

Racism at Radcliffe



This picture taken from the Radcliffe Quarterly is trying to tell us that there is no racism at Radcliffe. It is a lie.

progressive labor
party

RACIST HARASSMENT IN THE DORMS

An incident occurred at Cabot last spring which points out the intensity of overt racism at Radcliffe. Some white students thought that black students were playing their record players too loud. Rather than ever discussing this with the black students involved, they just discussed it among themselves and became more and more indignant. They went to the head residents with their complaint and asked them to deal with these "unruly" black students. The head residents then went to the black students and threatened to take away their record players if they didn't play them soft enough for the white students' comfort. Later that evening, while several black girls were playing records and talking, the white girl down the hall repeatedly came in and asked them to turn the music down. Each time they did. Finally she came in and asked them to stop talking! At this point, one of the black girls became extremely angry and there was an argument, ending in the white girl saying, "If it weren't for people like me, people like you wouldn't be here". One of the black girls retorted, "If it weren't for people like me, people like your father wouldn't be so rich in the first place". As the white girl ran back into her room, the black girl threw a bottle at her which hit the door. The black girls who were furious, demanded that the head resident call a dorm meeting about racism. The residents refused to call a meeting or promote any discussion about racism and the tension that was making it unbearable for some of the black girls to live in the dorm. The next morning, the black girls found roses outside their doors with unsigned notes attached, saying, "I'm sorry this had to happen".

This is just one example of the racism at Radcliffe that makes dorm life oppressive. Black students face the daily harassment of racist comments, are consistently spied upon, and are very often threatened and "disciplined" by head residents and white students alike. When thefts or other disruptions occur, black students are immediately suspect. In Holmes Hall, after several wallets had been stolen, a black girl was stopped at the door, made to show her bursars' card, and then told she couldn't go upstairs "unescorted".

RACIST ATTITUDES IN WHITE STUDENTS

White students, more or less aware of particular incidents and the general situation, feel uneasy and defensive in front of black students because their own racism prevents them from opposing these attacks. Some white students at Radcliffe are consciously and deliberately racist, like the white girl in the incident we described. In fact, all white people are likely to do or say racist things without necessarily being aware of them, because of the racist ideas that they've been taught.

One of the most common forms of racism in white students is the fear of black students; being afraid to talk to black students and being uneasy around a group of black students. Many white students have said that this fear comes from the hostility of black students toward them. White students should realize that they use black hostility, which has a very real basis in the racism that black students face at Radcliffe and everywhere else, as an excuse to keep from facing and fighting deeper racist fears and ideas.

These fears are so extreme that there have been several cases of white students going to head residents or deans and asking them to keep black students from having parties in the dorms. They have said that large numbers of black students in the building make them so nervous that they can't sleep! In Comstock, after black students had given an all-night party in the basement, some white students demanded that parties end at 1 AM, because they felt unsafe with "drunken men" roaming the dorms, late at night. They claimed they could hear the "wild, raucous" noise coming from the basement all the way to the fourth floor. Most white Radcliffe students would think that they are too sophisticated to accept the racist stereotype of black men as oversexed rapists and black people in general as drunken, wild and out of control. But this is precisely the implication of these complaints.

HEAD RESIDENTS BUILD RACISM

Most head residents are not neutral. In situations of conflict, they have consistently used their authority against black students, and in some cases, they have actively promoted racism among white students. For instance, at Whitman, one of the black girls hadn't been taking bells. One night the head resident approached a white girl on bells and asked, "What is the group

psychology behind the black girls at Radcliffe not taking bells?" The girl on bells pointed out that his question was racist; that, in fact, two out of the three black girls in Whitman took bells, and that many white students at Radcliffe did not take bells. When she asked him if he had ever talked to the black student about this, he said that he hadn't. What he had done instead was to confer with other head residents at Radcliffe about the "black problem" and to spread among whitestudents the racist idea that the actions of individual blacks was attributable to a black mentality.

RACISM --- WHO NEEDS IT?

The racist harassment black students face at Radcliffe is part of the racism directed against all black people in this country, and most systematically used against black workers. Black working people are consistently forced to live in the worst housing, send their kids to the most overcrowded schools, and made to pay the highest prices for the lowest quality goods and services. On the job, black people face equally rotten conditions. They are systematically excluded from the better-paying jobs. Although they often get the hardest jobs, they are rarely promoted, because of racist discrimination. They are the first to get laid off and the last to be hired. Furthermore, there are many blacks doing the same work as whites and being paid less.

We think that the big business men profit from racism. Take an example of a shoe factory that employs 100 workers, 90 white assembly line workers, 10 black maintenance workers. Each job is essential to the running of the shop. And maintenance work is certainly no easier than assembly line work. Whites are paid \$2.50 per hour and blacks are paid \$2.00/hour. At the end of a forty-hour week, the bosses have made an extra \$200.00 by paying black workers less, although their jobs are just as essential to production. What this means in the U.S. today (according to the U.S. Statistical Abstract) is that black workers made \$1000 per year per capita less than white workers. This multiplied by 22 million black workers means that racism earns the bosses 22 billion dollars per year.

WHITE STUDENTS MUST FIGHT RACISM

We think that white students and almost all white people have an interest in fighting racism. Racist ideas are only beneficial to the people who increase their profits through the special oppression of blacks in this country. The racist situation at Radcliffe is not peculiar to Radcliffe but exists in every area throughout society where racism is used to divide people from each other and to specifically weaken struggles to better conditions for all people. Whites will not be able to help fight racism unless they understand the racism in society, in the Radcliffe administration, and in their own attitudes and behavior. First of all white students should be very honest with themselves about their own racism. Those white students who recognize the racism at Radcliffe should oppose racist attacks on black students by administrators and white students and should try to get other white students to join them. They should also oppose the propaganda and racist ideas in courses and seminars like Nat Sci 26 where students are taught that poor and especially Black and Third World people are oppressed basically because they reproduce at cancerous rates, and should be sterilized since most of them cannot discipline themselves to voluntarily limit the size of their families.

But it is not enough just to struggle with the racist ideas which all white people hold to a greater or lesser extent. We must raise demands against the people who profit by racism and fight hard to end the material oppression of black people. Examples of this special oppression can be seen in the painter's helpers program at Harvard, and in the racist murder of Franklin Lynch, a black patient in Boston City Hospital, recently shot five times in cold blood by a Boston cop.

White students must begin to see how important it is to fight racism and ally with workers to win better conditions in every sector of society. Racism is not just a vicious and cruel weapon against black people, but it is whipped up in white people to prevent both black and white from uniting to fight the government and big business who profit from racism and from the exploitation of all working class people.

WHAT IS THE PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY

The PLP is a revolutionary communist party made up of workers, GI's, students and teachers. We think the capitalist system is based on the exploitation of all workers and that racism is the key tool used by the biggest bankers and industrialists to make extra profits and to divide the people. Under capitalism a small group owns and controls the sources of wealth--factories, mines and land, but workers produce all the wealth. To keep themselves in power, the owners have developed a huge government machine to serve them. They use the courts, cops and army to crush workers and use the newspapers, T.V., radio and schools--which they own and control--to back them up and divide the people. To secure gains that these rich rulers can't turn around through force and trickery, workers and their allies will have to smash the bosses, cops and courts. We must build a new government, a new society, run on every level by and for the workers. We must build socialism.

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