

# Editorials

## Martin Luther King, Jr., And The Theology of Black Liberation

In early August, the Black Theology Project held its third annual conference in Cleveland, Ohio. Led by the Reverend Muhammed Kenyatta, a group of about 40 black clergy and church leaders gathered to discuss the pressing social, political as well as religious issues facing black people.

Initiated in 1977 in Atlanta, the Black Theology Project includes pastors from Methodist to Pentecostal faiths, religious community organizers and workers. The group advocates the building of a United Liberation Church of Jesus of Nazareth. The purpose of the new church would be primarily educational and political: to distribute religious instructional materials written from a perspective of blackness; to provide a forum for political and social issues affecting the lives of people of color throughout the world.

In the words of the Black Theology Project's initial position paper of 1977, "Message to the Black Church and Community," the role of the Afro American preacher as spiritual and social activist is still viable. "With few exceptions, the church has attempted to address the spiritual needs of people while negating their physical and material requirements," the Statement declared. The task of black faith to use its "power" to advance the secular interests of blacks.

One of the most important, and perhaps controversial, aspects of the recent conference was the Reverend Kenyatta's position that the famous "Letter from Birmingham Jail" be included as an additional book to the Bible. According to the New York Times, Kenyatta and his supporters "hope the idea will catch on at the grass-roots level and that by the year 2000 a Bible that includes the letter as the final book will be widely available."

The proposition of including an essay written by the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., in April, 1963, into the Bible is not as improbable as it sounds at first. No American gave more than Martin toward the establishment of human justice and black freedom within our history. And many black youth under the age of 15 can scarcely comprehend the hatred and invective that was showered against Martin when he was engaged in that struggle to desegregate the most apartheid-like city in America.

Martin was bitterly disappointed in his fellow white clergy who has chosen to remain silent in the fight against American racism. "We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed," Martin observed. "I guess it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation to say, 'Wait'."

Martin's answer to his white critics who urged temporary acceptance of Jim Crow regulations was uncompromising. He declared: "When you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will and drown your sisters and brothers at whim; when you have to concoct an answer for a five-year-old son asking in agonizing pathos: 'Daddy, why do white people treat colored people so mean?'; when your first name becomes 'nigger' and your middle name becomes 'boy' (however old you are) and your last name becomes 'John', and when your wife and mother are never given the respected title 'Mrs.' ..... then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait."

The philosophical justification for deliberately breaking Jim Crow restrictions was found in the critical distinction between "just and unjust laws." Drawing from Saint Augustine, Martin argued that "a just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral law or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law." Since segregation laws degraded the human personality of both the oppressor and the oppressed, it was the true Christian's duty to violate Jim Crow laws openly, while accepting the penalty for his action. "I submit that an individual who breaks a law that conscience tells him is unjust, and willingly accepts the penalty of staying in jail to arouse the conscience, the community over its injustice," Martin concluded, "is in reality expressing the very highest respect for law."

The strength of black religion is found in the intimate relationship between spirituality and struggle. The expression of black faith within a traditionally racist and oppressive society assumes a political and social character, a commitment toward a better life for the black masses. Martin's legacy, "Letter from Birmingham Jail," would be a fitting and just closing statement to our understanding of Biblical thought.

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FROM THE GRASSROOTS



## Fayetteville State University Students And The Society

by Amechi Umerah

Ever since the word "academics" was known to men, academicians and the likes have been universally accepted by society as people of goodwill and good intent; people the world could look up to for responsible deeds and cogent reasonings.

Then what about our Fayetteville State University students and the society; what image do they portray to the society and what impressions do our parents and the school's authorities have of them? How about our conscience -- do we ever have any?

Of course the deeds at the Communication Center said it all. Last semester the fateful Center really saw for the first and repeated times acts of vandalism and high rated undisciplined acts probably from the hands of our students. No such acts could be praised. These fellows did not really care and were perhaps praised by their own beloved brothers in crime. But there were some honest people that cared and were deeply perturbed.

It seems that out of every twelve there is always a Judas showing up. Let us all, including these Judases, as a matter of pride, grow up and act like college students that we obviously are and become special premiums before our society and before our conscience. What pride do we, in fact, have as undergrads if we are classified as juvenile delinquents with question marks that would always be followed by strong exclamation marks?

## Stopping Library Hassles

CAMPUS LIBRARIES, WITH THEIR OPEN ACCESS AND MAZE-LIKE FLOORPLANS, HAVE BECOME THE FOCAL POINT FOR MUCH OF THE CRIMINAL ACTIVITY THAT HAS SEEPED ONTO CAMPUSES. PARTICULARLY, LIBRARIES ARE SITES OF SEX-RELATED CRIMES--EXHIBITIONISM, RAPE AND EVEN AN AX ATTACK ON A STUDYING FEMALE STUDENT. LIBRARIES HAVE ALSO INCREASINGLY BECOME THE TERRITORY FOR NON-CRIMINAL SEXUAL HARRASSMENT; FEMALE STUDENT COMPLAIN OF MEN SITTING ACROSS THE TABLE FROM THEM AND STARING CONTINUOUSLY, FOR EXAMPLE.

BUT THESE "PROBLEM PATRONS," AS THE NON-CRIMINAL BUT UNDESIRABLE ELEMENT IS CALLED, MAY HAVE MET THEIR MATCH AT THE U. OF WISCONSIN-MADISON, WHICH RECENTLY JOINED OTHER "BIG CITY ACADEMIC LIBRARIES"--NOTABLY THE U. OF CHICAGO, NORTHWESTERN U., NEW YORK U. AND BOSTON U. AMONG OTHERS--IN CLOSING ITS DOORS TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC.

BEGINNING LATE THIS MONTH, STUDENT I.D.'S OR SPECIAL PASSES WILL BE NEEDED TO GAIN ACCESS TO THE UW LIBRARY. OTHER UNIQUE MEASURES WILL GO INTO EFFECT, TOO, IN THE HOPE OF AVOIDING HARRASSMENT TO WOMEN STUDENTS AND FUTURE SUCH INCIDENTS AS THE MAY AX ATTACK.

REROUTING OF LIBRARY TRAFFIC THROUGH ONE ENTRANCE AND EXIT WILL ENABLE LIBRARY PERSONNEL TO RECOGNIZE "PROBLEM PATRONS," ACCORDING TO THE DIRECTOR OF MEMORIAL LIBRARIES. ON A SPECIAL ORDER OF THE CHANCELLOR, PERSONNEL MAY NOW "USHER OUT" ANY PERSON CAUSING A DISTURBANCE. PREVIOUSLY A PERSON COULD BE EXPELLED ONLY IF A CRIME WERE COMMITTED.

SOME 250 WHISTLES WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR CHECK-OUT AT THE CIRCULATION DESK AND EMERGENCY "HT LINE" PHONES CONNECTED TO THE CAMPUS POLICE OFFICE WILL BE INSTALLED ON EVERY FLOOR.

OTHER UNIVERSITIES FROM AUBURN U. TO THE U. OF SOUTHERN MAINE TO WELLESLEY COLLEGE ADMIT THE "PROBLEM PATRON"--PARTICULAR THE KIND THAT HARRASSES WOMEN--EXISTS, BUT NONE SEEM TO BE ATTACKING THE PROBLEM WITH "BOTH BARRELS" AS IS THE U. OF WISCONSIN.

NATIONAL ON-CAMPUS REPORT

Your letters and comments are welcome. Please limit letters to 300 words. Address them to: Editor, THE VOICE, Rudolph Jones Student Center.

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