

Editorials & Comments

"King" In Perspective

By Hoyle H. Martin Sr.
Post Executive Editor

NBC-TV's six hour, three-part series, "King," was a dramatization that chronicles 16 years in the life of the late Martin Luther King Jr.

More significantly, the film was an intimate close-up look at the personal fears, frustrations, courage and doubts of a reluctant hero. Specifically, the film shows how King was reluctantly drafted to lead the Montgomery bus boycott and quickly developed into a courageous and determined leader by responding to the historic demands and needs of the times.

"King" was a drama not in the commercial exploitation sense, but rather in the fact that he said on August 3, 1968, "I'm happy tonight. I'm not fearing anything. My eyes have seen the glory of the Lord. It doesn't matter to me now because I've been to the mountain top, I've seen the promised land," then, a few hours later he was killed by an assassin's bullet.

Now that the epic story has been viewed by millions of Americans, we might ask, what does it mean or what should it mean for us both black and white now and in the

future? We asked the same question

a year ago following the viewing of Alex Haley's "Roots." Again, the answer to this question depends on how we react to the story, a story that has its roots in "Roots" and a story that should give us a greater sense of where we are today in just 10 years since King's death.

Undoubtedly, some, both black and white, believe we have made great progress as a result of King's efforts and since his death. Others probably feel nothing has significantly changed.

Whatever our personal feelings, "King" was a chapter in the struggle of the human condition, in the flight for justice and equality, and a reflection of our immediate past that should motivate us to have a more positive future - that is - a future with less hatred and more understanding.

Abby Mann, the writer and director of "King" said, "This is the story of a man who wanted to carry out the concepts of Jesus and was destroyed (like Jesus himself) because of it." Hopefully, "King" is a reminder that such destruction is a threat to our personal safety and humanity itself.

NNPA Guest Editorial

One Voice For Equal Employment

Not since the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act has a President or Congress taken sweeping action to improve equal rights. Now the President's Task Force in the Office of Management and Budget has proposed a civil rights reorganization that would create a single-mission equal employment agency under the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. It is about time.

Today 18 different agencies enforce 40 separate equal employment requirements. This has greatly hindered effective enforcement and contributed to the astronomical unemployment rates that plague black communities.

The proposed OMB reorganization is more modest than most civil rights groups would like. Over a period of several years, EEOC would get jurisdiction over the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs and equal pay and age discrimination functions, now in the Department of Labor, as well as civil rights protection for Federal workers, now in the Civil Service Commission. In addition, the present unwieldy authority of four agencies to jointly decide equal employment opportunity policy would be transferred to the EEOC. In spite of the drawn out timetable, the proposal should be supported because it moves us closer to the dream of a single agency to enforce equal job rights.

To their credit, the black summit

of 15 civil rights leaders extracted a promise from President Carter when they met with him last month to send the proposal to Congress. Virtually all the groups protected by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act - blacks, Hispanics, women and older workers - have indicated support for the package. With this broad coalition of support, the President is expected to send the OMB package to Congress as is.

But there are a few vested-interest voices within the Administration, notably the Labor Department, who remain unreconciled to the concept of a single-mission civil rights agency, because they would lose functions. But the virtually unanimous support of the protected groups as well as of such powers as the United Auto Workers ought to settle the issue.

The impressive reforms underway at the EEOC leave little room to doubt its capacity to handle new functions. Eleanor Holmes Norton, the new head of the agency, has already made inroads into the backlog and instituted new case processing and management systems that are turning the agency around. Her plans for class actions to help large numbers of blacks are welcome.

It is time for civil rights to have its own full-service agency just as Labor and Agriculture and Energy do and just as most functions do which are taken seriously by the federal government.

ANGER, FRUSTRATION, HOPELESSNESS, IS THE PICTURE THAT EMERGES



Wanted... Jobs

Killing Their Hopes And Dreams

By Bayard Rustin

An emptiness, a void descended upon the nation with the death of Hubert Humphrey. We have lost a dear friend, a brave and enthusiastic warrior for social justice. He represented the best in America, the promise of democracy and for all our citizens, the continued renewal of freedom. He believed in the goodness of our people and in the responsibility of our institutions to create the conditions in which goodness might flourish. His was not a naive faith that ignored evil; he saw injustices as an enemy to be defeated by the forces of reason, compassion, and understanding.

No cause was dearer to Hubert than civil rights; no man's contributions were more crucial, untiring, for indispensable than his. The modern civil rights era can truly be said to have begun with his call for a strong civil rights platform at the 1948 Democratic national convention. "There are those who say to you 'We are rushing this issue of Civil Rights.' I say we are 172 years late. There are those who say, 'This issue of civil rights is an infringement of states' rights.' The time has arrived for the Democratic Party to get out of the shadow of states' rights and walk forthrightly into the bright sunshine of human rights. People - human beings - this is the issue of the 20th century." He was always at the head of that great, still uncompleted march, ever faithful to that dream. He rallied Congressional support for the 1963 March on Washington and guided the 1964 Civil Rights Act through the Senate, over-

coming a bitter 57-day Southern filibuster. It was not only among the greatest legislative and moral dramas in the history of American politics, but also a landmark chapter in the expansion of freedom.

Never has one man, over so long a period, so fully and forcefully represented the aspirations and hopes of the deprived, down-trodden, and unfortunate. He embraced unfashionable causes and through a persistent and often lonely advocacy transformed them into reality. He was the prime mover behind Medicare, the Peace Corps, the Food for Peace Program, and much of the most important social legislation of the last thirty years.

His politics combined imagination, moral idealism, and responsibility. He was not afraid to dream, to innovate, but he did not overlook the importance of achieving, rather than simply advocating, change. He understood the necessity of mastering political power for the service of social justice.

That he never served as President was a tragedy, not so much personally for Hubert Humphrey but for the nation. He could have done so much good for so many. It is an irony that many who not so long ago denounced him as a passed and old hat came to recognize his continuing virtues only after they had helped contribute to his defeat.

Hubert Humphrey brought qualities to American life that will be sorely missed. There was an exuberance and caring about him that ran deep and was uniquely felt by workers, blacks, and the poor. He understood suffering and could see through the maze of

statistics to people. His liberalism sprang not from a set of abstract principles, but from a vibrant search for solutions to human problems.

It is a measure of the constancy of his vision that in his final years he not only worked to complete unfinished projects, but also launched a new crusade for social justice: the fight for a meaningful national commitment to full employment. The finest and most fitting tribute we can pay to this man who did so much to make America a better country is the passage of the Humphrey-Hawkins full employment bill.

Hubert Humphrey leaves a legacy that will long endure. Wherever men and women strive to ease the pain of suffering, work to bring hope and opportunity to the despairing and rejected, and struggle to replace injustice and hatred with fairness and compassion, his labors will be continued.

Women Auxiliary

Plans Workshop

At Friendship

The Woman's Auxiliary of the Mecklenburg General Baptist Association will conduct a mission workshop on Sat. from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Friendship Baptist Church. The theme of the day will be "Arise, Let Us Go Hence," St. John 14:31.

Youth ages 4 to 12 and 13 to 20, young adult, and adult classes will be taught by Mrs. Debra Williams, Mrs. Betty Potts, Virginia Newell, and Shirley Bullock respectively.

By Vernon E. Jordan Jr.

TO BE EQUAL

Prison Reform Overdue

Prison reform is out of style today. Hard line, law and order propaganda seems to have convinced many people that the way to solve crime problems is to lock up offenders and throw away the key.

But the evidence of the past indicates that won't control crime. If anything, prison produces embittered people unable to fit into society.

That view was confirmed for me by a conversation I had with John Coleman, President of the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation. A leading advocate of prison reform, he arranged to spend time in two maximum security prisons last year to get a first-hand view of the prison system.

He served as a guard in one Texas institution. The experience, he found, was demeaning for prisoners and guards alike. The only difference between the two groups, a fellow guard told him, was that the guards serve less time - eight hours a day.

The system is designed to strip people of their basic human dignity. He ran a "gang" of twenty field laborers who picked cotton. Once they stooped to do their work they weren't allowed to straighten up without a guard's permission. To light a cigarette, to wipe a brow, to stretch, all required the guard's OK.

Some of the guards were young men, 18-20 years old. The absolute power they wield over their work gangs requires the judgment and maturity few people possess, much less inexperienced youths.

Coleman left that prison with sympathy for the guards and the guarded - both were forced into inhumane positions by a rigid system. Preserving dignity and rehabilitating offenders are supposed to be the goals of that system. Those goals are inconsistent with the actual workings of the prison.

The Minnesota experience was different. Coleman arranged to be an inmate, supposedly convicted of embezzlement. His cell block didn't stack prisoners, each had his own cell which he decorated according to personal taste. Petty regulations were at a minimum. Personal rights and a degree of privacy were observed. Work opportunities fitted to individual needs seemed to be available.

But there still was a pervasive dependence among the inmates. Their basic life decisions were out of their control. Even after a few days, he felt the loss of the independent decision-making and control of one's own life that alone can fit a person to survive in society.

So both prisons failed the crucial test of equipping inmates to take their place in society as functioning, law-abiding citizens. The strict regimen of the harsh, punitive Texas facility, and the milder, more humane Minnesota institution both prove ultimately incapable of returning to society people equipped with the skills and independence to function in that society.

Those who glibly claim that prison cannot rehabilitate or that offenders should be punished by long prison terms, don't have the answer. Prison by itself, through its very nature, offends against human dignity and creates attitudes and mindsets that make eventual adjustment to society difficult, if not impossible.

as i see it

Pride Lacking Among Blacks

By Gerald Johnson

I have noticed a lack in black professionalism in black businesses in Charlotte. Those businesses catering to a black clientele seems to be nonchalant about how they present their product to the customer. Let me give you an example. When I first moved to Charlotte I bought a house. I wanted the sun room on the house remodeled. I called a black construction company to give me an estimate. The owner came out, looked over what I wanted done and said he would write up an estimate and get back in contact with me. Three years and one room additional later and I haven't heard from him yet. I called a white remodeling agency that came in and did the job. Ironically enough the white agency subcontracted the job to a black carpenter who did an excellent job. The point here is that blacks are undoubtedly qualified to do a professional job, yet they lack the professional diplomacy to contract jobs. It is inexcusable for any business to ignore a potential customer.

My wife started seeing a black gynecologist for her medical services, but switched after feeling that the doctor

was too insensitive. She was not the only defector. Over hearing conversations my wife would have with friends it became apparent that many felt the same way.

Again professional diplomacy overshadowed professional ability. Clubs, restaurants, insurance agencies, and the like all lack the professional air. Therefore the mood of skepticism about doing business with blacks is real.

But how real is it? As blacks needing services rendered, we help add to the unprofessionalism of black businesses. It is a fact we as black customers give black business a hard way to go. Black workers produce less when working for blacks. Black customers are less willing to pay black collectors, black customers are less willing to pay a black company for services rendered the same price that they would pay a white company for the same services. Taking all this into consideration and realizing that a black businessman's primary clientele is the black public whereas the white businessman's clientele knows no color, the black business is hurting. Moreover, jealousy plays a



Gerald Johnson

dominate role in black business, black customer relationships. A lot of blacks refrain from helping black businesses because they don't want blacks to get ahead. In other words there are those who purposely anchor black businesses. The reason for this is my theory of "Failure Rationalization." It works like this: These blacks can rationalize their failings simply by using race as the reason. By saying that whites have had all the opportunities, they can relax with their shortcomings. But as more blacks succeed in business it begins to put the

reasons for failure where it belongs; in the lap of the individual.

It is obvious that black capitalism suffers because of the skepticism between black business and black customer. With a limited customer base a black business has to be understaffed. The necessary revenue is not forth coming. This causes a situation whereby the owner of the business is likely to be the salesman, the worker, the bookkeeper and etc. This obviously limits a person's ability at diplomacy. All small businesses lack professionalism for this reason.

As members of the black community we all should try to help build pride and professionalism in our community.

As businessmen we should not use the lack of personnel as an excuse for not giving customers the very best service we can offer.

As black laborers for black businesses we should do our jobs the best we know how and not try to take advantage of the business because it is black.

As consumers of services rendered by black businesses we should try to give our support. We should understand the shortcomings and

handicaps of the black businessman and realize that with our support most of these shortcomings can be overcome.

Remember, North Carolina Mutual, Johnson and Johnson, and Johnson Publishing Company, didn't start out as large corporations. All of these companies started as one man operations much the same way as small businesses are in Charlotte now.

With support, hard work,

ERA Advocates Launch

Campaign With Historical Appeal

Advocates of the Equal Rights Amendment are joining, in North Carolina with people across the country in launching a grass roots campaign with historical appeal.

North Carolina members at the National Organization for Women are repeating campaign activities of the Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century suffragists who fought and won women's right to vote fifty-eight years ago.

The modern-day suffragists are crossing North Carolina. The North Carolina NOWERA Caravan will be traveling

and pride in ourselves as a community we could turn mountains.

NEWS FOR YOU!

Do you have a topic that you would like my opinion on? Write to "As You See It" in care of The Charlotte Post.

You may include an opinion of your own if you like for printing along with my opinion. I will give you my honest and candid opinion on any topic.

At each Caravan stop a public meeting will be held, the theme being "Rights for Women: Past, Present, and Future." The film, "How We Got The Vote," narrated by Jean Stapleton will be shown, depicting the suffragists' campaign.

The Charlotte visit will begin with a stop at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte at 2 p.m., on February 16.

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