

ADULT LILLIE, continued

At first, when I went to that white school I was just glad not to have to walk so far to school anymore. Now I could go right down the street from my own house. That didn't keep me from being nervous though, in those first few years after I changed schools.

And I missed many of my black friends. Some of their parents didn't want the changes. But over the years, I made friends with some white children my own age too. Pretty soon, I got so I noticed the difference less and less.

What interested me the most, though, were all the wonderful books at the new school. They were newer, they had all the new information in science that I needed to learn to get into college and succeed in life at my highest possible level. I'm not saying that those books were better because they were at a white school. Not at all. They were better because they were newer, they were more expensive, and finally I got the benefit of the education that my parents were paying for with their tax dollars just like all other parents in this country.

By the time I was ready to go to college, I did indeed choose Howard University in Washington, D.C. Why? Not because it was a school that was founded by blacks, but because it was one of the best colleges in the country. Now I didn't have to make my decisions based on what school would take me. I could choose for myself.

While I was at Howard University in the 60's, a lot of other things changed in this country as well for black citizens. Or, I should say, they began changing--slowly.

Now, I have children of my own. And in some ways, we're right back where we started. My children don't go to the school closest to our home either. That's because they are required to go to a school where the numbers of students of each race can be balanced. I don't know if this is the answer. Doesn't it seem, in some ways, that we're right back where we were in 1954?

I returned to Kansas after I got my degree from Howard University. Now I teach students of all colors right alongside each other. I don't see so many students being spit on because of their color like I did 40 years ago. But there are still problems between the races, even here in Kansas, which calls itself "The Free State."

We still have a lot of poverty. Not just among African-Americans, of course. There are too many poor people of all races in this country these days. But, somehow, you have to wonder if race and color aren't still issues to some people in this country.