

something in common

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Recently Jesse Jackson's indiscretions have been the object of much debate. America, and more specifically its African-American population, was appalled to hear of the Rev. Jackson's fathering a child out of wedlock. "How could a 'Reverend' do such a thing?", people asked. "How could Jackson be such a hypocrite?", inquired the media.

But may I be bold enough to ask, what is the big deal?

Jesse Jackson's first response to his circumstance mirrored every individual's actions when they are wrong: cover it up. However, unlike Bill Clinton - and Senator Packwood, Newt Gingrich and Bob Livingston - Jackson avoided further shame by publicly announcing his misdeed.

Sadly, this is not the first time a prominent black figure has found himself in this situation. Jackson joins the illustrious company of Irvin "Magic" Johnson and Bill Cosby in the annals of infidelity.

Magic, who contracted the HIV virus from his extra-marital affairs, became an AIDS awareness poster boy and is now enjoying success as a businessman.

Bill Cosby served as America's father for over eight years on his self-titled NBC television show. The news of his infidelity temporarily shocked his supporters, but all has been forgiven and forgotten.

But what about the good Reverend Jackson? Jackson clearly is not the first minister to be caught having an extra-marital affair.

Despite the title, Jackson is only human and flawed like every one of us. Being an ordained minister does nothing to curb Jackson's carnal desires; and his prominence certainly doesn't do much to reduce temptation. He just gets the unique pleasure of having national attention fixed on his mistake.

Though many still find it difficult to discuss, there was another great man of God who shared Jackson's weak-

ness.

The extra-marital exploits of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. have been widely documented in the years since his passing. UNC-CH Professor Chuck Stone, who was acquainted with King, often points this out, referring to King as "a sexual tiger." However, because of Dr. King's awesome contributions to the Civil Rights Movement and to the world, his foibles are forgotten and ignored. We do not live in a time where such discretion is even imaginable.

If Martin would have had to overcome CNN, Headline News and the World Wide Web along with every conventional method of media and communication probing into his personal affairs, would he have made such great strides in the struggle for equality?

Perhaps we are focusing our attention in the wrong direction. Instead of pointing fingers at Jackson, the African-American community should assess what will result from his actions.

Recently, Jackson has been a political voice for black Americans. He has been the loudest advocate for the Florida disenfranchisement claim; he was also emerging as one of President Bush's most strident and effective opponents.

In addition to injuring and temporarily stopping his fight against Bush. Jesse Jackson also lost an opportunity to become president of the Democratic National Convention.

Now the black community must consider ways to soften the blow to its recent political image. Jackson has shown his flaws, and he is being properly impaled for the irresponsibility of his actions. But he has always selflessly fought the good fight. He has always stood and been counted when we needed someone to be - and even when we didn't. As a united community, we need to learn from his mistakes. Let us always remember, only the individual without sin has the right to cast the first stone.

