

Sense Of Lost Opportunity Lingers Over King Holiday

Racial Harmony Stalled, Say Laymen, Experts

By Cynthia Todd
Of the Post-Dispatch Staff

They sat at opposite ends of a 5-foot bench, watching the shoppers at St. Clair Square, the floor, their hands.

In 60 seconds, their eyes never met.

Then, their faces turned upward to answer questions about Monday's federal holiday to commemorate the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday — the humanitarian's legacy — and how well they thought blacks and whites get along.

The men — one white, one black, both retired — glanced toward each other.

"You know how I feel," said the black man, Bobbie Ellington of East St. Louis, a retired state transportation worker. "I think that it is a little worse than it was when he was here, the treatment that you receive."

"During Martin Luther King's time, people would tend to hide their feelings more. Now, they don't."

At the bench's other end, the white man, Don Beltz of Effingham, Ill., had looked away as Ellington spoke, not wanting to intrude.

"I didn't hear everything that he said," said Beltz, a former public rela-

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