

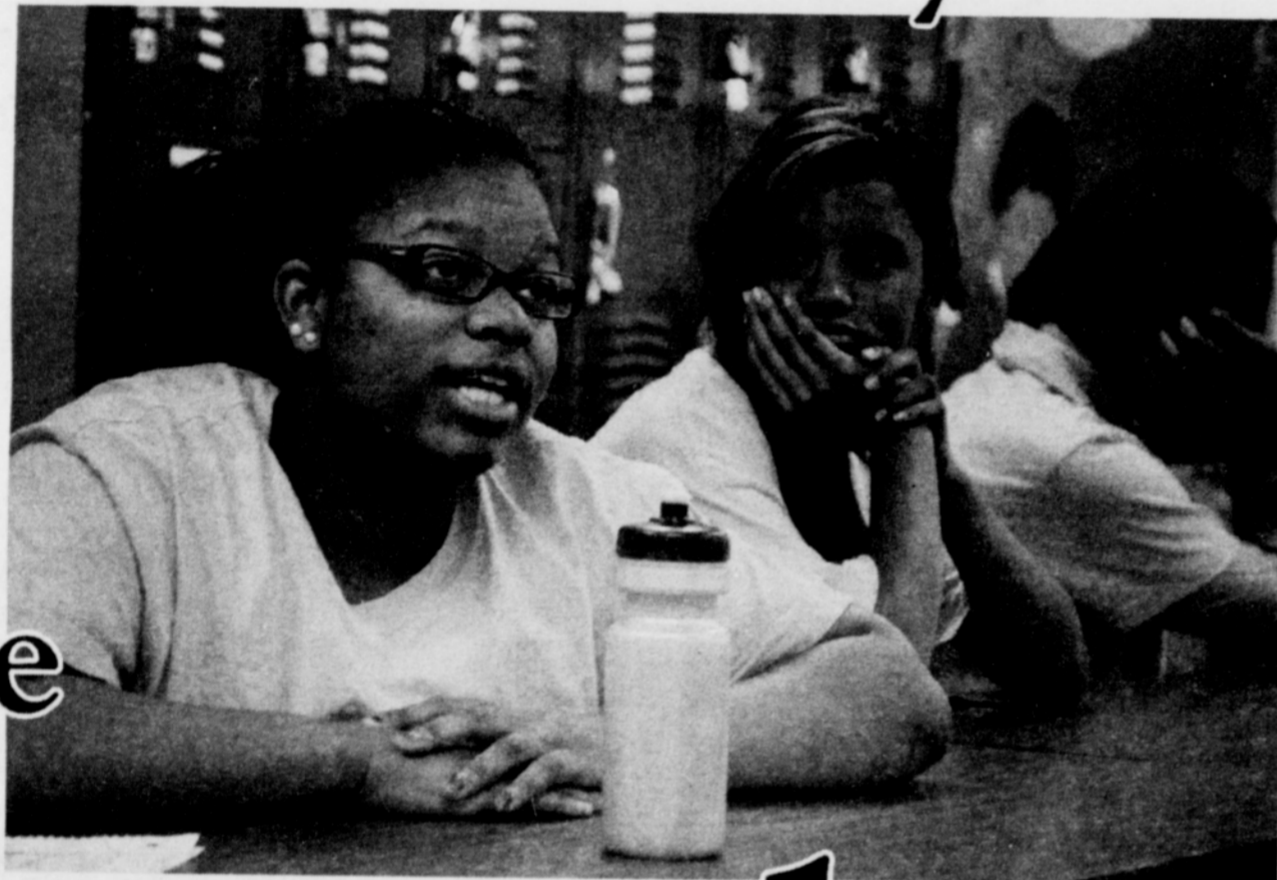
*Hate cannot drive out hate:
only love can do that.*

-- Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.



In Diversity...

there
is



Strength.

We salute Dr. King
and his leadership in
furthering Civil Rights.



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Ministering the Fatherless

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torate in Spiritual Formation and Leadership from George Fox University.

In respect to King's belief in the beloved community and taking stewardship to be responsible for one another, Strong said the issue of fatherlessness demanded his spiritual advocacy on the issue.

"Every individual's biological father may not be present, but that doesn't mean that a child or young man or young woman has to have a life void of an experience of a positive father," said Strong.

That's where the community and the church have to step in and be the surrogate father, said Strong.

Strong's book offers a thorough examination of fatherlessness. It educates readers about its roots and provides on-the-ground solutions, ways that the community and church can engage.

The pastor says the efforts don't require much money. People can utilize the resources they have, like embracing the good attributes of who they are, and their willingness to step into a person's life and make a difference.

In November, Strong, along with other leaders on fatherless issues, led a Father-Shift Conference at Life Change Christian Center, where a thousand or so men and women showed up to participate in the awareness-raising event.

After hearing from multiple speakers, the crowd broke off by gender into separate sessions for healing and mentoring.

While men learned how to cope with the pain of never having a father and fathers learned how to become better fathers, single-mothers and daughters learned how to deal with their own hurt as well as ways to empower themselves and their children.

Ultimately, those attending were encouraged "to find a relationship with the heavenly father who will never abandon them, but will always love and embrace them," said Strong.

In healing, there are two sides of the coin, Strong says. Fathers can be awakened and taught how to be responsible, said Strong. For the person wounded, he says, the difficulty is coming to the realization that he/she is still valuable despite rejection and lack of validation or approval by a father figure.

A deep bitterness or callousness can develop to fill the father-void which may trouble the fatherless child as an adult. Strong has witnessed hardened, grown men break down about absentee fathers.

In his book, Strong recalls the story of 29-year-old Los Angeles gangster Sanyika Shakur, a.k.a. Kody Scott, who at 13, earned the nickname "The Monster," for disfiguring a man by stomping on him for 20 minutes.

Shakur showed no remorse for his violent life of crime until a reporter brought up his father. "Absent! Missing in Action!" responded Shakur, before he broke down and cried. While his father, a professional football player, was on the field, Shakur said he was on the streets, and "he never came."

"It can't be denied that the absence of his father factored into the equation," Strong wrote. Social scientists have indicated a link between adolescent crime and father absence. But while prison may be the

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