

Easton makes progress up ladder of equality

I have been living in Easton for about 48 years. When I first came to Easton, about four or five black people had white collar or professional jobs.

Most of the black men worked in Lehigh, Warren and Bethlehem Steel foundries. A few worked as cooks and waiters on the now-extinct Black Diamond railroad.

The black women were just beginning to be employed in the sweat shops or sewing factories. High school graduates were working as domestics for white people. Metropolitan Edison Co. had 3,000 employees working there and not even a black person to clean the floor.

There were no black teachers in the schools. The school system was lily-white in those days.



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**Clarine
Boyer**

EXPRESSIONS

I'll never forget how in 1970, the principal of Easton Area High School suspended 25 students, mostly black.

(Editor's note: The school refused to accept requests made by blacks, including one for a black history course. The suspensions came during a time of high racial tension at the school.)

With the advent of the '60s, things began to change for the

better. The Civil Rights bill was passed. The Easton Branch, along with the national branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, began to push for equal opportunity. Yes, Easton did move forward a few inches. A supermarket hired its first black cashier. Another supermarket — after being picketed for 22 days by our branch — decided to hire two black cashiers.

Our local branch has opened a lot of doors and opportunities for both whites and blacks in Easton. Our branch was the first branch in the state to have five days of black history programs.

Today, because of the efforts of our branch, there are black teachers and two black principals in the schools. Our children are now treated fairly by the

white teachers and administrators in the schools. There are black nurses in the hospitals. Blacks are now working at area companies, including Mack Printing, Met-Ed, James River, Binney & Smith and Magnetic Windings. There are blacks working in supermarkets and department stores. We now have about five black attorneys, two of whom are residents of Easton. There is one black policeman on the force. Two have retired. Two black firefighters have also retired.

Our branch is responsible for the founding of the Easton Area Neighborhood Centers Inc. The centers were the result of a black high school boy's dream of a way of helping poor people out of poverty, my son, Marvin Boyer Jr. Our branch also played a part in the founding of

ProJeCt of Easton Inc. Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops have opened their memberships to black children.

We have a problem with the legal system. Black folks are seldom selected for jury duty. Black on black crime is ignored. Blacks are routinely convicted by all-white juries and sent to jail wholesale. Visit the Northampton County Prison and courthouse if you are in doubt.

We have come a long way but we have yet to reach the top of the ladder.

I pray that the day will soon come when equal justice and equal opportunity will be given to everyone no matter what the color of their skin happens to be. ■ Clarine Boyer is secretary of the Easton Area Branch of the NAACP.