

# On discrimination

We first came to Boston in 1967, and a year later my father bought a home. The house was located on an all-white street in Dorchester. We were the first and only Puerto Rican family to live in that neighborhood.

Our family was confronted many times with racial tension, especially the male members of the family. I remember one incident when my brother, sister and I went to the store. We were cornered by three brutal individuals, and we had no choice but to defend ourselves; and that we did.

When our home was stoned by whites, my parents called the police. They said that there was nothing they could do. I think that was a very prejudiced response. There was no alternative but to defend ourselves. We threw stones back. The way we defended ourselves may have not been the correct way, but it was the only way we knew. When the next attack took place, we were ready for them. This time they used eggs, and we used bottles.

By the time we moved in 1979, many of the conflicts had come to an end, not because we won, but because we were finally accepted. We still had that unwanted feeling, but we were not molested.

Racism is like a disease, and it's contagious. It can be overcome. It's a hard struggle, but not an impossible one.

—James Figueroa

The people who commit crimes of racial discrimination have problems with the Asian refugee's race, religion, dress and culture. The people who commit these crimes are prejudiced. Maybe they are jealous of other people. Maybe they think they are the best ones in the country—that nobody is better than they are. Maybe people who commit this discrimination think that we are all on welfare while they are at work.

Most people do not dare fight back. They just keep calm and suffering with the problems that discrimination causes. Many new-coming people think they do not have the right to fight back.

—Hang Chuk



Lillian Colon

The first time I encountered racism was when I moved to Roslindale. Where I lived there were children who thought Indians were savages. I went to school the first day, and a couple of my classmates started making fun of me and I was greatly hurt.

I was puzzled. I knew my name, but not my nationality. I didn't know why people were putting their hands over their mouths, teasing me.

People had the impression that we lived in teepees and wore feathers and skins. The children who never saw an Indian said, "Can you speak it? Where's your horse? Was your father a chief of a tribe?"

I responded with a scornful, "No." I knew I did not like school, kids and my neighborhood. The only type of people I felt comfortable around were my own people.

—Ellery Levesque