

# opinion/editorial

## King's legacy of justice must march on into '80s

Martin Luther King.

Once he was a man with a dream: a man who illuminated his vision of hope that racial equality could become a reality.

He was the spirit of the nonviolent black struggle. He was the soul of the multitudes who took to the streets during the 1960s because they believed in a principle—because they believed social injustices could and should be made extinct.

He accentuated the meaning of the word sacrifice, originally with his tireless efforts for a noble cause, and ultimately with his violent death by an assassin's bullet.

Martin Luther King was born on Jan. 15, 1929. It's too bad he didn't live to celebrate his 51st birthday.

Today is a good time to look back and contemplate the accomplishments made by the late Martin Luther King. It is also a time to look ahead and consider whether enough is being done to keep the King legacy alive.

Sadly, recent political and social events promote a dismal forecast for the hope of eliminating racial injustices.

A resurgence by the Ku Klux Klan is a very disappointing reflection on human nature.

President-elect Ronald Reagan's statement that he would like to return the country to the days before there was a racial problem proves he is not understanding of nor sympathetic with those who suffer from prejudice and inequality.

Sentiments to kill programs born in the 1960s to combat racial inequalities, such as the fair housing program, are spreading and make the outlook for realizing King's dream even more bleak.

Therefore, it is time for a firm, honest commitment to be made toward eliminating minority oppres-

sion. The promises of the 1960s are remembered and should be honored.

It is just as important that all people realize the dangers of complacency and the hazards of relying on comparisons to historic times when evaluating social conditions.

A lot has been done in the past 100 years to improve the lives of minority people. Unfortunately, not enough has been done during the past 10 years.

It is time to expand upon the legacy left to the world by the late Martin Luther King while it is still remembered.

## Baby-boom values need to grow up

LOS ANGELES Seventy-seven-year-old Mike Mansfield of Montana recently gave the *Washington Post* some examples of what he thought was "wrong" with American society.

There are "too many fat people. . . Not enough pride or courtesy or politeness," he said. "Too many people for themselves. . . Too willing to 'let George do it' because they don't want to be personally affected."

Are these merely the ravings of an old crank? Not really.

These criticisms come from a former Senate majority leader who, as U.S. ambassador to Japan, has spent the last four years watching America from the outside. Undoubtedly, his standards have been influenced by Japanese culture, which is steeped in pride, courtesy and a strong family tradition.

## shearer

For a while now, Mansfield has been concerned that the erosion of such values in America may be responsible for our ills. During an interview with us at his tastefully decorated embassy office in Tokyo several months ago, he appeared particularly troubled by the way this decay has made the baby-boom generation a selfish, materialistic and lazy lot.

Lately, we've noticed evidence of Mansfield's concerns in our own circles.

Item: A second-year law student in Washington, D.C., threatens to sue his roommate for jeopardizing his legal career. Apparently, the aspiring attorney, who is a New York City native, became distraught when, near exam time, his roommate underwent tests for hepatitis, not knowing whether the entire household had already been infected.

Item: A married couple, 25-years-old, complains that they have had to resort to supermarket store brands and meatless days in order to make payments on their new Porsche sports car.

Item: An office secretary vows to "get even" with a local dry cleaning establishment when she discovers the label on her \$100 designer jeans has been torn off.

To some, these anecdotes might seem like aberrations. But they are all too common, and probably reminiscent of pigheadedness of which we've all been guilty and later regretted.

Maybe we need such accounts to remind ourselves that we're all too selfish for our own good.

To be sure, few secular public figures aside from Jimmy Carter and California Gov. Jerry Brown seemed willing to articulate the need for values in tune with these times of scarcity. Then again, the electorate wasn't too receptive either.

In 1980, Ronald Reagan appealed to many voters with his call for traditional American "family" values.

But he also told his fans that they deserved to have more and more. His major campaign theme: "Let's make America great again"—found an eager, and susceptible voting audience.

Reagan may not have realized the impracticality of his rhetoric. But for a large number of Americans his words only fueled existing nostalgia for days when the Russians were No. 2 militarily, Pax Americana ruled Japan and Western Europe and the developing world knew better than to talk back to Washington or to the U.S. multinationals.

Back then, no one could force Americans to apologize for consuming over one-third of the world's resources—meddling in other countries' affairs either overtly or clandestinely.

Continued on Pg. 5



## Innocent handout reveals the truth

The hunched, scurvy old man watched us from across the busy city street. Partially hidden by a rustic brick pillar, his eyes seemed transfixed and piercing as I stole yet another glance his way.

He was in terrible need of a bath and new clothes, and most likely a stiff shot. But for a wide-eyed 12-year-old, he was an adventure.

I grew up in upper-middle class suburbia, exposed only to country-club neighbors and kids in color-coordinated outfits. I knew nothing of the kind of man across the street, save what I had read or seen on television.

## shelley smith

To me he represented mystery. A man who looked lonely and dejected; a sharp contrast from my world.

We crossed the street and headed for the large variety store just to the right of where I saw the man. I looked around but didn't see him, and although the adventure left too, admittedly, I was relieved. From across the street he was interesting, on his same side, he was eerie.

Just as I passed the pillar, "his" pillar, I saw him, hunched in a corner, perched on one foot and still watching. My eyes darted back to my friend, but out of the corner I could see him move closer to us. All of a sudden I felt a hand on my arm and heard his gruff, wispy voice.

"Honey, my wife is very sick and I need some bus money to go see her in the hospital. Do you have any spare change," he asked.

Instantly—whether provoked by fear or compassion, I still don't know—I shoved my hand down into the pocket of my corduroys, pulled out the \$2 my mother had given me for spending money and put them in his shaking outstretched hand. Just as he was about to mutter his appreciation, my friend appeared, grabbed my other arm, and whisked me down the dusty sidewalk.

Didn't I know that he was just an old bum, a bum looking for a drink? Didn't I know that there was no sick old wife? Didn't I know?

No, I didn't. My culture had protected me from people like him, shaded me from the harsh reality of poverty, of desperation, of deprivation. Out in my little world, there were no bums, no ghettos, no hungry children, no filth.

In my world there was only happiness, sunshine, laughter. I knew nothing of the "other" world I had just witnessed.

For an instant I hated my world. It had not prepared me for anything else than itself, it had not taught me the things I should know. And for an instant, I wanted out.

But once I realized what actually had just happened; what single and fortunately innocent event had just taken place, I was jolted into an understanding and I knew my little world would never be the same.

As I sat on the bus bench, waiting for my mother to come pick up my friend and me, I cried. I hurt, not about the lost \$2, not about poverty, not because he was dirty and old, but because he had lied.

Maybe my world had taught me value after all.

## daily nebraskan

UPSP 144-080

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The Daily Nebraskan is published by the UNL Publications Board Monday through Friday during the fall and spring semesters, except during vacations

Address: Daily Nebraskan, 34 Nebraska Union, 14th and R streets, Lincoln, Neb., 68588 Telephone: 472-2588

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