



...And Justice For All

by Angelique Sanders



This week's column is a tribute to Martin Luther King, Jr.

One of my foremost worries while attending school was--and still is--injustice. I always wished for a larger soapbox to promote my ideas of equality, and journalism was my obvious career choice. As a white girl raised in a town (Spokane) that contained little ethnic diversity, I didn't know that working at a "black" newspaper would become my fate. I knew, however, that I wanted to work at a paper that was not merely a splay of information, but was geared toward social reform.

With few exceptions, my formal education did not offer much information on black--or, for that matter, ANY non-white--culture. Only three exceptions come to mind:

first, the school's offered reading of Malcolm X's autobiography (students were required to read one of several school-selected books, one of which was on Malcolm X). Regrettably, I don't recall many students opting to read that book--and what is the surprise of this? After a decade or more of education primarily on topics within the youths social "circle", what are the odds that a single opportunity to learn about another culture will be seized by the students?

The second exception was a teacher I had that often told stories about days when he used to live with Native Americans: this teacher would expound at great length, not just about what occurred with his Indian friends, but also the psychology of them.

The third exception was a liberal English teacher of mine that had a temperament that oozed of justice. A story she told once caused my emotions to yearn for equality: as a child in Washington, D.C., she once attempted

to drink from a fountain, from which her mother steered her away, on the basis that it was a fountain for "negroes". Her youthfully naive, socially-unjaded mind could not comprehend segregation; after years of education and experience, the teacher is still completely baffled on this issue. "Why is society like this?" she and I won-

dered somewhat; but even more, we scratched our chins at "How do we change it?"

But these were questions the texts never explored. It became clear to me rather early-on that the school system offer pupils the bricks, but no mortar, toward a complete education. I read up, in my free time, on black history and other neglected topics of culturization. Presumably, the school felt that, with a primarily white student body, few people would be interested in learning black history. This is probably true--but, then, few of my classmates had an active interest in learning history AT ALL. Additionally, the school's job is not to cater to the educational interests of the students, but their educational needs. And if any of those students ever planned on moving away from Spokane, they had better be prepared to face cultures foreign to them, or hide forever within their "white bubble".

With ignorance present within

the very foundations of education, is it any wonder prejudices still exist. Most of the people I knew in Spokane were not blatantly prejudiced...they had simply never gotten to know any African Americans on any level aside from, perhaps, their black bank teller, dentist, whatever (Spokane has a predominantly white

population--according to figures in the 1980 census, Spokane ties with Madison, WI as the second most white-populated city in America, with over 94% whites [in first place is Lincoln, Nebraska]). Most seemed to possess a mental color-line, not on the level of "whites are good, blacks are bad", but perhaps--for example--purposefully not sitting by an African American on the bus

because they were "unsure" of what to expect.

Though my knowledge of black culture was strong, I had never known a black person until I graduated and move away from Spokane. It was obvious to me, though, there was and is a shortage of equality--one need not be outside to see that it's snowing.

And that is the "moral" to my story: you don't need to be black, gay, homeless, physically disabled, etc. to fight for equality. To be a minority does not mean you're part of a small population: it signifies repression. Women, though outnumbering men, are a minority.

So many feel that they'll leave the freedom-fighting to men like Martin Luther King, Jr. or Nelson Mandela. Do not just sit home and cheer at your t.v. for those who are fighting for us...accept your duty as a caring human: don't just join the fight, lead it!

Every day is Martin Luther King, Jr. day until equality prevails.

The world could use a few more Martin Luther King, Jr.s



Coretta Scott King, on her late husband (from the book "We Shall Overcome"): "Democracy means equal justice, equity in every aspect of our society. I think Martin understood from the very beginning that this goal could not be accomplished all at once. He knew he could not take a people who were largely uneducated and unrepresented and suddenly transform them into political activists who could immediately change the system. And he also knew that the basic problem in our society had to do with economic injustice or...the contrast of wealth between the haves and the have-nots. Believe it or not, he spoke those words to me when I first met him."



'All progress is precarious, and the solution of one problem brings us face to face with another problem.'

— Martin Luther King, Jr.
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Martin Luther King, Jr.

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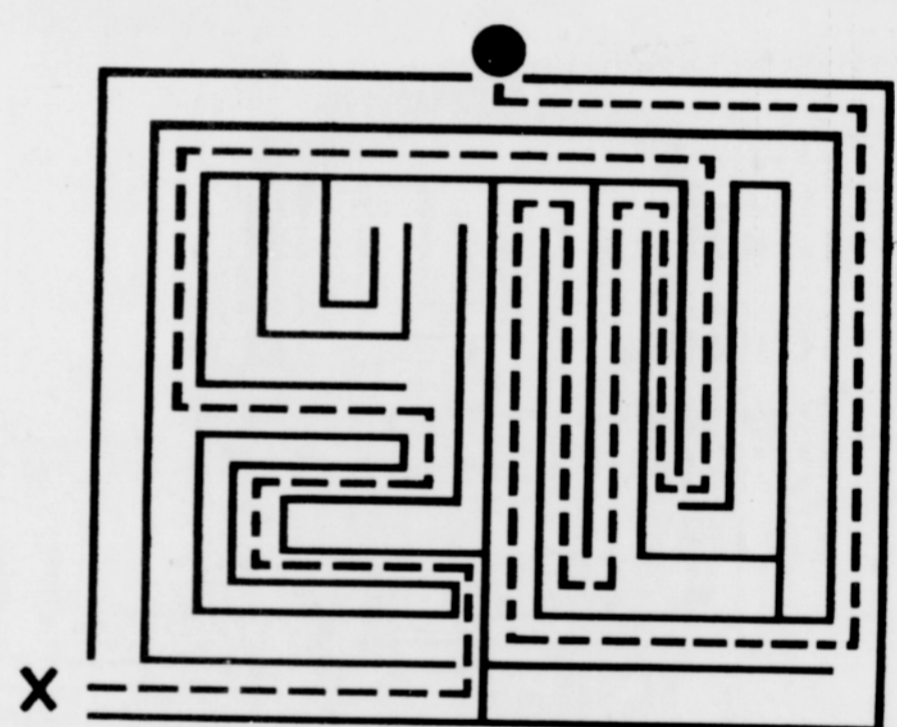
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