

Professor suggests holiday more than three-day weekend

Samantha Martin

For the Oregon Daily Emerald

Professor Edwin Coleman, who teaches English and Folklore at the University, can be thought of somewhat as a walking, talking chapter of American history.

Coleman grew up in what he refers to as "good times and bad times," when Jim Crow laws were in effect and he had witnessed first-hand the acts of violence that most people have only read about.

While living in San Francisco in the 1960s, Coleman participated in civil rights marches. He recalls one march protesting the lack of open housing and job opportunities for blacks.

"We were marching near San Francisco State (University)," Coleman said. "I remember being sprayed with fire extinguishers. I remember people throwing feces, urine, and blood from animals at us."

Coleman met Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1961. His flatmate at the time was the west coast president of CORE, the Congress of Racial Equality, a national civil rights organization.

"King was in San Francisco for a minor march," Coleman said. "He was coming to our flat for a quick meeting. He was a little late, but the minute we heard him coming up the stairs, the room became very quiet."

"Everyone spoke as if in church," Coleman said. "When King came in, you knew you were in the presence of somebody."

Recalling the meeting, Coleman said, "We deliberately didn't discuss anything of importance. We knew there was a mole in our group, so because of that risk we never discussed anything in depth in our flat. Our phone was tapped for a long time, and we knew we were being watched by the FBI."

When the Republican National Convention met in San Francisco in 1964, Coleman was working as a gopher for ABC. Protesters were picketing the Republicans' lack of effort toward fighting for civil rights.

"The streets were lined with the SFPD on one side and the San Mateo County sheriff's department on the other side," Coleman said. "A 12-year-old girl had wandered across the street. The sheriff grabbed her by the hands and someone else grabbed her by the feet. They actually threw this girl across the street," Coleman said.

Coleman had been at the University for a little over a year when King was killed. A doctorate student at the time, he was sitting in a seminar when someone entered the room and announced that King had been killed.

"It was a feeling of total disbelief," Coleman said. "People were just stunned. It was the same feeling I had as when President Kennedy was killed."

The day after King's death, Coleman and his wife had gone driving out to Philomath.

"We stopped at a roadside cafe for a bite to eat," Coleman said. "When I walked in, everyone stopped talking. It got real quiet. The silence was broken by someone saying, 'We should've shot that nigger a long time ago before this.' This was for my benefit."

Coleman does feel that part of the reason why the holiday was voted to be observed was because many people just wanted another three-day weekend.

The University has observed the holiday since 1990, when the Senate voted that the holiday was to be celebrated on the third Monday every January.



HIDEKI TOMEOKA/Emerald

Bishop E. Lynn Brown delivered the keynote address for the Martin Luther King Jr. celebration at the Hult Center Monday.

Hult Center celebrates with music, memories

Friederich von Carp
Oregon Daily Emerald

Music and Christianity framed the message of racial harmony pervading Monday's Martin Luther King Jr. commemorative program at the Hult Center.

Bishop E. Lynn Brown, a prelate in the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, delivered the keynote address. Brown related experiences of working with King.

"Because of Martin Luther King, I could allow them to turn the [fire] hose on me, to turn the dogs on me, to beat me," he said. "Dr. King believed in a faith that allowed him to stand in the darkness and to wait for the light."

"He believed in a Judeo-Christian religion. He believed in a God who could bring people together," Brown intoned. "Dr. King had the ability to organize love. There wouldn't be so many drive-by shootings if we had that kind of love today."

Brown criticized recent national events, lamenting an "increase in cynicism that

convinced 79% of people not to vote on Nov. 8."

"What you have is 21% of the people running the country," Brown lamented. "You have ultra-conservatives who will fight and kill people over abortion before the baby reaches its fullness. But once the baby is born, they don't care about it."

Reverend Allidees N. Beckham, co-chair of the Martin Luther King Celebration Committee, was the master of ceremonies. Beckham is pastor of the St. Mark CME Church in West Eugene.

Performances by the Martin Luther King Choir brought the crowd to its feet. The choir, under the direction of University music professor John Gainer, includes University students and other vocalists.

Bobby Green Jr., played drums for the Inspirational Sunshine Band that accompanied the choir. Green and other band members belong to the Bethel Temple church.

"We should not just celebrate Martin Luther King annually, but to celebrate him every day. Like Black History Month, we should be aware of this every day," he said.

MLK CALENDAR

Tuesday, Jan. 17

4:30 - 6 p.m. — "Let Freedom Ring: Singing for Freedom" concert. Sing with University music instructor John Gainer and the University Gospel Ensemble. Free. Beall Hall, 961 E. 18th Ave.

8 p.m. — "Eight new works for Cross-Cultural Orchestra." Pacific Rim Gamelon concert features instruments of the Balinese. Admission: \$4 general, \$2 for students and seniors. Beall Hall, 961 E. 18th Ave.

Wednesday, Jan. 18

2 p.m. — "Images of Family: Bridges to Understanding" workshop sponsored by the Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Alliance. Room TBA. Erb Memorial Union.

Thursday, Jan. 19

1 - 2 p.m. — "African-American Cultural Strategies for the 21st Century" lecture by Dennis Greene, visiting professor of law and founding member of the musical group Sha-Na-Na. Beall Hall, 961 E. 18th Ave.

4 - 7 p.m. — "Building Bridges Across Communities" panel discussion with music and food. The event is sponsored by the Black Student Union and will celebrate the bridges that have been built between the University, local civic leaders and African-American students. Fountain Court, EMU. Free. For more information call Maajjo Cooper-Henry, 346-4379.

5 - 8 p.m. — Open Mike public forum and discussion following the viewing of a "Star Trek" episode that explores the racial hatred of a species of half-white, half-black people. Sponsored by the University Race Task Force. Room to be announced, Erb Memorial Union.

Friday, Jan. 20

1 - 2 p.m. — "Cross-Cultural Relations in American Popular Music" panel discussion and dialogue. Free. Panelists include Ed Coleman, professor of English Folklore; Stephen Valdez, professor of music and music history; Carl Woideck, music instructor at Lane Community College. Ben Linder Room, EMU.

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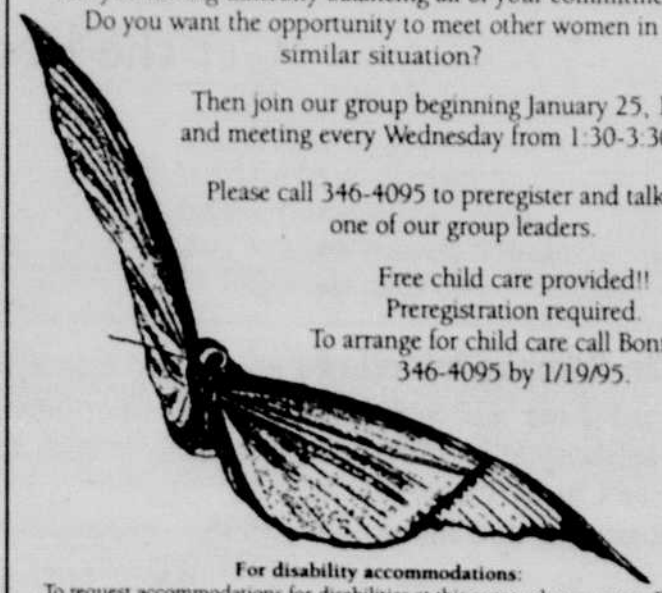
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For disability accommodations:

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