

# OPINIONS • OPINIONS • OPINIONS • OPINIONS

## Legacy For All Seasons

by James Exum

Sixteen years ago a man was slain, a dream deferred. The man was the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. The dream was that of an American who practiced social justice and tried to live out the true meaning of its creed. It is a dream brought to national attention when Rosa Parks refused to relinquish her bus seat in Montgomery, Alabama. It is a dream which longevity was brought into question when King was slain on April 4, 1968, while organizing a poor people's march. It is a dream most eloquently pronounced by a man of deep conviction and courage. A dream threatened to become the symbol of the nostalgic past rather than a catalyst for the continued pursuit of racial equality.

The attempt today, sixteen years after the assassination, is to make King's legacy a cause for all seasons. I am often amused when I see a King quotation associated with organizations who seek to achieve their aims through violence or non-Christian acts. Although King's messages certainly transcend the turbulent time during which they were espoused, the commercialization of his legacy has been pushed to the point of disservice.

The dream has been deferred because we too easily remember King's words but unfortunately do not seek to emulate the actions that make those words so significant. The dream has been deferred because too many people falsely deem the words "we shall overcome" outdated since, after all, we have already overcome. A dream has been deferred because the plight of the disadvantaged is ignored. There is no longer a national moral conviction to take care of the homeless and provide aid for those who cannot help themselves.

King's dream found its base on three areas: his commitment to black progress, his demonstration of the validity of nonviolence and his challenge to American society to live up to its moral ideals. The dilemma of racism propelled King to the pinnacle of national attention. He sought to solve the race problem by creating an integrated society or "beloved community." King brought to the forefront of national consciousness the belief that racism is the attempt by those of one race to enslave the physical psychological and social development of persons of another race. He believed that segregation stifles freedom because it cuts off one's right to deliberate, to decide and to respond. Although King was primarily recognized for his belief in black justice, his was a call for universal freedom and justice for the whole human family. It is clear that King was not a man interested in partisan politics but, rather, a leader committed to spiritual salvation.

There are so many who eloquently espouse an idea or a belief. Perhaps the difference between King

and those people is that he not only had a dream, but he additionally set a practical method to bring his dream to realization through the use of nonviolence.

King's philosophical and pragmatic views on nonviolence came from a convergence of the teachings and examples of Jesus, Thoreau, Gandhi, and Niebuhr. Nonviolence, for Dr. King, was not a temporary means to social justice, but instead a permanent fixture which would produce just and peaceful ends. Through nonviolent direct action, King was able to create a high level of constructive tension in a community so that issues that were previously considered non-negotiable were suddenly put at the top of the agenda.

King perceived with remarkable foresight, that in a world of nuclear nightmare, the easy use of violence to achieve one's objectives has lost all justifiable basis. He believed that to face violence with nonviolence was nothing short of revolutionary in America morality and psychology. The committed example of nonviolence in the life and work of King holds continuing promise for us today.

In order to bring about the realization of his dreams, King appealed to the moral fiber of this nation. It is ironic that a nation founded upon the principles of truth, justice, and equality would overtly and simultaneously express a belief in segregation and the alleged inferiority of the minority race.

America's problem, in King's opinion, was that it too frequently sought to separate power and morality. America will never be a truly great nation until it uses its great material power to eradicate the problems of racism, poverty and militarism around the world. Only then will it become a moral light for the rest of the world.

If King's dream is not to be deferred, there must be a new call upon the moral convictions of this nation to recognize the continued tragedies of social injustice. A state of urgency must be attributed to the malignancy of covert discrimination, hidden poverty and enhanced militarism. There are those who dare say that the problems confronted in King's time have been resolved. How tragic. The fact that the president of the United States says that there was no racism when he was growing up, the presidential counselor says there is no poverty in America and that the present administration is content to ignore the social demise of the nation in order to continue a wasteful military build-up shows the complacency of today's generation. A new era in human dignity must be ushered in. Goals conducive of social freedom — voting rights and political clout, better jobs and economic equality, higher education and social mobility — must not be allowed to recede to the pre-civil

## State of the BSM

The BSM performed very well at the first (qualitative) hearing of CGC meeting. The BSM received superior ratings for six out of nine programs. They are the Opeyo Dancers, Ebony Readers/Onyx Theatre, Gospel Choir, Black Ink, Martin L. King Jr. lecture and the proposed Black History Month activities. Programs receiving lower ratings were the 1984 Summer Retreat, Coronation Ball and Fund-raising.

Quantitatively, the CGC Finance Committee voted to appropriate \$10,000 to the BSM for the next fiscal year. This figure represents a 15% decrease over last year's budget. We fared well considering other organizations were cut from 50-75%.

The third and final step of this process is with the full CGC on April 11, in which case, any monetary figures proposed by the Finance Committee are subject to change. Hopefully, that will not happen. Regardless, I want you to understand that I'm not reporting the value of our programs just because the CGC now recognizes their excellence. I've always known, but it is important that you know that the BSM is making UNC take note.

I am very pleased to be a part of these enthusiastic executive officers: Keith Cooper, vice president; Connie Smith, secretary; and Lee Cooley, treasurer. By the time you read this article, all other Central Committee positions will have been appointed, and judging from the applicants, the positions will be filled by some very talented people.

What do we plan for next year? I plan to give the BSM a voice that it hasn't had in a while — that of the black student advocate. And I advocate: 1) the increasing of minority faculty, 2) the divestment of UNC's monies from corporation which support apart held in South Africa, 3) the heightened awareness of racial conflicts on campus, and 4) the additions of academic support systems for disadvantaged students.

I plan to address these state concerns. But I also ask UNC's black student body, do me a favor and think about these issues, and if you think they need to be addressed, then put your mind in overdrive and help me.

Remember, a mind is a terrible thing to waste.

## Where are Black Grad Students

by Michael Thompson

Each year, thousands of students worldwide go the extra mile and enter graduate or professional school.

This is a major career move for Blacks, and, unfortunately, there are not enough Blacks pursuing higher degrees.

Did you know that Blacks received only 17,183, or 5.8 percent, of the 294,184 master's degrees awarded in 1981? That same year, of the 71,273 Ph.D.s awarded, Blacks received only 2,929.

In addition, 32,839 medical degrees were awarded. Guess how many of those degrees went to Blacks? A mere 1,265.

Those shocking statistics were tabulated by the Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights. The facts clearly speak for themselves, so surely you agree that we need to expand our knowledge by expanding our numbers in grad and professional schools.

Many of you may quickly dismiss

the thought of going to grad school because you think it would be too expensive.

You shouldn't use that excuse as a crutch. Financial aid is not restricted to undergraduates, so why should you make hasty generalizations as cover ups for your uncertainties?

All that is required of you is to take the initiative and apply. Fellowships, assistantships, scholarships, grants, work/study and loans (Lord, forbid) are alive and flourishing in the accounts of numerous grad students. You could be one of them.

There are many reasons why Black students stray away from seeking advanced degrees, but hopefully the statistics will make you aware of our academic shortcomings.

The next time you consider graduate school, think about the United Negro College Fund slogan: "A Mind Is A Terrible Thing to Waste". ■

rights days. If King's legacy does indeed endure, it will be up to people of all races and religions to join together in a combined sole force to

carry the great burden that will bring into fruition the "promised land" that the Rev. King envisioned. Yes, we too must have a dream.