

Don't call me madam

JEAN CHASE

Returning from a Sash meeting where discrimination had been discussed, I was determined to try it out myself. My maid, Elda, was the ideal person for my experiment so I outlined the plan to her, explained that she might be insulted; that she was not to call me madam; she was my friend and equal. She was highly amused and agreed readily.

WE DROVE to 'Park and Ride', left my car and went to the waiting bus in which about 112 people were seated. We started to climb on when the driver (a young English immigrant) said "Sorry lady, she (pointing to Elda) must travel on the non-white bus".

"How often does it leave?" I asked innocently. "About every four hours — sorry these are the rules of your country not mine", he replied.

"But we are going shopping together just for the morning," I pointed out.

With that I looked into the bus and asked if anyone objected to my friend accompanying me. A few of the passengers shook their heads, the others appeared disinterested so we sat down, the driver grinning.

Arriving at a large departmental store, we went to buy shoes and sat down to wait for service. The woman in charge approached and told Elda that she must not sit down and to go over to the other side. I indignantly told her that she was with me and that we both wished to buy shoes. At first Elda was not

even allowed to try them on until I objected strongly saying that her money was as good as mine.

After making our purchases we went to the coffee bar and ordered. The young coloured assistant said she could not serve Elda so I sent for the floor walker and after a few threatening remarks, he agreed to us sitting and being served.

I knew they had no toilet facilities for Blacks so we then went upstairs to the restroom and walked in. The attendant tried to push Elda out. I sent for the floor walker again (this time a woman) and demanded to know where the toilet was for my friend. She was very apologetic, saying that they intended providing one but in the meantime she could use the one for their Coloured staff.

On the way back to our bus we were both laughing so much that we simply climbed on without waiting for objections and sat down. No one said anything. I intend doing this regularly at different shops where I know there are no facilities for Blacks.

