The Black Experience at U-High

It's frustration, some say, with white-orientated school life

By Bruce Goodman

"Many people talk about the fact that there exists at U-High. But the one thing that I feel they don't realize is that you can even overcome or solve the problem both sides must know what the problem is. Many blacks, they know what the problem is because they deal with it every day.

"But the other half doesn't know what the problem is, so, therefore, they can't begin with solving the problem."

These were the words of a black U-Higher, tape-recorded last year by the Curriculum Committee of the Council on Race as part of a forum on curriculum here (see Garman's Column, page 3).

To help whites at U-High understand, according to the black experience here and allow blacks to air their feelings, the Midway is presenting in this issue several stories about blacks and their relationship to the school.

The stories are based on portions of those Curriculum Committee tapes and interviews conducted by the Midway.

By publishing these articles, the Midway staff hopes to improve understanding of the black experience at U-High.

What is the problem to which U-Highers refer on the tape?

According to blacks interviewed, it is that they can't feel part of a school oriented toward a white point of view. Although the problem is evident mostly outside the classroom, where blacks and whites seldom socialize together, many blacks interviewed felt racial isolation begins with the school's curriculum and their teachers.

"The administration here is all white and the faculty is mostly white and they can't see things from the point of view of anyone except people from Hyde Park," Junior Linzey Jones feels.

Many U-High blacks live in the largely black neighborhoods of Chatham, South Shore and Avalon Park. Since U-High's curriculum reflects the white viewpoint of its faculty, in the opinion of many black students, the school fails to educate whites about black contributions to history and literature, as it should.

"Many blacks feel what they consider the resultant ignorance of white students concerning black culture has hindered interracial social activity between whites in the school neighborhood and blacks from other neighborhoods."

"I have a few white friends," Sophomore.lorum Lorenzo said. "I like these friends because they accept me like I am. I think the reason most of my friends are black is because I went to an all-black grammar school and I'm not going to be the first until 8th grade.

"Many blacks have attempted to overcome the results, to associate with white U-Highers, despite their differing backgrounds, they told the Midway."

"Most of the kids here like each other," Freshman Lionel Murphy added. "I have a lot of white friends and mingle with them at parties."

"I had to," he added, "because in a predominantly white school I just wouldn't have had any friends otherwise."

But Linzey disagreed.

"I have tried to be open and associate, with white students, he said, "but the situation seems impossible. I have all but given up on U-High as far as it becoming a place where there is communication between whites and blacks."

He added that until teachers incorporate into the curriculum more opportunities for frank interracial communication, blacks and whites will remain polarized.

Senior Helen Colvin feels that placing more blacks among the Guidance Department staff could help blacks understand themselves and provide them with black adults with whom to identify.

"But there are other problems," she continued, "which are being articulated; CBS (Cousins, Brothers and Sisters, an interracial group formed two years ago to improve racial understanding) needs to be revitalized to help kids communicate better."

Dr. Hurst to speak tonight

"Black Perspectives in Education," a series of workshops devised by the Curriculum Committee of the Council on Race, will be produced at 8 Thursday in Judd 126 with a speech by Dr. Charles Hurst, president of Malcolm X College.

The Council, a primarily parent-oriented group, was formed in 1968 by the director of the Lab Schools to advise him on improvement of race relations here.

The workshops, according to its planners, are intended to acquaint teachers, parents and students concerning the need for incorporation to a greater degree of black history, culture and urban problems in the school's curriculum.

The workshops, all 3:45-5:30 p.m., Wednesday's location to be announced and their dates are as follows:

December 2-Mr. John Sawyer, graduate student, and Miss June Patton, U-High social studies teacher, speaking on black history.

December 6-Mr. Alpert, a parent of a school student, to talk on U-High's curriculum.

January 6-Mr. Alpert, a reporter for Ebony Magazine and editor of Freshman Minion, speaking on black politics.

January 10-Mr. Alpert, a parent of a school student, to talk on school and city initiatives.

February 3-Dr. Audrey Manley, speaking on health care for black people and Operation Aid, a project to help malnourished blacks and drug addicts in Chicago.

February 7—Rollin Smith and March 17—To be announced.

Sophomore Melody Martin and Junior Joe Thomas

Programs promote understanding

Two new programs are underway to promote understanding of black students and their needs at U-High.

They are a series of workshops on how black perspectives may be incorporated in the school program and a forum at which black students shared with faculty members their feelings.

The workshops are sponsored by the Curriculum Committee of the Council on Race.

The forum, of which there may be more, was organized by the Black Students Association (BSA). It took place Thursday.

A check of past yearbooks shows black students—eight of them—first appeared in the 1947 volume. This year approximately 85 of U-High's 586 students are black, according to a head count by the Midway staff. The school, in observance of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, does not record enrollment by race.

Before 1967, articles in the Midway and Director's Bulletin indicated that visitors to the school often commented on the positive relationship between blacks and whites. But, the Midway reported in 1967, "While there is no division between racial groups—public or covert—and Negro students often are accepted to positions of responsibility and honor, Negroes and white students do not mix socially at U-High.

"The situation the Midway has found, is much the same today."

Fourteen of the 60 students who are class officers and student government officers or representatives are black, but blacks and whites continue to lead largely separate social lives.

In December, 1967, several students formed a club, Cousins, Brothers and Sisters (CBS), to improve racial relations. By June, 30 students—black and white—had joined.

The following year, 1968, many black students in CBS decided to form a new club, the Black Students Association (BSA) (at one point also known as the Black Students Alliance), to concentrate on black unity and pride. As BSA increased in strength, CBS decreased. It is inactive this year.

In 1968 the Council on Race was formed by former Lab Schools Director Francis V. Lloyd Jr. Primarily a parent group, it advises the director on curriculum, recruitment of black students and teachers and community relations.

Photo by Mark Gurvey

In The Wind

Today—Speech by Dr. Charles Hurst introducing "Black Perspectives in Education" workshops

Thursday, November 28—Sunday November 30—Thanksgiving holiday

Today, Dec. 3—Black Perspectives in Education" workshops

Today, Dec. 4—Ice Hockey, Lake Forest High vs. Evanston High, 8 p.m., here; basketball, Francis Park vs. North Park, 7:30 p.m., here.

Saturday, Dec. 5—Ice Hockey, Lake Forest High vs. Evanston High, 8 p.m., here.

Sunday, Dec. 6—Basketball, Friday, Dec. 11—Basketball, Morgan Park Academy, 4 p.m., here; swimming, Glenwood, 4 p.m., here.

Sunday, Dec. 7—Ice Hockey, Lake Forest High vs. Evanston High, 8 p.m., here.
As the Midway sees it

What blacks want everyone needs

Is it possible for a black student at predominately white U-High to feel he belongs? Many U-High blacks interviewed by the Midway for articles on this issue say no. They think U-High thinks white thoughts and reacts only to white needs.

And they feel, for example, that in the classroom blacks are expected to know about their black heritage and culture, so they can gain self-identity and respect.

They need more extensive incorporation of black studies in the curriculum, so all students can learn more about outstanding black writers and artists, black food and black fashion.

And they feel the school must secure more black teachers to provide black models of achievement so that younger students don’t mature feeling their race is inferior.

Though what U-High’s blacks request is in their own interest, white students would benefit from their suggestions, too.

In many ways the nation’s race problem is not black vs. white, because it is difficult for whites in this white-oriented society to conceive of anyone aspiring to a culture other than their own.

White students need to learn that there is more than one legitimate American culture, that black culture—or any minority culture—is as worthy as white.

And it is the school’s obligation to teach the lesson.

SLCC can’t finance causes

U-High’s chapter of Hashachar, a Zionist group affiliated with a national organization, has become an official school club, eligible to use school facilities for meetings and request Student Activities funds.

As an out-of-school organization, Hashachar has proven popular, attracting 25 members. They believe the club’s basic purpose—to inform Americans about Jewish nationalism—is a worthy activity.

But as worthy as the group’s goals may be, its new status as an official school club raises serious questions, because Hashachar is a politically-biased group. Although now supported by membership dues, one day it could secure Student Activities support, and U-Highers who don’t favor Zionism could find their Activities money in part going to finance the cause.

Serendipity

White girl in a black school

By Liz Greenberg

What would it be like if you were the only white student in an otherwise all-black school?

U-Highers probably can’t say, but Susan Gregory, who spent last year at black John Marshall High School, can.

Her experiences in a white student ghetto school prompted her to write “How I Became a White Girl!” (in the Norton and Co., 95 cents in paperback), a diary of her first frightening year but ultimately rewarding year.

The Gregory family—including three other children—decided to leave suburban Wilmette, where Mr. Gregory taught English at New Trier High School, to move into a black ghetto, so they could join a religious institute concerned with improving living standards for the ghetto dweller by improving his self-image and ability to direct his own life.

Despite his duties at the institute, Mr. Gregory taught English part-time at Marshall.

Susan had no idea how she would react to her new black classmates or they to her.

At first, Susan writes, the students at Marshall giggled and joked about her behind her back.

But after she turned up at school with a spiral-bound ankle, the result of a full day’s stairs, friendships started to form.

Susan later discovered her classmates were sympathetic towards her because they thought she’d been beaten up.

One important idea expressed throughout the book is summarized best by its concluding paragraph, where Susan states:

“We, as white people, need to face our history. We must come to grips with what it means to be white. We must confront our past deeds. We must try hard to understand our guilt, but we should turn that guilt around into constructive, positive energy and life. Most of all, however, we must view the coming together of black people with compassion and sensitivity. We must try harder to understand black anger and frustration. We must stop being afraid because we are ignorant.”

Play review

Fast-paced musical draws five capacity audiences

By Liz Greenberg

“Man of La Mancha,” presented November 12-16, proved to be a wise choice to open this year’s drama season and U-High’s new theater.

It is a melodic, fast-paced, attention-holding musical. And U-High’s casts (many roles were double cast, with different actors at different performances), directed by Mr. Paul Shedd, elicited enthusiastic applause and bravos from capacity crowds—700 people—at five performances, one extra.

Seniors David Shapiro and Loren Sherman each directed one production, and freshmen Liz Greenberg and Susan Gregory, who played Garmisa’s Column

By Steve Garmisa

Many whites at U-High have said they do not understand why many black U-Highers have by choice selected black colleges.

Black students group together in the corridors during open periods, before school, after school, and at extracurricular interviews (see page 2).

Taped in September by the Curriculum Committee of the Student Legislative Coordinating Council, the interviews were part of an investigation into the importance of race relations on campus.

What these students said may help white students understand why blacks here prefer the company of other blacks.

One reason blacks and whites here tend to form segregated groups may be their diverse life styles, each group doing its own thing in music, dancing and conversation.

Another reason blacks keep to themselves may be that whites sometimes react thoughtlessly when blacks attempt to assert their black identities.

A junior girl recalled a natural hair style she received compliments outside school.

"But as soon as I got in school," she recalled, "the white students gave me all sorts of weird stares, whistles and stuff."

Not all white students, of course, are apprehensive about natural hairdos. And just because blacks and whites have separate lifestyles doesn't mean they must ignore each other at dances.

There's much more to the story...too much to unravel here.

What can be said after listening to the tapes is that many whites need to go to their black classmates and begin to learn about black culture, just as blacks learn about white culture in this white-oriented society, whether they wish it or not.

Many white students wonder why blacks ignore them because they think only in terms of a white world where minorities aspire to be accepted by the white majority.

They need to realize it is time for them to be acquainted with another world, though in the minority, as valid as their own.

In return, black students who feel they have had more than enough exposure to white students say that many whites need to go to their black classmates and begin to learn about black culture.
Cagers shape up to outrun tall foes

Speed and endurance should be the main assets of this year's basketball teams, according to Varsity Coach Sandy Patlak and new Frosh Soph Coach Terry Kneisler. "They are running their teams in practice more than teams have been run in past years to get better conditioned athletes."

"Having our players in top shape should help us win close games," Mr. Patlak said.

"In the past we were out-run by other teams," he added. "This year we may be outshot, but not outrun."

His team will practice strategy and playwork more than fundamentals, Mr. Patlak said.

Tough competition for starting positions will strengthen the team, according to Mr. Patlak.

"A better bench means a better first team," he explained.

Mr. Kneisler plans to keep as many players as possible on the frosh-soph team, although only 12-15 boys can suit up.

U-High will have to overcome its height disadvantage in each of its remaining games before vacation.

Muckraking

WHAT THE MUCK is going on?

About 15 U-Highers participated in the October 31 "Lagoon Rake-Out" organized by the Hyde Park-Kenwood Community Con­ference to clean up the Jackson Park Lagoon at 5800 South Cor­nell Drive.

"Have we got the spirit?" "Yeah, man," varsity cheerleaders replied to their own question.

"We're going to clean up the lake," Coach Ed Pounder predicts.


"Why are we still here?""asked Bethany Zuspan and Senior Mary Allen as the team looked lousy in the second half of the game. ""This is the worst we've ever done,"" said Senior Lisa Hollander, Senior Ellen Stecy, Junior Vanessa Bush, Senior Liz Greendberg, Junior Bethany Zuspan and Senior Mary Rosenburg.

"Larger swim team should benefit from experience"

With six swimmers returning to the varsity squad and four moved up from frosh-soph, Coach Ed Pounder predicts his team will have won twice as many meets as it lost when season's end comes around.

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Option may get new study

The faculty has given its School Procedures and Rules Committee approval to con­ tact administrators, the fac­ulty, student government and the Parents Association and attempt to secure their agree­ments to more intensively inquire into off-campus privileges for students and together come to a decision concern­ing them.

The proposal was suggest­ed by the faculty at its Oc­tober 6 meeting and present­ed at its November 2 meeting. The study would consider the school’s role in the community, its relationship to the emo­tionality of the neighborhood, how students use free time and community, approval concerning off-campus privileges.

Senior’s film

Man and boy make friends... and winner

A young boy and old man meet on a park bench. The man gives the boy a candy bar and a butterfly, but the boy has little interest. Gradually, the man’s movements become that of a young person, and the boy stiffens as he has grown old. The boy walks away, ignoring the old man, who gestures with his hand to call the boy back. But no mat­ter how hard he tried, the old man could not com­pletely recapture his youth.

The film tells the story, and the silent black and white film on it. It won a March­lon of 10 honorable men­tion in the 16 millimeter cate­gory of the National Film­makers contest sponsored by the Kodak Co.

The 1,050 entries were judged in Ro­chester, N.Y., primarily by teach­ers of film.

Marc made the film as a sophomore in Mr. Robert Erickson’s Avant Grade class.

He got the idea and title for the film from a verse by Ambrose Bierce, a 19th cen­tury writer. It says, "Love is a delightful day’s journey. At the farther end, kiss your companion and say farewell."

Kodachrome shortened the title to "Love is... Farewell."

"Mr. Baab still reals it because of his manner," teachers suggested as possibili­ties for government action a tutorial service, book sale and lunchtime movies.

At the November 6 administra­tor-teacher-SLCC meeting, Mrs. Fal­lers questioned whether SLCC should continue to constitute and fund BSA in view of its exclusiveness. No white student is long.

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BSA, among other goals, seeks to promote appreciation of black cul­tures among all students.

Dean of Students Stanrod Car­michael questioned whether BSA’s ex­clusiveness violated school ideals of non­discrimination, school rules or statutes.

Mr. Henry Kaganof the Legal Aid Bureau told the Midway no state law existed that would bar the membership of student organizations.

SLCC decided to leave BSA’s status as is, leaving any further action about the club to administrators.

Tips for better smoking

The actors were Mr. John Baab, caretaker of the build­ing in which Marc lives, as the old man, and Mr. Jackson, "just a kid I know!"—the boy.

"Mr. Baab really steals it because of his manner," teachers suggested as possibili­ties for government action a tutorial service, book sale and lunchtime movies.

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Before you go trapezing off to the relatives for Thanksgiving

get something for that hard-working lady who’s cooking the turkey. Show her you appreciate it with an elegant silver pin from

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