

Mountaintop far off for equality seekers

In 1962, six years before his assassination, Martin Luther King Jr. proclaimed, "It may get me crucified. I may even die. But I want it said if I die in the struggle that 'He died to make me free.'"

Two years later, Martin Luther King Jr. accepted the Nobel Peace Prize on behalf of the civil rights movement, and became only the third black man and the 14th American in history to do so.

But four years after the chairman of the Nobel Committee handed King the award, describing him as "an undaunted champion of peace," King lay dead.

Now, more than 20 years have passed since the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. outside his hotel room in Memphis, Tenn.

Some people claim that the struggle for freedom for which King died has ended, fused by the uprising that followed his death, that blacks have been accepted, that equality has been established, that freedom rings. Some people claim equality can be further reached by ignoring the problem, by tiptoeing through the china shop of racial issues because the white proprietors might be upset if something gets broken. But if King stood among us now — and in a very real sense, he does — he undoubtedly would question the perceived fruition of his dream.

He might point out that the black man who won the Nobel Peace Prize before him — the second to win the award — was Zulu Chief Albert J. Lutuli, who received the recognition for his leadership in the non-violent cause against apartheid in South Africa. Lutuli received the prize in 1960, and almost three decades later, apartheid still lives, carried on by a new generation of racists.

As the myth of white supremacy thrives in South Africa, so does intolerance and social injustice live in every corner of the United States.

Injustice lives partly because white Americans have seen the unpopularity of their grandparents' ideas of ethnic purity, and have learned to smile agreeably on this volatile issue. Therefore, even if they hold such views in secret, they do not air them. In this age of media saturation, light makes its way through the darkness, and seeps into the most backwater, secluded homes.

But other institutions, the institutions of ignorance, perpetrate a new variation on an old myth. The white majority no longer claims superiority, and no longer lives in fear of violence from its outraged brothers and sisters; the new myth goes something like this: We love you, we love your culture, we love Martin Luther King Jr. and all he stood for, but now its over, so let's forget it.

We should all recognize King's birthday as a holiday, for the same reason we recognize any day: as a symbolic gesture. Organizations refusing to do so make a statement regardless of their intentions.

King's life cannot be forgotten. His message was simple and acceptable, but the ramifications of his message are rarely realized by whites. We all must continue to sweat and bleed for equality. We cannot sit back and say: Look what we have accomplished after such a short walk down the road to the truth.

King spoke of a dream, of seeing the mountaintop. We have lived through the turbulent times of racial unrest, brought about by centuries of overt oppression. But we are only at the foot of the mountain of brotherhood. Subtle racism is the rule, not the exception. If we ignore the problem, we will move backwards from trying so hard to stand still.

The American Dream stands far away, far ahead. The majority has yet to see what King saw because the majority never shared his dream of conquering the mountain.



"Uh, Ron, the sunset you're supposed to ride off into is THAT way..."

Letters

Nauseated

Jon Wollander, your letter (ODE, Jan. 11) about homosexual practices made me nauseated. I was so disgusted I was afraid I'd throw up. But what's your point?

Nature is disgusting. Have you thought about the bleeding, tissue damage and pain a virgin female suffers when she has sex the first time? Yes, pain, even if she's a married Christian! And what about childbirth? I can't think of anything more painful, dangerous, disgusting and humiliating than lying on my back with my legs spread apart while some man (not my husband) touches my you-know-what, tells me to push until my eyeballs pop out, and produces a bloody baby.

However, people must get some sort of benefit from both of these disgusting acts that I've mentioned or else they wouldn't do them. Similarly, the "homosexual acts" that you like to criticize also benefit the consenting participants, homo- or heterosexual.

As for AIDS, it is not homosexuality that spreads it, but a lack of common sense and care. Drug users shouldn't share needles, donated blood should be screened, condoms should be used, such products as razors shouldn't be shared, and men shouldn't be such sluts.

Alice Berry
Eugene

Intolerable

We have been appalled at the recent publicly reported acts of violence and affronts to ethnic and racial minorities on the campus and in the community.

Offenses against persons of color should be understood as offensive to all of us. We affirm our commitment to renewed anti-racist activities and we urge the majority community to both speak out against racism and work towards greater sensitivity in the university and larger community.

Silence in the face of racism is intolerable. We need to actively join the process to combat racism and build for greater justice for all.

The commemoration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his leadership and commitment to non-violence, peace and justice should be a challenge for action.

Elizabeth Deutsch
Student, Community education
Steven Deutsch
Professor of Sociology

Self-expression

Ahh, the joys of free self-expression.

I spent last year in Czechoslovakia and experienced the "reality" there. I learned that one couldn't just say anything one wanted to anyone on the street. There are people that listen, there are laws, there are informants. They don't have the freedom of expression that we all enjoy and sometimes aren't

even aware of. It was quite an adventure. It was strange though. I found the people to be quite cautious on one hand if they didn't know you; but on the other hand, they thought about what they said and when they said something, they usually meant it.

I stepped out of the library at the end of last term for a short breather, just a little happy that the term was almost over and that winter was coming with its brisk, sharp cold. I just began to think of how much my life has been changed over the past year and how coming to America has given me a slightly different view of it. I try to enjoy our freedom — the freedom to create, the freedom to express ourselves in almost any way we want. We might not have an audience, but we sure can speak, write, paint, sculpt, wear, etc. whatever we want in almost any way we want and we aren't going to be punished for it. It was almost an epiphany for me, stepping out of that institution of stored knowledge, containing even books by ex-Czechoslovak writers railing the communist regimes.

It was in that instant, in that moment of freedom and lightness that I heard a voice coming from somewhere around the PLC stairs stating matter-of-factly, yet quite loudly, "My name is (sic). I'm a Phi Delt. I'm not wearing any pants."

Ahh, the joys of free self-expression.

Mark Peterson
Senior

Letters Policy

The Emerald will attempt to print all letters containing comments on topics of interest to the University community. Comments must be factually accurate and refrain from personal attacks on the character of others.

Letters to the editor must be limited to no more than 250 words, legible, signed and the identification of the writer must be verified when the letter is submitted.

The Emerald reserves the right to edit any letter for length or style.

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