gives people the impression we're trouble makers and they should be on the lookout for us.

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