

JIM CROW'S STILL HERE

Denver Negroes Find Prejudices Haven't Vanished

Editor's Note—How does Denver stand on the issue of racial prejudice and discrimination? To get the answer, The Denver Post assigned Reporter George Brown to check up. For Reporter Brown, the assignment involved familiar ground. Reporter Brown is a Negro. Here is the first in a series of articles based on his experiences.

By GEORGE BROWN.
Denver Post Staff Writer.

The heavy footsteps of a man named Jim still echo daily in Denver. I know, because I am a Negro and I've seen Jim walking down Sixteenth street, out on East Colfax and over on Federal boulevard. Jim's last name is Crow—and I've met him face to face many times.

Jim Crow still lives here, but a citywide survey covering a period of several weeks has convinced me that his lease is running out.

Denver has made great progress in recent years toward the goal of eliminating racial prejudice and discrimination. Denver now has a chance to set an example for other cities in the nation, and maybe the world.

Jim Crow, of course, still directs the thinking of many persons in Denver. He's been doing just that around the globe for centuries. Jim Crow still has his hand in all walks of life in Denver. He still metes out certain jobs of minorities, puts limits on their advancement, fences in areas where minorities can live and restricts their use and enjoyment of many types of public places.

Jim Crow's Grasp Is Slipping

But for all that, Jim Crow's grasp on Denver is slipping. The racial problem in the Mile High city has been attacked forthrightly, and is improving on all fronts. New areas have been opened to minorities. Laws have been passed against job discrimination and housing segregation. Interracial committees have been formed to study and solve minority problems, and many citizens have entered the battle for better human relations. But there is still a lot of room for development.

These articles shall deal primarily with the prejudices and segregations suffered by Denver's 16,000 Negroes because I can understand those problems best. I've faced Jim Crow's subtle tactics and his open hatred many times here in Denver—and in many ways.

Permanent housing for Negroes in Denver is better than in most cities in the country. However there are still many

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Prejudices Plague Negroes of Denver

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areas where Negro money, no matter how much, isn't the right "color" for buying or renting a home. There are neighborhoods where whites become alarmed when an occasional Negro family moves in.

For many years the Negro population was concentrated around Twenty-seventh and Welton streets. A person driving through this area would see nothing like the Negro slums of Chicago or Detroit. But the fronts of these single-family dwellings often concealed shabby and overcrowded interiors—a condition that still prevails.

"GHETTO" EXPANDED.

Since the U. S. supreme court ruling in 1948 on restrictive covenants, houses in other Denver areas have been put up for sale to Negroes. This court ruling should have solved the major part of the problem, but it has only resulted in an expansion of the "ghetto."

Instead of a small circle around Five Points Negroes can now buy or rent up to York street going east. They can expand to East Seventeenth avenue to the south and East Thirty-eighth avenue to the north. The west boundary of the ghetto is the river bottom.

There are a few "islands" of Negro families scattered

throughout the city outside the so-called Negro district, but the islands aren't likely to expand.

FINANCING DIFFICULTIES.

Negroes also face financing difficulties when they try to buy a home. If the home is located in a "restricted" area, banks usually will not give the Negro a mortgage. However, if the mortgage is approved, the down payment on the house is often three to five times as much as normally would be required.

Jim Crow has the Negro going or coming. He will not let the Negro buy outside the restricted zone, and he creates barriers to prevent many from buying within. I tried to buy a house inside the boundaries and I couldn't get adequate financing from any bank because they said the house was in an "area which is deteriorating and becoming blighted."

The brightening section of the housing picture is the city's low rent, "non-segregated" housing projects. And if the Denver housing authority will house applicants regardless of race in all projects on the basis of their need and income and not place a Negro family here and a Spanish-American family there as "token" measures, the picture will be still brighter in the future.

But the city's low-rent projects are not the answer to the growing problem created by Negro families moving to Denver with the new government agencies. The incomes of these families are too high for the housing projects, and the enlarged minority district can't hold too many additional families without further cutting up of one-family houses into six or eight apartments.

To solve the problem created by this influx, rental units throughout the city should be opened to minorities and restrictions on sales of homes in the new building areas in Denver's suburbs should be removed.

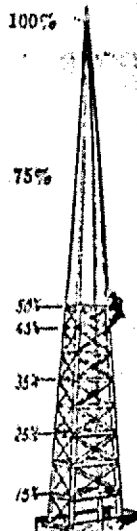
The planning needed to solve the entire housing problem and thereby ease racial tensions must be carried out from the city hall to the neighborhood level. The citizens battling for better human relations will have to go all out against the few unenlightened leaders of realty and financing and establish a secure democracy in Denver.

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