

Report on the

## 3rd National Conference on Whiteness - November 1998

On November 6-8, 1998 the third National Conference on Whiteness took place at the University of Chicago. The planning committee contained two members from the first conference, two from the second, and several, most notably Chicago Ink, who joined for this specific conference. The conference was managed with a razor thin budget and staffed completely by volunteers from the community. The University of Chicago generously permitted our University sponsor, Chicago Ink, to hold the conference. But the university community was scarcely represented in the planning or among participants. Other colleges in Chicago may have been represented in greater number. The conference event itself was easily swallowed up among many other events at the university and in the Hyde Park area going on that same weekend.

Our planning process, having taken time to get underway, did not allow enough time for the distribution of materials and information about the conference, or the time needed to renew and build relationships and commitments among persons and organizations interested in the conference. Attendance was smaller than hoped, at around 200 persons (no official figures avail. at this time). Still, we publicized however we could, and many new people found out about the conference for the first time. New relationships were explored among activists, trainers, new abolitionists, Baha'i, the academic community, and the media. The latter were there either reporting the event, or discussing their professions in a conference-sponsored dialogue about whiteness and the media.

Some unpleasant logistical problems took place, though nothing to jeopardize the safety and well-being of participants. But coffee was unavailable at times. Lodgings were had to find. Workshops were scheduled in anticipation of more participants. Some rooms, thought to be reserved, were in use by another group. Still, it worked, for those who needed an opportunity to network and learn.

The conference was still biracial (black/white) as has been its history. Given our shortened planning process we did not develop our full multiracial potential. However, we did see some Latino/a support, and perhaps some Asian and American Indian as well. The multiracial community, as such, was not visibly present. In terms of representation by people of African heritage, the conference probably held a greater proportion than the previous two, perhaps 30% (again, not an official figure). This was true of the planning committee, and seemed to apply to our presenters, and to participants as well.

Conference planners solicited and recorded feedback from 50 participants on the last day of the conference. We have also received a small number of offers to host the conference next year. We will be reviewing them soon as prelude to beginning the planning of the fourth conference.