

# FORUM

## Remembering Dr. King and 'The Other America'



**Charlene Crowell**  
Guest Columnist

Once again on the third Monday in January, much of the nation will mark the life of the late Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Countless programs and events will no doubt recall several of his famous speeches from the 1963 March on

Washington's "I Have A Dream" to his "I've Been to the Mountaintop" delivered in Memphis during the 1968 sanitation workers' strike.

In a life of only 39 years, Dr. King captured global attention in his valiant, nonviolent fight for the values of freedom, justice and equality. Preaching and fighting for long overdue citizenship rights first promised to all in the Declaration of Independence, he championed economic justice – especially for blacks to have safe, decent, and affordable housing. He also called for full participation in the economy, and an end to financial exploitation.

Now 51 years since his assassination, his words still strike a resonant chord. His words -- written as prose but markedly poetic--remain as timely as they are timeless.

"There are so many problems facing our nation and our world, that one could just take off anywhere," Dr. King said in a speech delivered on April 14, 1967 at Stanford University.

Entitled, "The Other America," Dr. King began by recapping the nation's bounty and beauty, noting how "America is overflowing with the milk of prosperity and the honey of opportunity," and how "millions of young people grow up in the sunlight of opportunity."

For his audience, those comments almost certainly reflected the lifestyles of the students attending one of the nation's elite educational institutions.

In his inimitable Baptist cadence, Dr. King then went on to speak of the "Other America" that was equally real but far removed from the commonplace privilege associated with Stanford.

"Little children in this other America are forced to grow up with clouds of inferiority forming every day in their little mental skies. As we look at this other America, we see it as an arena of blasted hopes and shattered dreams," said Dr. King. "It's more difficult today because we are struggling for genuine equality. It's much easier to integrate a lunch counter than it is to guarantee a livable income and a good solid job. It's much easier to guarantee the right to vote than it is to guarantee the right to live in sanitary, decent housing conditions."

In 2019 the two Americas Dr. King wrote about still remain. A nation once lauded for its enviable and expanding middle class has evolved into a nation of people who are either growing wealthy or growing poor. In this unfortunate process, the nation's envied middle class is vanishing.

Historically, homeownership has been a reliable measure of the nation's middle class. Late last year it stood at 64.4 percent according to the Census Bureau. Yet when race and ethnicity are added, who owns a home today discloses a far different picture. White homeownership was higher than the national average at 73.1 percent.

But blacks still suffering from the financial losses from the now decade-old foreclosure crisis had a homeownership rate of 41.7 percent, lower than its pre-housing crisis rate of 47.7 percent. Today's black homeownership resembles the same levels experienced at the time of the 1968 Fair Housing Act's passage.

Latino homeownership today is higher than that of blacks at 46.3 percent; but still lower than its earlier pre-crisis rate of 47.7 percent.

Housing also remains troubled for renters as well. According to the National Low-Income Housing Coalition, the nation lacks more than 7 million affordable rental homes that affect 43.8 million families. Moreover, 11 million families pay more than half of their income on housing and are considered severely-cost burdened.

As of January 3, over 1,100 HUD contracts with landlords for its Section 8 rental voucher program expired. By February, another 1,000 more contracts are expected to

expire. At press time, the stalemated federal government shutdown continued, leaving millions of people uncertain about their lives, or livelihoods or both. While landlords and HUD figure out the paperwork, 1.2 million families relying on this vital rental support program remain at risk.

Also caught in partisan bickering of a federal government shutdown are men and women – the military and civil servants - whose service to the country is deemed so essential that they must continue to work without knowing when another paycheck will arrive. Another 800,000 furloughed federal workers may be at home; but like others affected by the shutdown, they too still need to pay their rent or mortgage, honor their financial obligations and take care of children as best they can.

When times are tough financially, a range of predatory lenders seize opportunities to tempt those who are hard-pressed for cash with interest rates on loans that would make a bookie blush. When a loan of only a few hundred dollars comes with interest payments that double or triple the cash borrowed, predatory lenders are ready to exploit those with few or no financial options.

Those who are unpaid or underemployed – those who are working but failing to earn a salary comparable to their education and training, student loan repayments can take a financial backseat to housing, utilities, or other daily living needs.

At press deadline, the federal shutdown was approaching the 1995 shutdown record of 21 days.

In 1967 Dr. King advised his Stanford University audience, "Somewhere we must come to see that social progress never rolls in on the wheels of inevitability. It comes through the tireless efforts and the persistent work of dedicated individuals.... And so we must help them, and we must realize that the time is always right to do right."

*This year, may we all honor Dr. King and do our respective efforts to make America live up to its promise of opportunity for all.*

## Hotel apologizes to African-American man they kicked out



**James B. Ewers Jr.**  
Guest Columnist

I was born into segregation and know the evils of separate but equal. However, America has come a long way since the days of separate water fountains and accommodations simply based upon your race.

Some would say that the current immigration problem is simply a problem of race and ethnicity. If you look at the history of race and racism in this country, it is hard to give a counter point of view.

It appears that no matter how hard we try that racist behavior by some members of our beloved community continues to put a stain on this country. While some would say differently, I believe the present tone in America empowers racism. I call it RWA (racism without apology). People of ill will commit racist acts and think nothing of it.

Recently in Portland, Oregon, a black man was on the receiving end of a racist act. Jermaine Massey, an African-American male was a registered guest at the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel. He was in the city attending a concert by rapper Travis Scott.

Jermaine Massey was in the hotel lobby calling his mother. A DoubleTree security guard asked Massey to leave the hotel property. This is after finding out that he was a registered guest in the hotel. The incident has prompted the hotel to fire the security guard and another employee.

Of course, apologies have been non-stop since the incident. Paul Peralta, general manager at the hotel, has issued an apology. The mayor of Portland, Ted Wheeler said, "It is deeply troubling to hear about Mr. Massey's experience with discrimination." And lastly, the Hilton Hotel Corporate Offices have also issued an apology saying that it is not consistent with their values.

The next steps according to the hotel will be to launch an investigation which will get to the bottom of it. Well, in my opinion, the bottom of it is that this highly regarded hotel hired two racist employees. This incident has some similarities to what happened at a Starbucks last year in Philadelphia. As with Starbucks, I wouldn't be surprised if the Hilton Hotel has its employees undergo diversity training. Diversity training has its merits. It gives employees a set of guidelines and principles regarding employee behavior and customer service. Role playing and developing better communication skills are components of these training sessions. Equally as important is that they teach you how to value and respect people that are different than

you. Diversity training and when it occurs depends upon the organization. We will have to wait to see what approach the Hilton takes. However not to engage in some level of diversity training would be a mistake. I will say to the Hilton that the public is watching to see what you do.

While we try to convince ourselves otherwise, race matters in the United States of America. While there may be another view, many of these uprisings involve African American males.

Jermaine Massey was sitting as a registered guest in a hotel lobby. What was his crime? His blackness? Am I being overly sensitive? Dr. Cornell West wrote a book entitled Race Matters in 1993. It tackles an uncomfortable topic for a lot of people and that is race. Too many of us are wandering around in a racial wilderness.

Let's do better. We must!  
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## New Documentary Threatens to Expose Michael Jackson as Child Predator

BY STACY M. BROWN, NNPA NEWSWIRE CORRESPONDENT  
SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

First R. Kelly. Now it's the late King of Pop. After the scathing and gut-wrenching Lifetime Television documentary, "Surviving R. Kelly," shed more light on the alleged crimes of the R&B crooner, a new film about Michael Jackson threatens to do the same to the late "Thriller" singer.

The Wrap reports that the 2019 Sundance Film Festival has added a documentary that will focus on two men: (presumably) choreographer Wade Robson and James Safechuck, who say they were sexually abused by Michael Jackson.

Following Jackson's death in 2009, Robson, who has worked with Britney Spears, NYSNC\* and others filed a lawsuit against the "Thriller" singer's estate claiming that handlers of the superstar essentially helped run a child-sex ring.

Robson claimed in a lawsuit, that was later tossed because a California judge said he waited too late to file, that Jackson raped him.

Safechuck, who at 7 years old was befriended by Jackson and traveled extensively with the singer, also sued Jackson's estate.

While neither Robson nor Safechuck previously made complaints, Robson testified in Jackson's defense at the singer's 2005 trial which resulted in an acquittal for Jackson who was charged with 13 counts of molesting a teen cancer patient.

Robson had always maintained his innocence. However, many have argued that Jackson admittedly settled at least three multimillion dollar claims made by prepubescent boys and their families. A sheriff's deputy at his 2005 trial claimed that, when factoring in settlement cash, attorney's fees, private investigator costs and other fees, Jackson spent more than \$200 million to quiet abuse allegations.

The synopsis for the Jackson documentary titled, "Leaving Neverland," says: "At the height of his stardom, Michael Jackson began long-running relationships with

two boys, aged 7 and 10, and their families. Now in their 30s, they tell the story of how they were sexually abused by Jackson, and how they came to terms with it years later."



The report notes that the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements have resulted in some of Hollywood's biggest names being outed as predators, abusers or simply having a history of inappropriate behavior.

The fallout from "Surviving R. Kelly" continues with numerous celebrities joining the chorus of millions on social media and other platforms who've called for Kelly's arrest.

A Georgia prosecutor is reportedly looking into potential charges and, in Kelly's hometown of Chicago, a district attorney has publicly called on "victims" to come forward.

CNN reported on Wednesday, that R. Kelly's former manager, James Mason, has been accused of threatening to kill the father of Jocelyn Savage, one of the women featured in the documentary. The case was presented to a Magistrate Judge who issued a warrant in July, citing "terroristic threats and acts."

As for Jackson, the late hitmaker often publicly said he simply enjoyed the company of children because of their innocence. "I'd slit my wrist before I'd hurt a child," Jackson once said in a broadcast interview.

His defenders have always pointed out that Jackson's accusers were after money or fame themselves and could not be trusted.

It was that theme that helped attorney Tom Mesereau successfully defend Jackson in his 2005 case in California. Mesereau famously referred to the accuser and his family as "grifters," looking for a handout.

No one in the Jackson camp returned messages on Wednesday.

It should be noted that the accuser in that case has always maintained he was molested and, despite financial hardships, his family never attempted to sue Jackson.

The accuser went on to graduate college and get married.

Ironically, Robson who defended Jackson in 2005, said it was only after he had gotten married and had a child of his own that he began to come to terms with what Jackson had done to him years earlier.

"I have never forgotten one moment of what Michael did to me," Robson told the Today Show in 2013. "But, I was psychologically and emotionally completely unable and unwilling to understand that it was sexual abuse."