

Follow his lead

by Lanita Duke

Within the leadership of Afro-Americans in Portland, no other comes closer to Dr. Martin Luther King than Ronnie Herndon, co-chair of the Black United Front. Herndon says he does not deserve that honor. "That is the kind of compliment I could never accept. The best that any of us can do is try in our own way to advance the cause of liberation for black people."

History tells of a conflict between Dr. King and another great leader, Malcolm X. But was there really a conflict or was one man ahead of the other? "There were conflicts and at certain times each man was critical of the other. But if you look at what happened when Malcolm X began to change his philosophy and when King began to change his, they were saying the same things. Both men spoke out against the Vietnam war. History will show that Malcolm X was critical of the War first; King followed at least six to seven years behind. Both men said clearly that black people should organize themselves to gain justice, freedom and equality. The most important item is that that both gave their lives for black people in this country. If Malcolm had lived, then King would have agreed with many of the positions that Malcolm took."

How does Herndon feel about Dr. King? "He was one of the most important leaders to come out of the 20th century. What he has done for black people across the country is immeasurable. He was able to get the black church out there on the picket lines. Many people today say they really dig Martin Luther King but they do not live the philosophy that King taught. King said is there

is injustice you confront injustice. He spoke out against poor housing, poor police protection and the unequal distribution of wealth in this country. I do not see any of the people with King's picture in their home doing what King believed in doing."

What set King apart is that here was a man who could have been quite comfortable in fit into the 'black Bourgeoisie.' He had the education and the background and he would be alive today if he had not taken on unpopular causes. I would like to ask the black middle class of Portland when were they involved in helping their fellow blacks.

"I think that many of us are quite hypocritical of King. When they want to impress their white friends, they talk about King. It is easy to talk. I just wish some of us would back up our talk with actions and conviction. If you do not try to help black people out now, when will you ever do it. And if you don't, try not to fake people out by telling them that you love King. You might love your job or that little title you have, but if you really love King you would do some of the things he did for black people."

The elements about Dr. Martin Luther King that Ronnie Herndon respects the most were his courage, conviction and intellectual honesty. "You could see King develop in just a few short years. To go from the bus boycott to speaking out against the War in Vietnam is an example of this man's evolution. He stood alone in many of his battles. When he came out against the war many of the other so-called civil rights leaders criticized King. This was hard being criticized by your peers but King stood fast with what he believed in and it cost him his life."



Environment influences leadership

by Dr. William Little,
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Most scholarly analyses of Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Civil Rights Movement either focused on leadership or community organization. These analyses exclude any discussion of the political and socioeconomic factors of the environment. I have argued that leadership of black organizations has historically been influenced by three primary factors. These are 1) the environment factor; 2) historical development of the area; and 3) the organization's proneness of the local community.

The environmental factors refer to those political, social and economic conditions which influence the development of community organization and leadership. This is illustrated by the creation of the Women's Political Council in Montgomery in 1951, by Mrs. Robinson of Black Alabama State College.

The Women's Political Council provided the initial impetus for organizing the boycott. Mrs. Robinson mobilized the members of her council to appeal directly to the black masses of the city. Mrs. Robinson adopted a political maneuver which took cognizance of the existence of black leaders whom she placed in a position from which retreat would be both difficult and embarrassing. The historical development of the area is also very significant. It determines the role and organization relationship leaders utilize in relating and interacting with the power structure of the local

community. The traditions of a region determine the relationship which exist between white and other minority groups.

The development of a new political culture by blacks during World War II was the result of the following: 1) the A. Philip Randolph's threat to lead a march on Washington D.C. to protest job discrimination in Federal Employment and; 2) the migration of large numbers of blacks from the South to the North provided opportunities for the development of a national economic, political, and legal support.

The major contributions made by Martin Luther King, Jr., in the Montgomery boycott, according to Lewis Killian was possible because of his extraordinary skill as an orator and a philosopher. These skills allowed for his ascendancy to a position of a national black political leader in that King had both the white and black community support. His legitimacy in the black community stemmed from his scholarly achievements and his extraordinary skills as an orator. His appeal within the white community was also possible because of his philosophy, principles and theology. According to Killian, King reduced the complex problem of the segregation and unequal social structure to a simple spiritual equation: segregation is evil, integration is good. At the same time, he showed his followers concrete ways to attack the visible, accessible symbols of evil.

After the movement led by King

and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference had completed its first task a group of students initiated another phase of the Civil Rights Movement, utilizing a different version of nonviolent protest which occurred at Greensboro, North Carolina in 1960. This event expanded the Civil Rights Movement to include two additional groups; 1) Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, which was created after Greensboro to control sit-in strikes and; 2) the Congress of Racial Equality. CORE, as the latter was called, was considerably older than SNCC and was a pioneer in this technique of nonviolent action. The third development culminated in the Urban Revolt of 1965 which signified the new demand by the urban blacks for redress of their grievances. The revolt made a very great impact and reformed the political and social institutions in American society. This urban revolt movement was a national call for black identity, heritage and development.

The leaders of this movement included Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael, Rap H. Brown and countless others. In the fall of 1968-69 black students in predominantly white universities began a campaign of campus take-over and black political awareness on university campuses throughout the nation.

The political, social and economic environment of the black community has influenced the development of black leaders in the United States.

Constitution applies to all...

by Lanita Duke

Grassroot News, N.W.—Judge Mercedes F. Deiz was recently named by *Ebony* Magazine as an outstanding female judge. Judge Deiz has served Multnomah County with the same backbone and stride as Dr. Martin Luther King. Although Dr. King was arrested at least 30 times in his career, Judge Deiz believes that he didn't break any laws. "There is a constitution which applies to every man, woman and child. So in terms of federal laws King and the movement didn't violate any. But the sit-ins, marches and the quiet type of protests broke state laws. These state laws were un-

constitutional and should not have been on the books in the first place."

Judge Deiz doesn't like to speculate on what might have happened if there had been no Martin Luther King. "Dr. King was unique. Somehow he galvanized all black people and many whites to see the truth of working together. I'm disenchanted in 1983 to see how we're falling apart. Racism is in no ways eradicated in the United States. It is not a overt as it was during the 1960s. Today, it's not a question of being latent. It's just there."

How does Judge Deiz feel about the movement that Dr. King inspired? "Whenever people inquire

as to who my heroes are Dr. King is on that list. I remember when he came to Portland to speak at an Urban League meeting. There was an aura about that man that was special. I've never been around anyone since who would let you know that you were around a man who cared about every living person. He said what needed to be said; there was no falsehood involved. He's just about the greatest man to come out of this century."

Does Judge Deiz feel there are still laws on the books that need challenging? "There continue to be minor kinds of laws that are only important to one group that need to be changed. It's taken a long time as

women to eradicate the inequality in working conditions and salary. In terms of discriminatory laws I don't think there are any more on the books. Although I might be wrong."

The justice system through the Attorney General and the F.B.I. wiretapped, sent phony mail and tried to disrupt the movement and personal life of Dr. King. Judge Deiz found this "disgusting." "I'm dismayed that any group can take the law into their own hands and use it to suit their own purposes. I'm shocked and dismayed that there ever were and continue to be agencies that will violate the law in order to justify the end results."

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