

An Enduring History Lesson

by Anthony T. Podesta

The birthday celebrating of the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., gives Americans a chance to reflect on his message of justice for all. Dr. King showed the world that equality for black Americans could be won without bloodshed. His beliefs in equal rights and peaceful change were deeply rooted in his religious heritage. In his civil rights battles, from the bus boycott in Montgomery, Ala., to the march on Washington, D.C., Dr. King strived to give full meaning to a old lesson learned at Sunday school: that we are all God's children.

Today's young people first learn of Dr. King's life and legacy from the pages of American history textbooks. Unfortunately, reading these textbooks would lead young people to believe that Dr. King was just another special interest group politician from the 1960s. Far too many textbooks tell them nothing of Dr. King's religious faith and the inspiration it gave to his dream of racial equality. They paint Dr. King as a political leader of the black race, not a moral leader of the human race.

One textbook simply says Dr. King was "a black leader," while another describes his commitment to peaceful change as something called "soul force." Other books say Dr. King opposed segregation laws because, as he often said, "an unjust law is no law at all." But seldom do they tell us whom Dr. King himself was quoting: St. Augustine.

Some textbooks probe Dr. King's message of equality for all mankind, but leave out the values taken from his religious heritage. They say that Dr. King learned of peaceful change from Mahatma Gandhi, who practiced passive resistance to win India's independence from Great Britain. The textbooks overlook that King also learned that lesson from the teaching of Jesus Christ, who preached a similar religious precept of "turn the other cheek" two thousand years ago.

Textbooks which skimp on Dr. King's religious inspiration short-change his legacy. But some public figures go even further by trying to deny Dr. King his well-earned place in history. We just learned from the newly-released White House papers of President Nixon that Patrick Buchanan,

President Reagan's communications director, advised Nixon in 1969 not to meet with Dr. King's widow on the first anniversary of Dr. King's assassination because, according to Buchanan, Dr. King was "the Devil incarnate" and "one of the most divisive men in contemporary history." And one of the first executive acts of the newly-installed Governor of Arizona, Evan Mecham, was to rescind the state's holiday honoring Dr. King.

In 1987, Dr. King's wisdom on equal justice and peaceful change is sorely needed. Abroad, the brutal white-minority government in South Africa has rejected repeated offers to negotiate a peaceful settlement with the majority blacks on race and representation, despite mounting domestic and foreign tensions. Here at home, racial tensions have boiled over in New York City after a young black man was beaten and chased to his death by white youths in a predominantly white section of Queens. And, recently, black high school students in Philadelphia beat a Cambodian student to the cheers of onlookers.

Now more than ever, our young people need to read and learn what many of us witnessed for ourselves: the redemptive love Dr. King had for people of all races and all religions. Dr. King promoted peaceful change not only because he thought it was politically wise, as it proved to be, but also because he followed the teachings of his faith to love his adversaries as much as his allies. He often told his followers: "Let no man pull you so low as to make you hate him."

The Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., dedicated his life's work to seeing that men and women throughout the world live free of the chains of injustice. In turn, textbook publishers today must do justice to Dr. King. They must fully describe this truly great man and the religious inspiration that gave birth to a timeless dream of equality for all mankind. Otherwise, Martin Luther King's legacy will be stripped of its unifying religious and moral values.

Anthony T. Podesta is president of People For the American Way, a nonpartisan constitutional liberties organization.

THE NAACP AND YOU!



Rev. Jesse D. Scott
President
Las Vegas, NAACP



--The Day After Martin Luther King Birthday--

Now that we have celebrated the 58th birthday of the late great Dr. Martin Luther King, what do we do next? Martin would not want us to engage in the celebration and then sit down on our do nothing and wait until next year for another celebration. I'm persuaded to believe he would want us to become aware of our condition, then begin planning and strategizing in search of solutions to problems and answers to questions. During the middle of the Civil Rights struggle a group of white clergymen had taken a very hard position against Dr. King's involvement and his non-violent confrontation techniques as a solution. Dr. King chose to respond to them by writing the now famous letter from the Birmingham jail. Martin's reply was very simple, yet very profound. He said, and I quote, "To make a change in the social order you must first become aware that you have a problem."

--Black Las Vegas Unaware--

Many of the problems that Black Las Vegas are experiencing are directly attributable to their own unawareness. There is a statement that God helps those who help themselves. This statement is not taken from the Bible, but there is a lot of truth in it. To be sure, racism is a reality and a fact of life; however, all too often we blindly walk right into its trap. The Bible says watch, fight and pray. Most of the times we do neither. Too many Black people are not aware of the following situations in Las Vegas and Nevada. In cases where Blacks appear before the courts of Clark County, too many of them end up with all white juries. The U.S. Constitution requires that juries should be made up of your peer group-meaning people who represent your racial, social and economic status. More Blacks should serve when they are called for jury duty. Be aware that you maybe the defendant next time around. We must continue to be aware of the

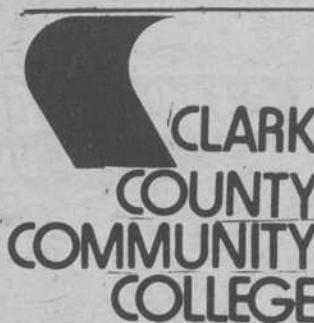
fact that there are too many Blacks in prison in Nevada. Blacks represent 10% of the population and 50% of all those who are in prison. Much can be done to prevent them from going to prison, to minister to them while they are in prison and to assist them in getting employment when they get out. Most of the problems that were previously recited stem from the fact that there are too many Blacks unemployed. Where as the unemployment rate among White Americans is about 6 1/2% it is 21% among Blacks. We are 13 years from the end of the 20th century and the employment situation is the same as it was in the beginning-Blacks are still the last to be hired and the first to be fired. The NAACP wants you to become aware of these alarming statistics.

--Black Dollars Don't Count--

Last year 1986, Blacks spent more than 206 million dollars in America. This is more than the budget of the country of Canada. Yet less than 20 billion of these dollars were spent with Blacks. 9 billion of these dollars were spent on liquor, 9 billion were spent on automobiles and 6 billion were spent on cosmetics and beauty supplies.

--NAACP Volunteers Bank--

The NAACP needs volunteers to do the following things: To solicit NAACP membership, to type and file, to be office and telephone receptionists, to be deputy registrars of voters, to be counselors and to be job interviewers. Write P.O. Box 4887, Las Vegas, Nevada 89127. Call 646-1662.



King Holiday

By Rhoda McKinney
NNPA National
Correspondent

The true meaning of the second annual Martin Luther King Jr. national holiday appeared evident at the Israeli Embassy on January 14, as nation's linked hopes for peace, Coretta Scott King spoke of a dream that must endure and a slide presentation was shown of Israeli children studying with emotional diligence a man they have no memory of, but whose life and legacy linger on.

In the fourth consecutive Martin Luther King Jr. celebration at the Israeli Embassy, program participants such as D.C. Mayor Marion Barry, founder and former national director of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), James Farmer and Coretta King attempted to emphasize the international impact and importance of the slain Civil

Rights leader's life.

"In the final analysis," said Israeli Ambassador Meir Rosenne reading a letter from Jerusalem and the State of Israel, "the deepest significance of Martin Luther King Jr.'s life was that it became a spiritual mission, a moral witness and a journey to the highest sphere of human striving for good."

King's life, said Rosenne, "was a profound commitment to humanity's never ending struggle to translate the divine message of love...and to dishevel the practice of human persecution into politics of peace."

Coretta King enchoed Ros- enne's sentiments, stating that the King Holiday was not a black holiday, but a meaningful American holiday where people in solemn reflection should contemplate what Martin Luther King, Jr. has done for the country and the world.

"Whenever we gather in the name of Martin Luther

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