

A Dream forgotten ... fulfilled

Activists whine, forget once-noble goals

The speakers' words floated to the high, vaulted dome above. In each of the four quadrants of the ceiling, tile mosaics of Indian chieftains and a bison hunt watched stoically over the filled legislative chambers.

"Martin Luther King Jr. was a great, compassionate man who stood for the equality of all people." And on and on, the same words echoed through the whole day. Dr. King condensed in 50 words or fewer - concise, frozen and dead.

Thirty-two years ago, a man died. This man saw injustice and attacked it using the venerable principles of nonviolent civil disobedience.

He devoted his life to bringing more love, more compassion, to a country that was too quick to hate him.

His words are now on a perpetual tape loop. "I have a dream. I have a dream. I have a dream." The University of Nebraska-Lincoln celebrates this man's birth on the third Monday of every January. A day of events, designed to get you out of bed or to make you feel guilty if you don't. So you go.

What you get is a ticker tape of press releases; a lot of words, but no spirit. Try to find Dr. King in these words. He's not there. He's dead, and his spirit has left the building.

So when they speak of him, standing behind the brand-new podium in the sparkling auditorium of the Nebraska Union, the words ring hollow.

When they speak in the East Legislative Room, the words reverberate with the disposition of rote learning.

"Dr. King was a great and compassionate man who stood for the equality of all people."

In Nebraska, statisticians profess to be activists. Minorities are underrepresented; language is not inclusive enough.

Gone are the questions of human rights and justice - now we hear, "I don't feel represented in the course work I study," or in prime-time television, university policy or whatever.

The activists are bickerers and nay-sayers who speak nobly but say nothing. Dr. King had an issue - segregation. He had a method - civil disobedience.

What does the NAACP stand for in this state anymore? What of Allies? The Afrikan People's Union? They offer vague definitions of institutional prejudice, to be solved by programs of inclusive language, quotas and posters.

A day devoted to Martin Luther King Jr., a man of fire and love, was without either. The opening ceremony was a religious service, filled with music and mechanical statements. "Please rise for."

Even the activists are inactive. Even their stances are stale. So is it any surprise that, across the state, teen-agers sit at their computer screens and shrug when they hear of "injustice?" They don't care. Who does? Why should they?

Times they are a-changin'. The methods of Dr. King are no longer applicable. Rallies are a laughable, trivial 50 people in a photo on the front page with a caption that begins "Despite poor weather."

Without the conviction of justice behind them, the activists are lost.

They profess their victimization. At a loss for legitimate social qualms, activists balk at insensitivity and insufficient diversity. Victims require oppressors. But who are the oppressors?

The establishment-majority-cronies are the accused. Against the faceless enemy, the activists can't fail, but the enemy consists of people - real people.

Once, these real people felt hatred for the oppressed and oppressed them consciously.

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Now the so-called oppressors are as apathetic as the activists who accuse them of prejudice.

Oppressors? Hardly.

They aren't guilty of their "crimes." They are victimized by their alleged victims. They're put into a role, given expectations and stereotyped just as they are accused of doing to the oppressed.

Injustice results now not as a conscious choice of people in power, but because the two sides view each other as enemies and not as humans. And what did Dr. King say?

Modern activists smear their enemies. They generalize and vilify those who oppose them, rather than accepting them and loving them.

It is a battle between the Ivy Leaguers and the white-haired fat cats. Catch phrases are the ammunition, and the front line is the press.



Dr. King taught to love one's neighbor as his faith required. His battle was peace; his front line was the street.

Yet, in his name, on a day devoted to him, activists portray themselves as downtrodden. They brainstorm methods that will fix the problem of "inequality."

Dr. King never adopted this victim mentality. His people may have been downtrodden, but they held their heads high.

The movement carries his face on its banners and moves its lips in the familiar hymn "We shall overcome." Overcome what?

Overcome this emaciation? Someday.

People should act to fulfill King's dream

"I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed. We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal."

These are the unforgettable words of the late civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

According to 137 academics surveyed by two researchers from USA Today, King's "I have a dream" is the greatest speech of the 20th century.

Even 32 years after his death, we still have a long way to go to achieve racial equality for all.

His belief was that nonviolence was the most powerful tool in the fight for racial equality.

We hope one day we will all be able to stand for freedom together knowing that we will all be free.

Then you realize that this is just a dream. Our hope has yet to become reality.

As an international symbol of power of protest and civil disobedience, King changed the world through his words and deeds. He stood up for human rights for all, and he refused to be silenced.

The impact of King's work and his dream have affected people worldwide.

He empowered minorities and allowed people to envision their dreams. He taught men and women to believe in themselves and to believe they have civil rights. He brought about social change in America at a time when it was needed. He was the voice of black America.

His vision encouraged the world to strive for racial harmony, and his effect is still alive today.

Lincoln did a fine job celebrating King's life, reaching out especially to young people and keeping his dream alive.

diversity.

Dr. King's dream can only become a reality if people look within themselves and recognize the problems in our country. Personal ideologies and individual belief systems need to change. We cannot overcome racial injustice while white supremacist groups like the Ku Klux Klan still exist and believe in their superiority. We need to learn to accept all people as they are.

We need to teach children we are all equal. We all need to get involved in our schools and communities to fight injustices and build racial harmony.

We need to increase awareness throughout the world on racial injustices and seek to understand the barriers we must overcome.

Ignorance must be eliminated. The problems of racial injustice are not just for minorities, but for everyone. It is a global concern.

The economic system needs to change so that everyone has equal opportunity and an equal share.

We must all strive for racial harmony and equal opportunity as King wished, and the only way we can achieve this is to join and work together to solve these problems.

Martin Luther King Jr. Day is a holiday of remembrance, rejoicing and re-commitment to the life and contributions of Dr.

King. The main purpose of this day is to "serve by a heart of grace generated by love," by serving the community.

Americans celebrated King's legacy Monday by participating in parades, rallies and volunteer activities, such as blood drives, neighborhood clean-ups and house-building projects.

Lincoln did a fine job in celebrating King's life, reaching out especially to young people and keeping his dream alive.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was one of the greatest and most influential men of the last century. His dreams are inspiring.

I also have a dream that one day there will be world peace and a world community of justice for all. I dream that one day every man, woman and child can live his or her dream.

The struggle for racial equality continues, and the dream still lives on.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. paved the road to a better way. We still have a long journey ahead, when this nation lives out the true meaning of its creed and all men are treated equally.

However, in recent years, we have witnessed horrific and disturbing events such as the Rodney King police beating, Los Angeles riots, ethnic cleansing of Albanian Kosovars, NATO's bombing of Serbs, genocide in Rwanda and Burundi, and more recently, the fightings in Chechnya.

Too many innocent people have suffered and lost their lives.

These devastating events illustrate just how bad the problems of racial injustice continue to be and prove we are still fighting against racism and discrimination while we work for

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