

Living life as a second-class citizen

I'm responding to a recent letter to the editor urging that affirmative action be abolished.

When I was a young girl growing up in New Orleans, I often wondered why I had to go to a black school. Black children were not allowed to walk on the sidewalk in front of a white school.

Why did I have to walk 25 blocks to a black church? I was taught that the church is God's house. Why then was God's house segregated?

Why did black citizens have to go to the back of the restaurant to eat? Why did certain places of employment have signs stating "whites need only apply"? Why did I have to sit behind the screen in public buses or the back seat in Greyhound buses? Why were blacks segregated in hospitals, jails, restrooms, water fountains, parks, playgrounds and movie houses? Why did blacks have to enter through the rear doors of doctors' offices and stores?

And on the trains, why did blacks have to travel in a small car behind the engine while whites were spread leisurely throughout the train? I was told that in the North, things like this did not happen. When I came north, I found that segregation did exist.

Right here in Easton certain plants and stores did not hire blacks. Most of the churches here did not allow blacks to become members. There were and still are schools that are all white. Why? They are all white because Realtors refuse to sell



**Clarine
Boyer**

SEP 02 1995

EXPRESS YOURSELF

houses to blacks in so-called white neighborhoods.

The Wilson Borough police will stop and question any blacks walking or riding through Wilson after hours. Blacks are not welcome in the pools and parks in Wilson and Palmer Township.

A few weeks ago a letter writer stated that affirmative action is reverse discrimination. Qualified white men are denied jobs because of this, and they are angry. After many years of debate and fighting, a law was passed saying that qualified black people should be given preference over whites when applying for jobs.

This act was supposed to make up for past injustice rendered to blacks. Very seldom has this happened. To offset the law everyone immediately became a minority. Women, children, the infirm, crippled, even the mentally retarded. Now all of this was done to keep blacks back. Why do white people hate blacks so much? We have to live just like you.

Why do you want to push the clock back to the 1940s, 1930s

and beyond? Why deny blacks a crust of bread? That is about all the progress we have made despite the law. It was said that there are angry white men. Well there are also angry black men who still have not put their foot in the door.

In Easton, a mayor hired a black young man who was a college graduate as executive assistant. A previous executive assistant, who was white, only needed a high school education. You can plainly see the discrimination here.

A jeweler hired a black cleaning woman but said that he could not hire a black clerk because he feared that people would not frequent his business if he put blacks on the same level as whites. Again the ugly face of discrimination.

Why do white people act this way toward black people? No matter what the color of our skin is we are all born the same way and will die the same way.

After living a life of second-class citizenship, I wonder if when I get to heaven I will be kept away from a white God because I'm black.

Affirmative action is seldom practiced, and because of that, there are angry black men who have been forced to become second-class citizens.

We are all descendants of Adam and Eve, who are black, but who are painted and portrayed as white by white men.

■ Clarine Boyer is secretary of the Easton Area NAACP.