

The Meaning of Martin Luther King's Birthday

by Gwen Shervington

I am convinced that if we are to get on the right side of the world revolution, we as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values. We must rapidly begin the shift from a 'thing oriented' society to a 'person-oriented' society. When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, materialism and militarism are incapable of being conquered.

from Dr. King's "Beyond Vietnam" speech April 4, 1967

Martin Luther King Jr. was born January 15, 1929, in Atlanta, Georgia. Early in the evening of April 4, 1968, a rifle bullet ended his life in Memphis, Tennessee. Because he lived and dreamed and died many factories, offices, schools, all federal and some state agencies will be closed. This is a national holiday with national implications. This is not a holiday for rest, frivolity and play. This is a day for re-affirmation and commitment to the principles of social justice and positive social change. In the 50's and 60's racism and racial discrimination were the most important crises facing America. In a nation that proclaimed liberty and justice for all, too many Black Americans were living with neither. The more blatant forms of racism have disappeared, but the subtle forms still exist:

FAMILIES BELOW THE POVERTY LEVEL 1984

White - 16.1%
Black - 41.4%
Female Headed Households - 41.9%

MEDIAN INCOME 1984

White - \$27,686
Black - \$15,432
Other Races - \$18,833

MEMBERS OF CONGRESS 1985

Representatives:
Male-412
Female-22
Black-20

Senators:
Male-98
Female-2
Black-0

Bigotry still mars America. The Martin Luther King Jr. holiday is a day not only to remember the man but to rededicate ourselves to acquiring a deep understanding of the nature of racism in the U.S. and the ways in which racism and other anti-humane values impact negatively on our society and the world. Racism, sexism, homophobia, classism, ageism and all the other "isms" that work to punish and degrade those who are not WHITE, WEALTHY, HETEROSEXUAL and MALE come from the same arena. Those who perpetuate racism also perpetuate homophobia. Racism and homophobia both support the premise that being different from "the norm" is a mortal sin.

The Right Wing which today openly preaches its brand of intolerance, racism and national chauvinism opposed Dr. King's quest for freedom and equality. While Dr. King and others were marching, working and dying to assure fuller acceptance of and participation by all U.S. citizens in the affairs of the nation, many of the leaders of today's religious Right Wing organizations were condemning and accusing him of being under the influence of the Communists. Jerry Falwell publicly made this accusation on March 21, 1965.

Known mostly for his Civil Rights work and for the fact that he won the Nobel Peace Prize, King was, first and foremost, a Christian minister and preferred to be known as such. He was firmly rooted in the Black Church. Unlike many other church leaders, Dr. King stuck to the church doctrines of universal love and non-judgement. He was very critical of the Church's hypocrisy:

"Any religion that professes to be concerned with the souls of men and is not concerned with the slums that damn them, the economic conditions that strangle them,

and the social conditions that cripple them is a spiritually moribund religion in need of new blood."

Dr. King and the nonviolent movement gave freedom a new birth in America. They banished the Jim Crow signs, browned American politics, and transformed the student and women's movement (and to some degrees the Church). He brought together people of all races, classes and backgrounds to work towards a common goal. Let us continue this work. Let us make the connections. As people of color, as lesbian and gay people, as poor people, as women, as old people, we are all oppressed. Let us come together to fight our common oppressor not to establish a color-blind society, but to build a society that recognized all differences, all colors, all lifestyles, all preferences. Dr. King believed:

"When oppressed people willingly accept their oppression, they only serve to give their oppressors convenient justification for their acts... Oppressed people cannot remain oppressed forever, the yearning for freedom eventually manifests itself. Freedom is never given voluntarily by the oppressor, it must be demanded by the oppressed... To accept passively an unjust system is to cooperate with that system."

Twenty years later we have still not overcome, so we keep on keeping on, we keep on fighting, we keep on organizing, we keep on speaking and COMING OUT!!!!!!

Books by Dr. King:

Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story.
Why We Can't Wait.
The Measure Of A Man.
Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?
Strength To Love.
The Trumpet Of Conscience. (transcript of a series of CBC radio broadcasts)

Planning Meeting for 1987 L/G Pride Celebration


After the lesbian/gay bashing that took place during the recent ERA campaign, we members of the Lesbian and Gay Community need to redouble our efforts to maintain our visibility. People must be reminded that we are an integral part of the community and we are not going to disappear simply because "they" do not want to deal with us.

In that spirit, we urge all of you who have enjoyed some of the activities of the four previous Lesbian/Gay Pride celebrations to contribute some of your talents and imagination.

The small group who worked on last year's celebration are not going to shoulder the whole load this year. It is vital that more of us become involved.

A meeting will take place on January 15th at 7:30 P.M. at the Peace and Justice Center, 186 College St., Burlington. Bring your ideas and your friends. Without you it will not happen.





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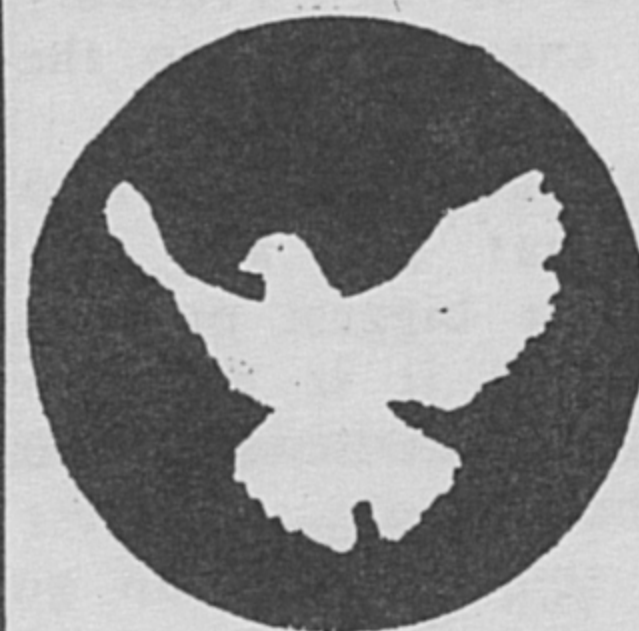
**HAIR
CLINIC**

ANNOUNCEMENT
STATEWIDE LESBIAN/GAY
COALITION MEETING PLANNED
DATE: February 1st, 1987
PLACE: South Royalton House

AGENDA
10:30-12:00 Separate Meeting
12:00-1:00 Lunch Break
1:00-2:00 Workshops
2:00-2:15 Break
2:15-3:30 Joint Meeting
3:30-4:30 Movie (TBA)

The workshops will be "Legislative Process" by Heather Wishik and "Grassroots Organizing" by Louise Brill and Jim Morgan. The meetings Co-Facilitators will be Susan (234-9589) and Keith (454-8552).

Peace & Justice Center
186 College St.
(1 flight up)
Burlington 863-8326



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Saturday Hours 1 pm - 5 pm**