

OPINION

Editorial Columns

THE CHRONICLE

Winston-Salem Greensboro High Point

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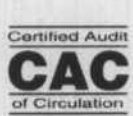
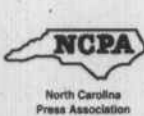
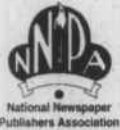
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Making Winston better

The city and several community development corporations are doing their best to make Winston-Salem a better place. Plans are under way to give several spots around the city facelifts and to bring new businesses and employment opportunities to residents.

But we should not forget that physical improvements are only one way to make our city a better place. Perhaps a more important path to bettering our city is by investing in its people and its most promising institutions. That's what Marshall Bass has done through his countless contributions to institutions like Winston-Salem State University and the Best Choice Center. Bass' investment in young minds will mean more for Winston-Salem in the long run than a new sky-scraper downtown or chic eateries. His reputation in this city has been mainly from his business prowess, but his legacy will be his generosity and his ability to see the benefits of investing in human beings.

The Winston-Salem Foundation also deserves kudos. The foundation, especially since it kicked off its ECHO campaign, deserves a round of applause from everyone. The foundation has awarded several grants to organizations working to heal racial wounds and those trying to bring about equity in a too often unequal world.

The foundation's recent grant to the Winston Lake Family YMCA will, no doubt, save the lives of young Hispanics and African Americans in the long run. While construction workers hammer away downtown, the Winston-Salem Foundation and Bass are doing building of their own. The city needs both types of building, physical and human.

MLK Day

Many of you will have Monday off from work because of the Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday. Don't spend the day at home in front of the television set. Sure, you probably deserve the day to sit around the house and relax; we're sure you work hard every day and a little R&R would hit the spot. But rest over the weekend. Use MLK Day to attend the many local events scheduled to honor the slain hero. A popular saying states, "MLK day is not a day off, it's a day on." That saying could not be more true. King worked and died so that we could have jobs that give us a day off. His work is the reason that we had the opportunity to attend universities so that we could get the jobs in the first place. His efforts made it possible for us to own



King

the homes that we come home to every day after we leave those jobs. Remember him and his dream Monday or give back in some way.

See King Day activities in our special section.



What would Martin think, do?



Asa Spaulding

Guest Column

Since shortly after the first of the year, I've been thinking a great deal about the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. As we get closer to the celebrations surrounding the King holiday, it becomes increasingly apparent that he is greatly revered and highly regarded by many outside the black community. It is hard for me, personally, to believe that it has been more than 45 years since he and I first met.

It was about 1 o'clock on a hot, sunny, summer day in Atlanta, Ga. I was sitting in the kitchen of the King family home on East Auburn Avenue with his brother, A.D. King. "AD" and I had been schoolmates in the late forties at Palmer Memorial Institute in Sedalia, N.C. AD was about three years older than I so we really weren't that close at Palmer. When I went to Morehouse College in 1952, he was a junior and I, of course, was a green-eyed freshman. We quickly became re-acquainted. After the first semester, AD was drafted and went on to serve two years in the U.S. Army. He returned to Morehouse in 1955. By then, I was a semester ahead of AD. Since most of his classmates and schoolmates were gone, we re-established our acquaintanceship and spent a good bit of time together.

In the common parlance, it could be said we used to "hang out together."

So on that hot summer day in 1955, AD and I were sitting in his kitchen eating baloney sandwiches and drinking milk. In strode this handsome, "clean" (gray suit, white shirt, tie, wide brim hat, long chain hanging from his belt and reposing in his right pants pocket) "brutha."

AD said, "Asa, I want you to meet my brother, Marty."

We exchanged pleasantries and Marty went to the refrigerator and poured himself a glass of milk. We chatted briefly and then he excused himself.

Our paths would cross occasionally over the next few years — first, during the next school year with the Morehouse Ministers Union. This was a group of students who thought they would be going into the Christian ministry. I was one of those students for more than a year and a half. Little did I know that the young Marty King I had met on that hot summer day would soon become the world renowned Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

I followed Dr. King's career very closely over the next few years, largely through the media and through occasional contacts with AD King. The last time I spoke with Dr. King directly was a brief encounter at a civil rights rally at White Rock Baptist Church in Durham, N.C. in the mid-sixties.

As was the case for most of Black America, I was horrified by Dr. King's assassination in 1968. I was even more pained by his brother AD's suicide several years later. AD had found himself in the '60s, had become a minister, and was working loyally with his brother Martin when Martin was

killed. AD King was never the same after his brother's death. He became consumed by alcohol and later drowned under rather suspicious circumstances.

As I look back at my own life's experiences and those of Dr. King, I often wonder what would Martin think of the black experience were he alive today? What would he do? What would be his assessment of how we have responded to the challenges facing Black America? Would he approve of the conduct of such black leaders as Jesse Jackson, Al Sharpton, or Ron Daniels? How would he counsel us? What about his dream and its fulfillment?

I believe that Dr. King would be generally pleased with Black America's progress in some areas, but he would also be saddened and disappointed by our lack of progress in others.

I believe he would applaud the successes of the large numbers of black men and women who have broken through the glass ceiling, but he would be visibly anguished by the still large numbers of blacks living below the poverty level.

I believe he would be encouraged by the increasing numbers of young black men and women attending college, earning their degrees, and going on to have productive lives. However, he would be dismayed because so many of our youngsters continue to drop out of school, and end up in our jails, prisons and even killed in drive-bys.

I believe he would be appalled by the conduct of some of our so-called leaders due to their continuous spewing of vitriolic venom and half-truths as a means of arousing the troops to demon-

strate and create unnecessary havoc.

I believe he would be preaching non-violent behavior and demonstrations in support of our causes, while at the same time working behind the scenes to negotiate and bring about positive changes.

I believe he would be counseling us to put aside our partisan and petty differences to work together both within the system and outside, to achieve a greater good for the masses of the people.

I believe that Dr. King would be a continuing positive influence on society, including on the world stage, but he would be facing continuing challenges from within. Sadly, many of his detractors would be so-called "friends" who feel he is passe and that his presence would be blocking their opportunities for leadership.

The list of issues and items of concerns to Dr. King could go on and on. But in the final analysis, I believe he would have been a catalyst for bringing about positive changes in society. No doubt he would have been frustrated by the inordinately long time it would take to achieve worthwhile objectives. He would have had a difficult time dealing with his dream deferred.

As we celebrate the life and death of Dr. King, we should remember that God never makes a mistake. Perhaps, had he not died when he did, the way he did, he might have become a symbol of our society's good intentions.

ASA SPAULDING is a Triangle-based management consultant. His e-mail address is: "aspauldingjr@cs.com"

Thanks for not prejudging me

Jamal Toshumba

Guest Columnist

To a lady and everyone like you A thank you note ... with an apology:

I could offer an excuse but there is really no excuse for prejudging, stereotyping or judging a book by its cover. Well, let me start at the beginning. It is two days after Christmas and I am at the mall taking advantage of the sales, sales and more sales. With more than two and a half hours of walking and shopping under my belt, I thought this is a good time to take a break and get off my feet. This is when I sought respite, by taking a seat where other shoppers were congregating.

I spotted enough room to squeeze in and was making my way once I made eye contact with a well manicured, smartly attired, mid-forty-ish, middle class, female quietly eating a light lunch. Unbeknownst to

me, as I was taking my seat thinking I had made this person to a "t," I found myself sitting next to an opened, unmonitored purse with a coat partially covering it with several packages. Once becoming aware of my situation I prepared for the inevitable. This nice, mannerly woman would quietly and unassumingly move her items closer to her and away from me.

A few moments passed and nothing happened. A few more moments passed still nothing took place. Now as curious as it might seem I started to get concerned that this lady was not more attentive to her packages and purse.

What I thought would be a typical encounter never took place. This lady was not acting as I anticipated and now it was perplexing that there was no noticeable recognition by this lady of my presence and my proximity to her items. This concern continued. I began feeling uneasy about this lady giving so little attention to her purse and packages. Hence, I began my vigil of watching and carefully

noticing any and everyone in the vicinity. I found myself becoming nervous and actually considered tapping her, and asking her to keep a closer watch of her things. But before it got to that point, she finished her snack, turned and picked up her belongings, gently smiled at me and walked off.

Then sitting there and processing what just took place, it dawned on me that I should have stopped her before she left to say, "Thank you," because perhaps to her nothing of any significance took place, but for me, it was something special and I will be eternally grateful.

I am sure almost anyone reading this is thinking "no big deal." But for me, I was just given a nice gift — the gift of not being prejudged.... Oh, by the way, did I bother to mention, I am 6 feet tall, 165 pounds with a full beard ... and I am black. Needless to say, the woman I was sitting next to was white. Now do you understand the significance?

I have taken the time to write this thank-you note to this

woman because without her knowledge she gave me a wonderful gift. It is not often that as a black man you are shown this attitude from white America. I have become cynical over the years and have come to expect just the opposite. But this woman gracefully reminded me that I should not do to others what I desire when it is done to me. Yes, I was wrong, very wrong for prejudging her and what her actions would be when I sat beside her and her items.

So please, I humbly ask you to accept this thank-you note because your gift to me was genuine. I apologize for lumping you in a general category and stereotyping you based solely on your appearance or linking you to some previous experience that was humiliating or unpleasant. I was reminded of an important lesson. Thank you and I do apologize.

Jamal Toshumba, M.A., LPCIC, is the owner/operator of C.A.P.P.S. (Children and Parents Partnership Services), a counseling and consulting agency.

Submit letters and columns to:
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