

Rethinking Malone

Activist: Reconciliation must start in church

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AND THE BEAT GOES ON

A lack of adequate medical services. Businesses reluctant to move into the area. Suppressed property values. The lowest median income levels in the city.

For decades, this has been the story of the Malone neighborhood.

Why?

One common answer emerged from all who commented on the latest crime records: Lincoln residents can't always believe what they see and hear.

For example, one popular perception is that crime is linked to blacks, said UNL sociology professor Siegman.

Media images that portray minorities in a negative light are piped into Lincoln homes. Some reports come from as close as Omaha, Siegman said, and Lincoln residents start to apply the perceptions locally.

When that happens, he said, perceptions tend to distort reality.

And Lincoln residents need to get control of those perceptions, Wallace said.

The community needs facts before it can dispel some of the fiction about minorities, crime and city neighborhoods, he said.

"We've got to have a dream. We've got to have a vision, a clear picture, before we begin to put the different colors of paint on this canvas of the community," Wallace said.

Blaming minorities for the ills of society is nothing new, said Soto, the Southeast Community College diversity director.

Perceptions of Malone as a high-crime area, he said, affect those who move there, other Lincoln residents, city officials and local law enforcement.

"We have all been living under a

false impression of what the Malone community is."

False impressions, he said, are rooted in racism.

"It is really an extension of the mindset, that problems in the community have to do with minorities," Soto said. "Once people believe that, they look for reasons to enforce that."

Leola Bullock doesn't use words like "perceptions." She is more blunt.

"It is just as detrimental to white people to grow up with this ignorance as it is to people of color," she said. "Lies, just plain old lies."

"Just get rid of the lies and tell the truth."

CLOSURE

So what are the solutions? What can be done to bring age-old perceptions and entrenched stereotypes in line with the statistical reality of modern-day Malone?

The data, Wallace said, indicates one thing: There is work for all to do in Lincoln.

"We need to wake up in this community and come together and stop polarization from being the driving factor in how we exist," he said.

To begin, Wallace said, developers need to commit to building in the Malone area. First-time homeowners need to move in, and funds for streets, sewers and parks must be made available.

The Malone Center, a hub for the area, needs to become a site for neighborhood children to learn about technology and computers, Wallace said, and UNL could play a vital role.

"The Malone Center and UNL ought to become a model for the rest of the country on how they can collaborate and create environments and opportunity," he said.

These are things that create stability, he said, something the area desperately needs.

Stability from businesses, housing, health care, recreation and places to



MATT MILLER/DN

JUSTINA HINES laughs as she practices a dance routine with her friends at the Malone Center, 2032 U St.

raise families.

"Places for people who want to go to college," he said. "Places for kids to go and play baseball."

Malone, Wallace said, is a vital part of the capital city.

"We're talking about the core community of Lincoln. It is the community that many others spun off."

The crime numbers, he said, conclude that city residents are just as likely to get their cars stolen or see a drug deal in south Lincoln as they are in north Lincoln.

There needs to be a reconciliation, Wallace said, between the perception of Malone as a crime-ridden, undesirable neighborhood and Malone as a safe, historic community trying to reach its potential.

Wallace has a vision of who should lead the reconciliation: The clergy.

"They are the ones who have to stand in front of their congregations ... on Sunday mornings ... and ask how can we just sit behind our doors and think everything is all right when it is not," he said.

"We aren't going to have reconciliation, we aren't going to have anything



MATT MILLER/DN

COI THI DUONG worships at the Immaculate Heart of Mary Church on the corner of 26th and P streets during the church's Roman Catholic Mass given in Vietnamese.

until it starts in the pulpit."

for decades.

Wallace was hesitant to call the new crime data a vindication for Malone, a neighborhood that has labored under negative — and untrue — perceptions

"Vindication," he said, "is only a word that a man of the cloth can speak ... All I can say is that these statistics are the truth."

Bullocks watch as area changes

Forged in racism, Malone's 'black' image crumbled in '60s

By MATTHEW WAITE
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From the kitchen of their house near 73rd Street and Havelock Avenue, Hugh and Leola Bullock reminisced about their many years in the Malone neighborhood.

The memories drifted from good to bad.

Leola remembers when the first black teacher was hired by Lincoln Public Schools in the 1950s. During that same time, Hugh remembers being harassed by police when he walked down city streets.

In many ways, the area's history has been like the Bullocks' memories — some good, some bad.

Most of Malone's wooden houses were built between 1910 and 1930. For decades, it was a white, middle-class, working-family neighborhood. But as time passed, the color of the neighborhood shifted from white to black.

As the racial face of the neighborhood changed, so did its homes. By the late 1940s, the housing stock deteriorated until it had transformed Malone into one of the city's poorest areas.

Hugh Bullock arrived in Lincoln from Mississippi in 1948. He was looking for a way out of the segregated South and a decent home for his bride. Two years later, in 1950, Leola joined her husband, and the couple settled into their new home on 22nd and T streets,

the heart of "T-Town."

Their home had no indoor plumbing, so they used an outhouse in the back.

When they looked around, according to the Bullocks, this is what they saw:

"They saw a lot of poor people, like themselves, trying to eke out a living. Jobs were hard to come by — especially for blacks. Many employers were reluctant to hire people who lived in Malone because white customers wouldn't patronize their businesses. That left mostly menial labor — the kinds of jobs that often couldn't pay for a good home, a decent car, much food or clothing for their children.

Hugh got lucky. After years of odd jobs, he got a job in 1964 with the U.S. Postal Service after it opened up its driving corps. He was the Lincoln post office's only black employee — and not welcomed by his co-workers.

"I was the only black guy out there, and that's what they wanted me to know."

Most of his neighbors weren't as fortunate when it came to getting jobs.

Although the people were poor, their houses were well kept. Lawns were mowed, kids played safely in the streets, and neighbors talked to one another.

In those days, they said, if a black family had the means to move from Malone, their new white neighbors often reacted violently. Angry mobs were not unheard of, they said, and discrimination was commonplace.

As a result, Malone residents stuck

“
There is no black neighborhood.”

LEOLA BULLOCK
former Malone resident

together. Neighbors warned neighbors, and they all looked out for one another.

"They informed each other because there were no signs like in the South," Hugh said. "Black people worked together to keep each other out of trouble."

In 1964, the Bullocks left Malone and moved to a home near Ninth and Park streets.

In 1968, four years after the landmark Civil Rights Act abolished unfair housing practices, other blacks began moving from Malone, too.

By the 1970s, Lincoln's black neighborhood largely had splintered apart, spreading the once close-knit community throughout the capital city.

Now, 20 years later, the city's black population is still scattered, but the perception of Malone as a largely black neighborhood remains, despite Malone having a white population of more than 70 percent.

"There is no black neighborhood," said Leola Bullock, sitting in the kitchen of her northeast Lincoln home. Her husband nodded his head.

City, UNL had plans for Malone's future

By MATTHEW WAITE
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Since its start in 1869, the University of Nebraska's Lincoln campus has slowly crept into the historic Malone neighborhood.

The campus started near where the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery and Hamilton Hall are now at — a two-block area bounded by T and R streets and 10th to 12th streets.

From that core, it expanded.

Much of the expansion occurred between 1920 and 1970. From Avery Hall in the '20s to the George W. Beadle Center in the '90s, City Campus has crept east, eventually taking much of Malone with it.

In 1967, UNL released a Campus Master Plan, the university's ultimate expansion goals.

That blueprint specified that all parking, traffic and residence halls were to be shifted to the campus perimeter. Academic buildings, meanwhile, were to become the center of a pedestrian campus.

In 1975, another university study detailed a "Malone Neighborhood Plan."

In that study, the authors detailed UNL's expansion plans into the Malone neighborhood. They

said the campus's easternmost expansion would stop between 20th and 22nd streets — it now reaches out as far 23rd street.

In 1988, the campus stopped its advance into Malone when the university and the Malone Neighborhood Association signed an agreement.

Historically, UNL is not the only institution that has had plans for the Malone neighborhood.

Starting in 1952, the city of Lincoln drafted — and rejected — plans to route traffic along major thoroughfares through the neighborhood. The plans were dropped in 1974, but their impact remained.

In 1969, the city started buying land between downtown Lincoln and 48th and Fremont streets. A total of 297 properties were bought — 196 were leveled, and the rest were rented out.

Between 1980 and 1984, the city proposed three plans to reuse land bought for the Northeast Radial. The first two were rejected; the third worked out, resulting in Trago Park and the surrounding area.

Mayor Mike Johanns said Malone now provides housing for students who rent for the first time or young couples who buy their first houses.

"Ideally, your inner-community neighborhoods experience that," the mayor said. "In many cities, the inner-community neighborhoods have just been given up (to crime and poverty)."