

A nation's troubled soul

By DAVID SPARKS

It would take a theological thesis to fully explain the significance of Martin Luther King's life and why he died an untimely death. Such an endeavour would have to be titled "Why Great Individuals Die in History". But for Black people, the life of Martin Luther King has a special significance, which should never be forgotten.

To explain this significance, it is important first to put Martin Luther King in the proper historical perspective. He must be seen as — to us the Biblical expression — "The One Who Should Come." His was the voice of the twentieth century calling unto modern day Pharaohs, saying, "Let My People Go."

Martin Luther King was seen by many as standing in the prophetic tradition of the old Testament: as a Moses called to lead God's people to the Promised Land of Freedom and Equality. For Blacks, he was seen as the one of whom our slave foreparents dreamed — of a coming King, who would give himself unswervingly in championing the cause of the oppressed.

Martin Luther King — to borrow the words of Rev. Robert Speaks — fulfilled life's first requirements: he knew himself. Knowing himself, King knew he had a unique role to play in history. He considered the period in which he was living to be fraught with meaning for the Black race.

It was his conviction that the Black race was being used by God to change the course of history — and which history has certainly validated. Martin Luther King once stated:

To become the instrument of a great idea is a privilege that history gives only occasionally. He went on to say, the Spiritual Power that the Negro can radiate to the world comes from love, understanding, good will, and non-violence . . . The Negro may be God's appeal to this age — an age drifting rapidly to its doom".

Not only did King believe, as Jefferson believed, that all people were endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; but that Black people were endowed with special spiritual gifts which have enabled us to endure centuries of slavery and degradation, and yet still soar upward. This must be the meaning of King's life for Black People: one of suffering and struggle. The whole meaning of history can be seen as a battle between good and evil — between the forces of light and darkness (King). A futile attempt by Mankind to prevent the prevailing of God's purpose.

Martin Luther King can be rightly or wrongly characterized as the "Secular Saint". A third generation Baptist minister, Dr. King's religious convictions only took on deeper meaning when forced to confront the evils of racism. He was greatly influenced by the great Hindu philosopher,

Mahatma Gandhi, who was also seen as the one that should come.

Both men had a passion for truth and justice which was inspired by a religious-ethical idealism. For whenever religion concerns itself with the transformation of society, it not only displays a courage which challenges the forces of injustice, but it gives birth to a Millennial hope even when present realities stand most violently opposed to such a hope.

For people of colour, both King and Gandhi must be seen as "links of the same chain" — a chain that runs throughout history. They were only the first in a series of such individuals who must yet appear.

As life continues to unfold and history continues to spin its unpredictable web, individuals will be forced to give their lives in carrying forward the torch of truth and justice. If it is for such a Cause, Black people may have to lead the way, seeing that we appear always to be the less privileged among the people of the earth; but yet possessing the moral insight to discern truth from falsehood.

Finally, the legacy of Martin Luther King can only become meaningful for Blacks in Canada when we allow the King spirit of love, goodwill, and non-violence to break forth anew out of the depth of our own situation, and see ourselves — as King saw Black America — as the conscience of the Nation. As its troubled soul.

i Anda, mocosa!

Reflexiona antes de obrar

By H.D. EDWARDS

Spanish One — 2nd Edition, the language text used by Dalhousie and scores of other universities, has once again come under feminist fire. It would seem that this book helps maintain the values of a male-dominated society. However, as often the case in the past, this latest round of complaints is the result of superficial examination and cannot withstand any close scrutiny.

It is suggested that Antonio Ruiz is responsible for sexually stereotyped characters, while "co-author" Sonia Jones is guilty of letting women down by not preventing this. Had the author of the complaints contacted the Spanish department, Dr. Jones would have told her, "I wrote the book in its entirety. He (Ruiz) proofread it."

So, the book is not the tool (no pun intended) of a sexist male. What, then, is the reason for the stereotypes? Dr. Jones explains, "In a beginning language text, the students' vocabulary has to be simple and discussions have to be black and white." However, as the book progresses, characters are developed in greater depth. The rakish Javier turns out to be "afraid of women. The reason he goes out with so many is because he is incapable of creating a lasting relationship with anyone."

Profesor Moreno, who offers chocolates to a university student and *not* to a child, is based on a real-life former professor of Dr. Jones. She is quick to point out that the book explains how, having lost his family to war and with his own death approaching, he only likes to imagine he is flirting with his students, because it makes him feel younger. She also explains that even the real Profesor Moreno "never went so far as to make us (his female students) feel uncomfortable . . . It made him happy for a while to imagine, and it cost us nothing."

The purpose of these situations and characters is, in effect, two-fold: first, the controversial topics, including death, divorce and the generation gap, are more conducive to discussion than, for example, going shopping; second, they are in fact, satire, and not intended to be taken seriously. Dr. Jones is not blind to the problems confronting women, but rather than to ignore them or to moralize about them, she prefers to look at such people and situations for what they are, and to laugh at them. "Satire," she maintains, "helps us see them more clearly, their foolish side and their foibles . . . My particular weapon happens to be humour."

Dr. James Holloway, head of the Spanish department, agrees that these characters cannot be

taken at face value, but suggests that even if one did, it is men who are portrayed in the least flattering light. Often, he tells us, the role of man is that "of a ridiculous and laughable character, not someone put favourably forward as an object suggested for emulation. There are, however, no doubt some people . . . who just don't laugh at W.C. Field movies."

Avril Van Vollenhoven is one of many students who defend this position. "To be offended," she says, "you'd have to be taking life too seriously, looking for chauvinistic attacks on every corner. You read into the book what you want to see; if you're looking for degraded women, that's what you'll find." Julie Matthews, president of the Dalhousie Spanish Society, concluded, "I think it's ridiculous to assume that any thinking, intelligent woman should be offended by this book. It's obviously intended as satire."

If one cannot understand the book, it can be interpreted as any number of things, but a handbook for sexists it is not. Without considering anyone's academic capacity for comprehension of either the language or the content, one might wonder what could be the motive behind these unsubstantiated attacks on *Spanish One*. With a little more back-

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