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CURRENTS

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READINGS IN RACE RELATIONS

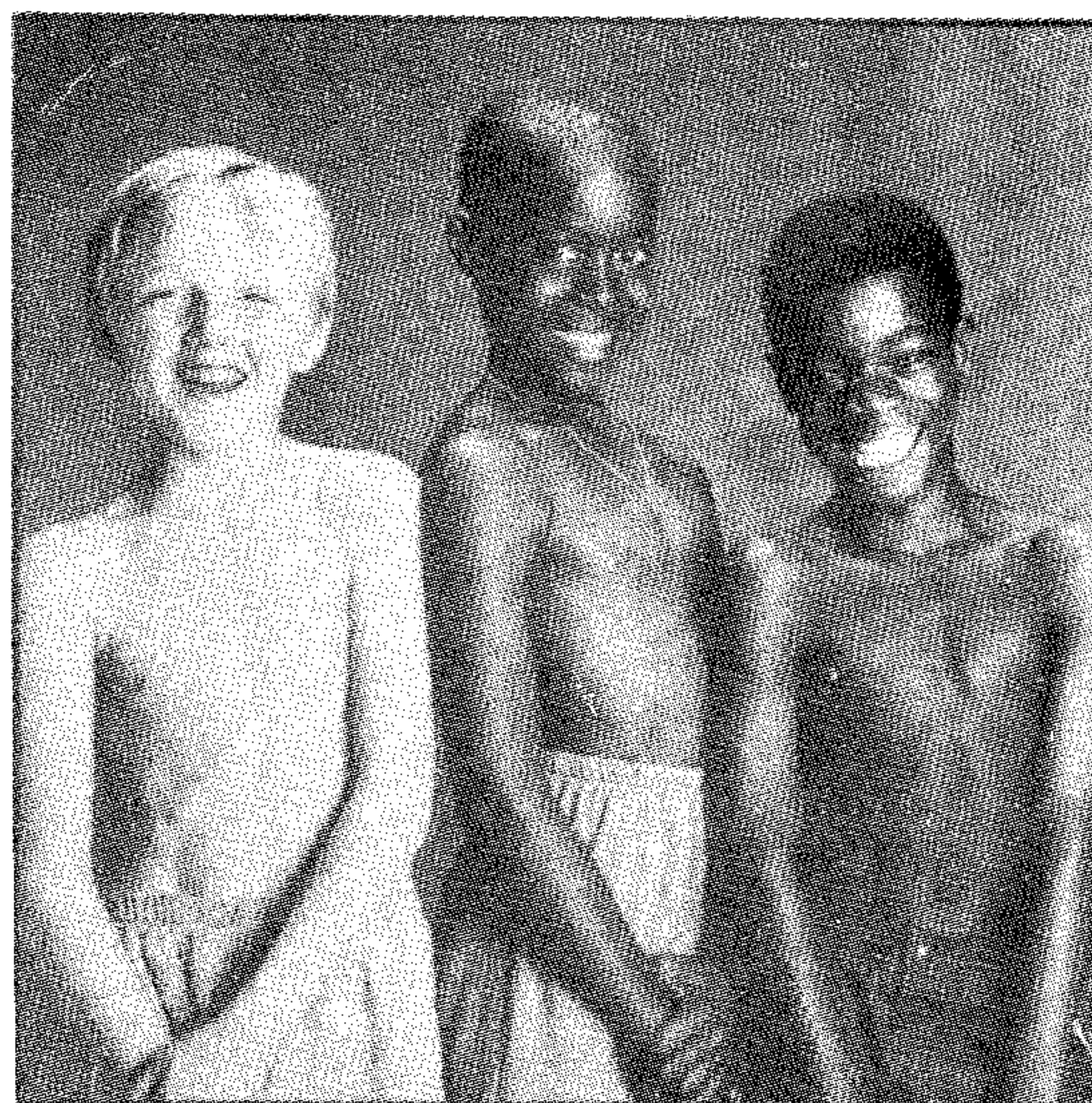
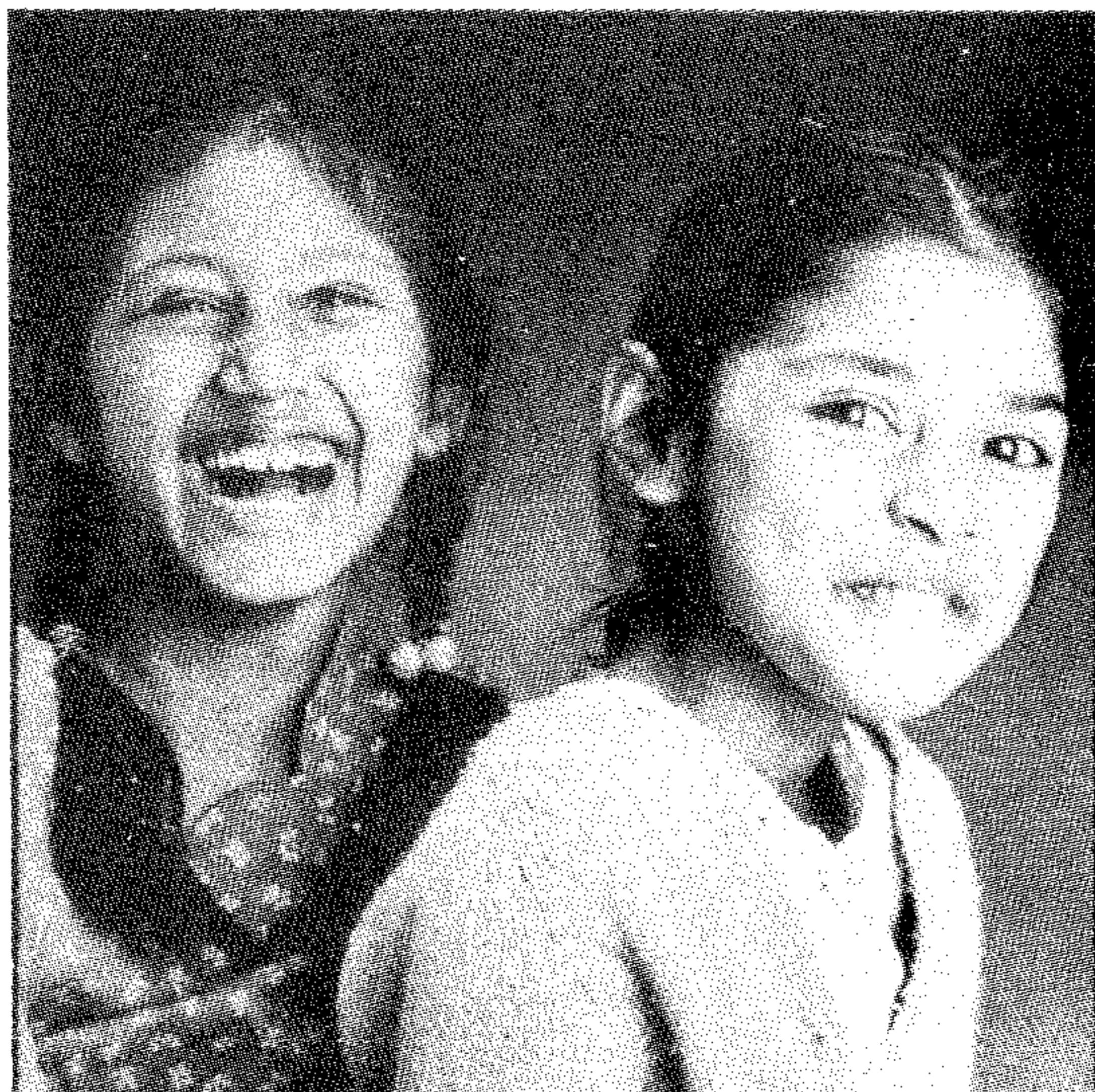
April 1989

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

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Also

**Immigration and Visible Minorities
Canada's Employment Discriminators
Access and Equity in
Canada and Australia**



Price \$6.00

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CURRENTS: Readings in Race Relations is the quarterly magazine of the Urban Alliance on Race Relations.

The Urban Alliance on Race Relations, formed in July 1975 'to promote a stable and healthy multiracial environment in the community,' is a non-profit organization made up of volunteers from all sectors of the community.

The Urban Alliance on Race Relations is an educational agency and an advocate and intermediary for the visible minorities. It works toward encouraging better race relations, increased understanding and awareness among our multicultural, multiracial population through programmes of education directed at both the private and public sectors of the community. It is also focusing its efforts on the institutions of our society including educational systems, employment, government, media, legislation, police, social service agencies, and human services, in order to reduce patterns of discrimination and inequality of opportunity which may exist within these institutions.

The work of the organization is carried out through committees such as:
Educational Institutions; Legislation; Media; Law Enforcement.

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INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

This special issue of *Currents* commemorates March 21 as International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Yes indeed, if only the magic wand could be waved and racial discrimination was eliminated from the world!

As a day proclaimed by the U.N. General Assembly, it marks the date March 21, 1960 when over seventy peaceful demonstrators against Apartheid were killed and over 180 wounded in Sharpeville, South Africa.

Thirty years on, can we say that those demonstrators did not die in vain? In South Africa and in many other countries around the world interracial and interreligious violence appears to be flourishing unimpeded. And as the articles in this issue of *Currents* demonstrate, racial discrimination continues to blatantly manifest itself in many areas of Canadian life.

International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination would appear to be a time to commemorate and remember the horrific consequences of racial discrimination. Sadly the cures are not in evidence. When will International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination be an occasion for celebration? How long will it be before we can mark the occasion with significant events and achievements that actually do help to eliminate racial discrimination from within our midst?

Commemorating International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination should be an occasion to rid ourselves of the obfuscation and muddleheaded thinking about how to eliminate racial discrimination. The existing evidence speaks volumes of the feebleness and irrelevance of present efforts. It is a time for clarity of purpose, commitment and action.

Cultural Solutions to Racial Problems

There are many indications that uncertainty, misunderstanding and suspicion underpin many of the mundane relationships between the public sector and minorities.

Government - at all three levels - has generally interpreted the difficulties in these relationships as a cultural and linguistic problem. Cultural differences still tend to be the basic foundation of race relations and

multicultural public policy. As a consequence the translation of this policy into practice has become largely a process of bridging the cultural gap.

For the minority communities, defining the problem in cultural terms appears to be perceived to mean that they are inadequately informed and educated about the services provided by the public sector. More multilingual publicity has therefore been identified as the major remedy.

For government it is a problem of improving communication with minority communities. Therefore, for government to be more responsive, the bureaucracy - and in particular "front-line" workers - need to be more sensitive and understanding of the different cultures of "immigrant peoples". Governments - and particularly the Ontario Government at the moment - are thus spending literally millions of dollars on "sensitization" training programs for their staff.

Understanding the cultural backgrounds of the major ethnic groups, or even just the new, small groups from places such as Iran, Afghanistan or Sudan, is somewhat of an overwhelming and neverending task. In attempting to understand the specificities of all the problems and needs within all the minority communities, it is little wonder that public officials endure these "sensitization" workshops with little enthusiasm.

The assumption of such training is that there is a definable body of information which can be transmitted and which will help public officials understand and "deal" more effectively with minority communities.

But it is not simply a matter of improving perceptions and attitudes. Public officials are increasingly operating in ambiguous, uncertain and unsupportive environments. They have been trained and equipped to perform a job, to provide a service. But their roles are no longer the same. They lack the knowledge and skills necessary to address many of the problems they are confronting in serving a racially diverse clientele.

In most public sector agencies, it seems apparent that little effort is being made by decision-makers, including directors, managers and supervisors, to assess how cultural and racial diversity might impact the delivery of their services. There is little evidence to suggest the requirements to change policies, programmes or the allocation of resources. If any action is deemed necessary it seems as though the burden is largely being placed upon the shoulders of front-line workers, while the system itself remains unaffected and unchanged.

While the political solution in the 1960's perhaps was to throw money at the community to deal with the problem, one wonders whether the 1980's strategy of mass "sensitization" is not equally misdirected. One suspects that such an approach is going to be found severely wanting in its inability to provide the skills and knowledge by which public servants can unravel and solve the puzzle of delivering services to a culturally and racially diverse society.

Specialization

In fact, its failure is already becoming apparent by the fact that an increasing number of public agencies are being forced to create an alternative strategy. The politically seductive nature of this particular mechanism is that it manages to both address and avoid the issue at one and the same time. Specialization is taking root as the strategy of the 1990's.

In the new age of austerity, institutions are now hiring one person to assume all responsibility for multiculturalism and race relations. These "specialists" have been hired to work in specialist units.

At the institutional level the policy of specialization creates a situation where problems of ethnic and race relations are understood as the province of particular "specialists" who possess particular skills to deal with them. Such an approach presumes that such specialists - "cultural interpreters" - with vaguely defined skill requirements and job functions as a newly minted profession are in plentiful supply. Secondly the strategy of separate provision

VISIBLE MINORITIES AND IMMIGRATION

by John Samuel

may be perceived by many to be simply an extension of historical, colonized status. Thirdly, such an approach still concentrates upon the specificities of "exotic problems". It avoids any attention upon the sensitivity of general service provision. It avoids placing the problems within a consideration of the broader structural, institutional systems.

Racial disadvantage and discrimination cannot be addressed by marginalizing "special needs" to "special provisions" supplied through specialist units. Such a strategy refuses to recognize that most differences in service treatment and provision are based, not on culture, but by the exclusion of minorities from the full rights and benefits of citizenship in our society. Race relations is not a discrete feature of Canadian society. It is woven into structural relationships and it is that which should form the framework for policy development and implementation.

Within that framework it would be refreshing to not only find the answers to the right questions but actually implement the solutions.

Let us not be fooled by the political illusion - through the appointment of race relations specialists and the establishment of advisory committees - of meaningful change. Let us not be hypnotized by vapid political exhortations. And let us not excuse poorly conceived and controlled expenditure initiatives.

Tim Rees

Canada has welcomed more than ten million immigrants since the beginning of the century. The nation has always opened its doors to economic immigrants with attractive characteristics.

In the 1940s Prime Minister Mackenzie King believed in the positive economic benefits of immigration. In the late 1950s Prime Minister John Diefenbaker proposed massive increases in population via immigration in his National Development Policy. In the 1960s, the White Paper on Canadian immigration policy seemed to be suggesting "bigger is better" as far as the population is concerned. In the 1970s, the Green Paper advocated the "small is beautiful" concept. In the 1980s, Canada is again doing some soul-searching in the area of immigration.

No one can miss the changes in the composition of immigration that has occurred in recent years. During the decade 1951-60, 90 percent of our immigrants came from Europe or U.S.A. In 1981-86 only 36 percent came from those sources. The others came mainly from Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

The Myths of Immigration

A Québec author, Henry Bourassa, wrote in the 1950s: "The purpose of immigration was to drown the French minority in a sea of drunkards, paupers, loafers and jail birds from England." This quotation consists of a number of myths - immigrants are alcoholics, poor, good-for-nothing criminals. Since the 1950s, have the myths around immigration changed? Maybe to a certain extent. But there are many prevailing myths.

Myth No. 1: Immigrants take jobs away from residents

The most powerful argument politically against immigration is that it increases unemployment. There are a number of studies on this from different countries. Let us look at other Countries first.

Looking at recent evidence in the U.S.A., Prof. J. Simon of University of Maryland concludes: "Research does not show across-the-board unemployment caused by immigrants, either in the U.S. as a whole or in particular areas of relatively high immigration." The study says that immigrants have considerable awareness of labour market conditions in the U.S.A. and tend not to come if there is little demand for

their skills.

Extensive econometric studies in Australia quoted by Norman and Meikle in 1985 showed that immigrants to Australia do not intensify unemployment in that country. The other positive economic effects of immigration have also been stressed in this study.

Here in Canada at home, numerous studies proclaim the same, loudly and clearly. For example, Professor Tony Richmond of York University reviewed numerous studies related to immigrants and the Canadian economy for the sixties and seventies. He came to the conclusion that there is no evidence that immigrants add to unemployment. For the period 1983-85, Samuel and Conyers looked at how many jobs are created by immigrants directly - by starting a business, for example -- and indirectly, when they consume goods and services. Then the study looked at how many of them are destined to the labour force. The study provided a balance sheet of how many jobs are created by or through immigrants and how many jobs they occupy.

The study concluded immigrants make more jobs than they take.

Myth No. 2: Immigrants displace residents from jobs

There are numerous American and Australian studies that emphatically dispel this particular myth. For sake of brevity, I will not refer to them.

There are however two major Canadian studies I would like to quote. One of them by Dr. Roy won an international award for the accuracy of its methodology and comprehensiveness of approach. Such events are rare among economists who do such studies. He concluded that immigrants do not displace Canadian residents from jobs.

Another two-year study by Prof. De Voretz of Simon Fraser University used the national Census and found that immigrants do not take jobs away from residents. Very often immigrants take jobs which residents do not want. For instance, recently I heard at a Queen's University forum on immigration that some 200 sewing machine operators were needed in Winnipeg some time ago. The employment centres there phoned everyone on the U.I. list. Only two people came forward to accept these jobs. Then the employer was given the okay to get workers from the Philippines. This does not happen only in Winnipeg. This does not happen only to sewing machine operators. Some of you may

say I know a friend in Scarborough who used to work in a high-tech industry and someone from Asia replaced him. True. This could have happened. That was visible. But what is invisible is the number of jobs created by the person in this instance, from Asia. He/she might have brought a few thousand dollars for initial expenses. When that money is used to consume goods and services, who gets work? When the newcomer buys clothes, house, appliances, etc., who gets work? A resident, of course.

Myth No. 3: Immigrants live on welfare They exploit the Canadian people and try to have a good life at someone else's expense. Listen to this poem which was circulated in the Toronto area rather widely at one time.

It is entitled, "Bless Ontario - I Say"
*I come for visit -- am treated regal
 So I stay...who cares I legal?
 I come to Ontario, poor and broke
 Get on bus, see Manpower bloke
 Kind man treat me swell there
 Send down to Welfare
 Welfare say "come down no more"
 We send cash out to your door
 Six months on dole -- get plenty of money
 Thanks to working man, the dummy
 Write to friends in Pakistan
 Tell them to come fast as can...
 Two years later, big bank roll
 Still go to Manpower, still with dole
 Kids need dentist? Wife needs pills?
 We get free, We got no bills
 White man good, he pay all year...etc.*

I don't want to deny the anonymous author any brownie points for his poetic ability. But what are the facts? Immigrants have historically contributed a lot more than they take out. According to a study by De Voretz and Akbari, "There is no period after 1971 in which immigrants did not pay more in taxes than they used in services". And the difference is so large that you can't say, "Well, you made a mistake and forgot to include the tax on parsley or some such thing". The range of the surplus (i.e., immigrant contribution to the public treasury minus what they take out) is between \$200 and \$2,000 per family, depending upon the year of entry.

Though there may be a higher rate of unemployment for immigrants in the early days of their settlement in Canada, part of these costs are met by the funds they bring with them or are paid by their relatives. Many immigrants are ashamed to receive social assistance. I am

reminded of the story of a Uganda Asian who, upon arrival, received assistance from the Immigration Department. After he found a job, a cheque to the Immigration Department arrived from the Uganda Asian repaying the assistance received. The department had not even an account to receive such payments at that time. It was quite unheard of.

Myth No. 4: Immigrants stay in poverty and reduce per capita income of residents

Dead wrong. Immigrants, unless they are prosperous business immigrants, do not start out as rich. Many of them, if they were born with a silver spoon in their mouths, would not have been here. But they are strongly motivated to succeed, and they work hard to get that silver spoon in their children's mouths! And, in a few years, they do very well. According to 1981 Census data, the average income of a native-born person was \$12,800, and that of an immigrant \$14,100. That is not poverty. Nor do they reduce the per capita income of residents. According to studies at Wilfrid Laurier University, though the immigrant earns less than a native-born person in the initial years, the newcomer's arrival helps residents to earn more. The immigrant is not bothered by earning less than the resident initially, since he is earning a lot more than in his former country anyway.

Apart from income, statistics also show that immigrants do better than native born in wealth accumulation. They are 20 percent richer!

Myth No. 5: Immigrants commit more crimes than others

There is a general feeling that criminality of immigrants is higher. An August, 1987, issue of *Macleans* magazine describes the laundering of "billions of dollars" in Canada businesses by "Mafia-style" Chinese drug gangs. When a Canadian of Sikh origin is accused of a murder the news headline reads, "Sikh murders girlfriend" or whatever. Thanks to the media, the impression remains that the criminality rate is higher among immigrants.

What are the facts? In the 1950s, the Department of Citizenship and Immigration conducted a study which discovered that immigrants have only half the criminality rate of the rest of the population. In the 1960's, the Ministry of the Solicitor General in Ottawa found out that the foreign-born crime rate is much lower. In the 1980's, another study said that while immigrants from the U.S.A. and Europe had a criminality rate of 79/10,000, immi-

grants from non-traditional source countries had a rate of 23/10,000. This is less than a third. There are a number of reasons why the criminality rate is lower for immigrants. Before arrival their background is checked and anyone with a criminal record is not allowed to come. Second, their average age is at a level where criminality is not much of a problem. Third, they have higher levels of education and eventually higher levels on income. Fourth, they have strong family ties and are hard workers. These characteristics are not conducive to higher rates of crime.

Do We Need Immigration?

This is a question often heard in Canada. There are only two ways in which the population of a country can be maintained -- through natural increase (births minus deaths) and through net international migration (immigration minus emigration). If you look at immigration in the post-war period graphically, you get the feeling of a rollercoaster ride: up, down, up again and drastically down afterwards. This has been the result of a tap-off, tap-on policy of immigration in response to economic conditions. This plays havoc on planning and administering the program.

Lately two factors have emerged. Many economists believe that immigrants don't take jobs, but make them. Second, our fertility rate is going down and down and down. Much water has flowed under the bridge since the first French Canadian woman who stepped on Canadian soil produced 27 children. In the 1950s the fertility rate (the number of children born per woman) was close to 4. Now it is 1.65. To replace the existing population, an average of 2.1 children per woman will be required -- one to replace the mother, one to replace the father and 0.1 to replace all those who cannot, or do not want to, have children. At the current rate of fertility our population will start declining early in the next century without immigration. Eventually our population may reach the level of 11 million. Maybe, as the French chanson by Gilles Vigneault says, "mon pays, c'est pas mon pays, c'est la neige" -- my country is not my country, it is the snow. We may have to surrender the country to snow.

But maybe there are others who may want to live here. Look at the tremendous population pressures all over the world. There are five billion people in this shrinking global village

