

# New game focuses on race relations

## Newark detective tackles issue

By DREW BRACKEN  
Advocate Correspondent

NEWARK — There's a new game in central Ohio.

And Cliff Biggers, 50, of Coshocton, is the inventor. Biggers is better known as a Newark Police Department detective specializing in white-collar crime, who's also the pastor of Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church in Coshocton. Recently he's added the title of president of Newark-based Race Relations Research Inc. to his resume.

"The idea actually came when I was taking a shower," Biggers said. "I was just thinking, 'What could people do that would make it more meaningful, and easier, to talk about a very tough subject — an emotional and divisive subject.' And I just got this concept in my head — a board game."

So the Race Relations Discussion Game was born. It looks a lot like other board games — there are tokens, dice and cards, and the person who ends up with the most cards wins the game. But the discussion questions are the key to the game. Participants are given from 1 to 3 minutes to respond depending on the question.

"What I found is that people are less apt to be frustrated and angry because the time is up," Biggers said. "(They think), 'I'm done talking about this. I don't have to keep going on and on, beating a dead horse.'"

But why a timer? Why is it so difficult to talk about race relations?

"Ignorance," Biggers answered. "Race is the core of what we are, not who we are. I can change my religion, I can change my political party, I can change my partner, I can change a whole bunch of things. But I can't change my race. And if I'm willing to be open and let the discussion take me wherever that needs to go, honesty and respect will probably win out."

### Are you game?

For more information about the Race Relations Discussion Game or Cliff Biggers' seminars, titled "What About Race?" contact him at 623-0449 or e-mail him at [race2bg@netscape.net](mailto:race2bg@netscape.net).

Prototypes of the game are already in use at the Marion Correctional Institution in Marion and Central Ohio Technical College in Newark.

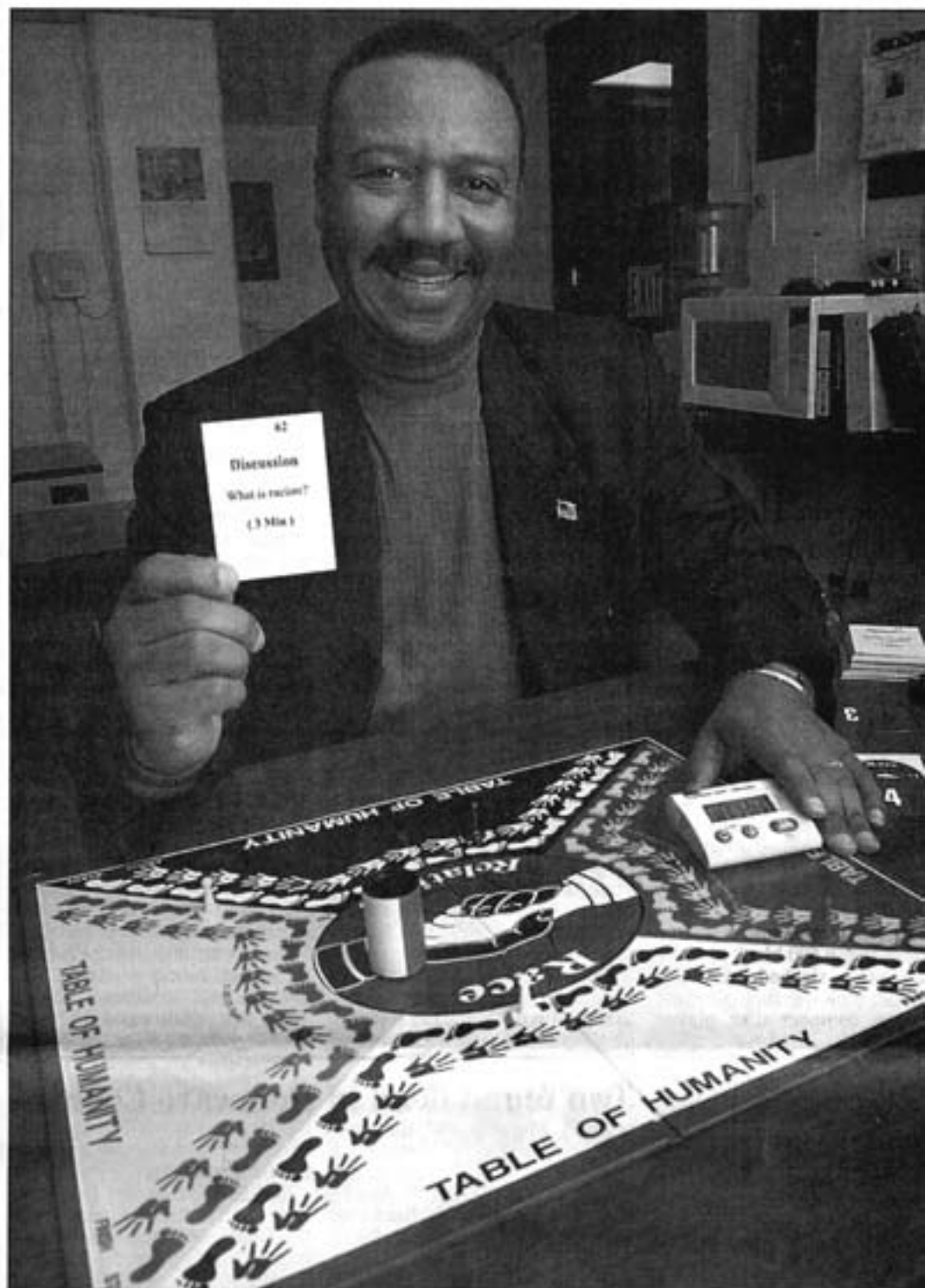
"I feel like it was a wonderful piece to open a comfortable discussion, and I was amazed at some of the answers they gave," said Yvonne Bell, an admissions representative at COTC, who recently had 12 students play the game at three different tables. "And they didn't seem to be fearful. Usually it takes people a long time to be candid and comfortable, but this game sets up everything so wonderfully well, everybody enjoyed it."

That's the aim, Biggers said. And now he's hoping to expand his horizons, introducing the game to his police colleagues and other law-enforcement agencies.

"I'm hoping police departments will catch on and really not see this as a threat, because in the past race relations have been very volatile," he said. "People say, 'Meet me halfway.' That's not my desire. My desire is to go outside of the comfort zone."

Which means it's important for church members to be exposed to the game, too, he said.

"I have one designed for churches," he said. "We know that churches were not as active in putting down slavery as they should have been. We know that racism went as far as it did because in some situations it was sanctioned, and the church didn't speak out against



Cliff Biggers, a detective at the Newark Police Department, also runs a corporation called Race Relations Research Inc. Biggers created this board game to help with his seminars. (Kevin Graff, *The Advocate*)

it. We need people who have the faith to speak out against the injustices and the church needs to be at the forefront."

Biggers' adviser, the Rev. Charles Noble Sr., pastor of Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church in Newark, also believes the concept is bigger than just a game.

"I see this as more than just a game Cliff developed," he said. "It will aid in dispelling some of

the divisions in this country and throughout the world. It has merit, I do know that. And I think the time is right."

Biggers is now in the final stages of negotiations with printers, manufacturers and toy companies. He hasn't yet decided whether to market the product through his own company or a larger one. But either way, he's convinced he's on the right path.

"It sounds too simple than talking about something going to wipe out people's emotions and feelings, but I'm not saying that," he said. "I'm saying talking about it allows people to see themselves as what they are and not focus so much on what they are."

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