

Point of View

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CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL

"MALCOLM & MARTIN": GOOD TEACHINGS OF JAMES H. CONE

By Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.

As hundreds of thousands of people are lining up to see Spike Lee's historic movie on Malcolm X, it is advisable for all communities to take the time to study and try to better understand the legacies of both Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr. Thanks to a recent book by the prolific African American scholar, Dr.

James H. Cone, an important contribution has been made toward re-educating the public about the truth of Martin and Malcolm.

In *Martin & Malcolm & America: A Dream or a Nightmare*, published by Orbis Books, Professor Cone skillfully analyzes the lives, ministries and living legacies of Martin and

Malcolm. Although both of these great leaders were assassinated more than 24 years ago, the impact of their leadership is still felt by millions of people in the nation and throughout the world.

It is not our purpose at this point to take sides in the raging debate at some levels about the historical accuracy of the movie on Malcolm X. Certainly, Spike

Lee is to be congratulated for achieving what no other film maker would dare to attempt concerning bringing renewed public attention to one of the gallant giants of the freedom struggle. Notwithstanding all of the overdone commercialization of the "X" image, the fact that generations of people are for the first time being at least intro-

duced to the significance of Malcolm X is cause for renewed hope. Of course, the real hope is that more "Malcolms" will be raised up out of the youth from the increasing masses of those who are oppressed.

Rather, our purpose is to recommend Dr. Cone's book to all of those who really want to know more details and insights about what is the meaning of Malcolm for us today and in the future? Too often in the past it has been characteristic for writers to portray only the differences between Malcolm and Martin. The divisive treatment and approaches to evaluating Malcolm and Martin have only served to cause unnecessary disunity in the African American community.

Dr. Cone stated, "This book is about Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X - their relationship to each other and their meanings for America. The 'dream' and 'nightmare' images are used to focus their perspectives on America and to reveal something about the audiences to whom and for whom they spoke."

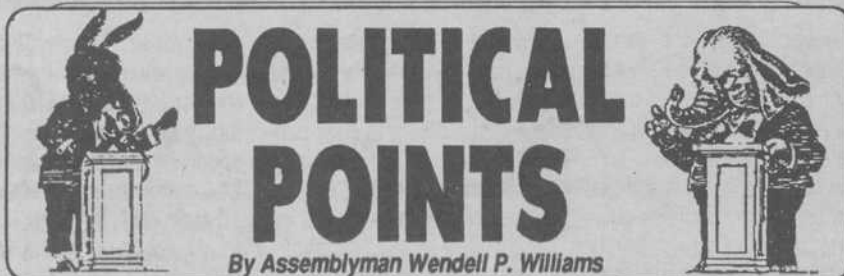
Reading and listening to the "good teachings" of James H. Cone about the lasting value of both Malcolm and Martin set in a complimentary tension is refreshing, revealing, and revolutionizing. Cone demystifies the falsehoods and stereotypes that have been made about these



BENJAMIN F. CHAVIS, JR. two freedom fighters. Cone emphasized, "They were like two soldiers fighting their enemies from different angles of vision, each pointing out the others blind spots and correcting the other's errors. They needed each other, for they represented - and continue to represent - the 'yin and yang' deep in the soul of black America."

Is it fair or appropriate to measure or evaluate African American leaders today in comparison to the leadership style and impact of Martin and Malcolm? We say, "Yes, it is imperative to always be reminded of the kind of leadership that is effective with moral integrity." Cone pointed out that Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr. were not elitist in their leadership style. Since their deaths they have been portrayed to have been messiahs, but in life that was not the case. They both knew the importance of mass movement and organization for the causes of justice and freedom. They were not arrogant. Yes, they were forceful, but not disrespectful or drunk with ego-tism.

Cone concluded, "Thus, it is important to emphasize that Martin and Malcolm, despite the excessive adoration their followers often bestow upon them, were not messiahs. They show (See Civil Rights, Page 21)



IN CASE YOU MISSED IT...

In case you missed it, a historical event took place in Nevada politics at the state level last week. Five-term state assemblyman Morse Arberry Jr., was named as chairman of the Assembly's powerful Ways & Means committee. This chairmanship places "Moose" in a position as one of the top most influential spots in the entire political landscape here in Nevada. The Ways & Means committee is the panel that develops much of the state's budget and to a large degree, decides who gets what? And how much, of that budget? Needless to say, this appointment is the first of its kind in state history for African Americans in Nevada politics. Assemblyman Arberry who represents the largest constituency of African Americans in Nevada in district #7, has served as a member of the Ways & Means Committee since the 1987 session and has six years of solid experience under his belt when he takes the gravel when the state legislature opens on January 18th. The thing to remember here is, only through the participation of the citizens in his district that went to the polls

and exercised their valuable right to vote, is Arberry holding this powerful gavel. Secondly, he still needs your support by giving ideas, advice, and understanding. Politics is not a spectator sport.

In case you missed it, Bank of America also made history last week as it broke ground at the corner of Washington Avenue and Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., the site of the very first bank to be built in West Las Vegas ever. For decades many people, in many ways expressed objection to the disregard the banking community has shown to citizens of the West Las Vegas area. All who played a part in this first step should be commended. Those of years gone by, as well as those who carry the baton today.

In case you missed it, history was also made in the state senate last week. University of Nevada, Las Vegas professor Dina Titus became the first female to be selected as the leader of the Senate democrats. Senator Titus, who has only served one term in the legislature was selected by her peers in the senate as their leader. It is an often practice that the senator with the most seniority is

selected to this position of minority leader. However, Seniority did little for our own Senator Joe Neal as Titus who is still a freshman at this point, beat out Neal and his 20 years sitting in the senate. What happened?

In case you missed it - Cincinnati Reds owner Marge Schott referred to several African American baseball players as "nigger." Poor ole Marge - then she said that she sees nothing wrong with the statements, "it does not make me a racist." Right Marge. It again just goes to show whether you've got \$10 dollars, \$10 million dollars or more, to some people, you will always be some kind of nigger. At least there is one thing that can be said about the Cincinnati Reds, they are the most coordinated team in the league - The players all have red uniforms and the owner has a red-neck.

In case you missed it - smiles were seen on the faces of Debra Jackson and Marzette Lewis, officers of WAAK-UP, as the CCSD adopted a plan to begin creating equity in the public education system. Lewis and Jackson were relentless in their mission to create reforms in the educational system. After 20 years of eleven-to-one odds



Assemblyman
Wendell P. Williams

against West Las Vegas children, their work is one of the biggest steps made in decades. Good work Nubian Sisters!

In case you missed it - President-Elect Bill Clinton received 38% of the white vote last month on election day, while Bush received 42%. However, what caused Bush to suffer such a huge defeat was that Clinton received over 86% of the African American vote. Once again, the hands that once picked cotton are now picking the president. But more importantly, don't pick 'm and get nothing for it. Demand accountability!

In case you missed it - America has now decided to help the daily starving people of Somalia. The same people who have been starving for years, just as many have been starving for years in the the good ole USA. Its hard to believe that George Bush just discovered this during his last Campaign.

If you misses the news of the people of Mogadishy, Somalia, don't feel too bad - George Bush and Ron Reagan missed it for years!

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