

Civil Rights Journal

"A Gift For Dr. King"

The national holiday celebrating the life and ministry of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is, from our perspective, the most important national holiday we are privileged to celebrate. The nation is becoming more familiar not only with the name of Dr. King, but, hopefully, with the principles that guided his life. Despite the fact that there was some strong opposition to the passage of the bill that made Dr. King's birthday a holiday, the multi-racial coalition which came together to support the bill was, finally, successful.

Now we hear that a few states, such as the state of Arizona, are taking steps to rescind the King holiday. Arizona's new Republican Governor, Ed Mechem, has publicly declared that one of his first official acts will be to repeal the King holiday. As he said, "I want to do this as soon as it is convenient. It is a necessity to do it before the 19th. It is a responsibility." Obviously, Gov. Mechem feels he has a responsibility... not to his state but to the forces of racism. It is a sad commentary that nearly 20 years after the tragic assassination of Dr. King there are still too many in our society who hold a racist vengeance against everything Dr. King worked for.

We celebrate this year's King holiday in the wake of racist white mob

violence in Howard Beach in Queens, New York. There is a greater need today than ever before for all people who are committed to human decency to forthrightly challenge all forms of racial injustice. If Dr. King's legacy means anything, it should mean that we have a moral obligation to fight racism.

But it is just not enough that only African Americans take the lead in fighting this battle. In fact, the majority of white Americans have abdicated their historic responsibility to fight white racism. This country does not need a new wave of liberal guilt that only offers paternalistic — an usually non-functioning — hand-out programs. Instead, white America must own up to its racism and then consistently commit itself to corrective action.

We must remember that it was from a cell in the Birmingham jail that Dr. King warned, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." Therefore, we cannot be patient with the injustice in Howard Beach. We cannot be patient with the injustice of apartheid in South Africa. We cannot be patient with the injustice in the U.S. supported contras in Nicaragua. And we cannot be patient with the injustices suffered by the Palestinians. If Dr. King were alive today he would celebrate his birthday by saying no to Reagan's inhumane 1988 budget. He would say yes to homes for the homeless, jobs for the jobless and food for the hungry.



Internationally famous gospel singer Willa Dorsey performs at PSU Wednesday, Jan. 21, at Noon in Parkway Commons in Smith Center.

PSU Celebrates King Week With Willa Dorsey

At Noon, Wednesday, Jan. 21, in the Parkway Commons (first floor Smith Memorial Center, 1825 S.W. Broadway), PSU's Cabaret Committee will provide the entertainment of gospel great Willa Dorsey. She performs in celebration of "Martin Luther King Week" here at Portland State University.

Dorsey is a popular and engaging performer who has performed all over the world, and every year she entertains the crowds at the Neighborfair at Waterfront Park. We are very proud to have her perform in the town she calls home and hope everyone will be at Portland State to see Willa Dorsey perform.

For more information on this and future Cabaret performances, call Byron Beck at 229-4452.




Last year we recalled that the year before Dr. King's assassination, he changed his mind about how his dream could be fulfilled. Although he refused to give up the dream, he now understood that his dream could not be fulfilled without a major social transformation of the basic structure of our society. In the words of Dr. King, "For years I labored with the idea of reforming the existing institutions of the South, a little change here, a little change there. Now I feel quite differently. I think you've got to have a reconstruction of the entire society, a revolution of values."


The good news is there are real opportunities today to follow through on Dr. King's vision. Mayor Harold Washington has begun a reconstruction of Chicago that has served to heighten the aspirations of all those on whose behalf Dr. King struggled. That is why it is so important not to let the forces of racism stop Washington from being re-elected next month.

In New York City, amidst all of the anger, pain and, in some cases, cynicism, there is also some good news. Out of the agony of the Howard Beach incident has emerged the kind of "mass meetings" which played such a vital role in mobilizing our people during the Civil Rights Movement. In Manhattan, in Brooklyn, and in other parts of New York City, African Americans are now joining hands in large numbers and in ways that they have not tried for along time. Therefore, throughout this nation let us all come together and dare to resurrect a new freedom movement. This would be the greatest birthday present we could ever give to the memory of Dr. King.

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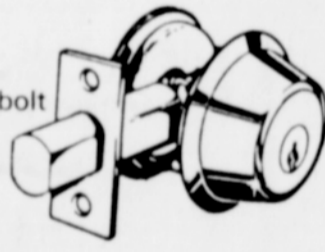
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11:00 A.M. Congregational Worship
5:00 P.M. Vesper Service
10:00 A.M. Baptism Fourth Sunday
11:00 Communion Each First Sunday
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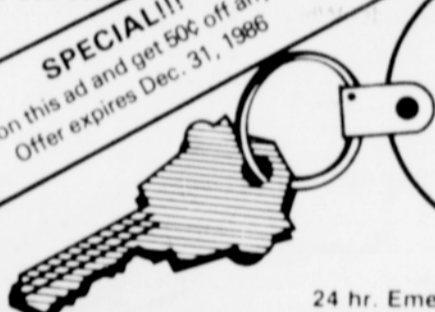
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