

inspiration from "The Drum Major Instinct," look beyond the prizes and the fanfare, and seek to explore the deeper, more profound meanings of his life and ministry.

We might use this occasion to question why certain moments in Dr. King's magnificent body of sermons, speeches and writings have achieved canonical status while others are all but forgotten. We might seize this as the opportunity to ask whose interests are served when Dr. King is remembered as the champion of a color blind society and not, for example, as an advocate for the poor or an outspoken opponent of war. Indeed, we might take this opportunity to restore Dr. King's notion of a color blind society to its original meaning. For Dr. King used the term to refer to a society free of racial subordination. Yet various political leaders and pundits have appropriated the notion to justify their opposition to any intervention by the state to eliminate racial subordination.

In the spirit of Dr. King's Nobel Prize acceptance speech, we might use this occasion as a time to commit ourselves to learning more about the lesser-known activists associated with the struggle, men and women such as Septima Clark, E. D. Nixon, the Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth, Bob Moses, Diane Nash, Ella Baker, Fannie Lou Homer, Bayard Rustin, as well as the many, many others without whom there would have been no Movement. Perhaps most importantly, we might commit ourselves to a critical, productive engagement with his words and his actions so that we will be able to make his vision come alive for us as we face the challenges of the present moment. For the poverty, inadequate access to education, employment, and health care, discrimination and military aggression against which he struggled are still with us. They may have assumed different forms, but we face them nevertheless. What should we do in our daily lives to honor this drum major for justice, peace and righteousness?

During his lifetime, Dr. King was often criticized for stepping outside the categories into which others sought to confine him, his message and his mission. When, for example, a group of Birmingham clergymen accused him of being an outside agitator, he responded in his 1963 "Letter from Birmingham Jail," that

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly."

When he was criticized for speaking out against the Vietnam War, and told that "peace and civil rights don't mix," he responded in a sermon entitled "A Time to Break Silence," delivered at the Riverside Church in New York City on March 25, 1967 that he had "a calling . . . beyond national allegiances."

"To me [he continued] the relationship of this ministry to the making of peace is so obvious that I sometimes marvel at those who ask me why I am speaking against the war. Could it be that they do not know that the good news was meant for all men—for Communist and capitalist, for their children and ours, for black and for white, for revolutionary and conservative? Have they forgotten that my ministry is in obedience to the one who loved his enemies so fully that he died for them? What then can I say to the 'Vietcong' or to Castro or to Mao as a faithful minister if this one? Can I threaten them with death or must I not share with them my life?"

As we seek appropriate ways to remember Dr. King, we ought be certain not to limit him in death as his critics sought to limit him in life. He saw the interconnectedness of diverse struggles against racism, impe-

rialism and economic exploitation. Our tributes to him must draw inspiration from that vision, they must enable us to see beyond our local interests and personal investments, and they must require us to recognize our place in the network of mutuality within which we are inescapably placed.

The brilliant 2001 film *Boycott*, offers a compelling example of memory as a critical function. In *Boycott*, the director Clark Johnson expands our conventional understandings of the Montgomery Bus Boycott. This film works to disabuse us of the notion that the Movement began with the boycott by drawing a connection between the segregation of public accommodations and the terror of rural lynch law. It complicates our understanding of the leadership of the Movement by pointing to the significant roles of figures such as Joann Gibson Robinson, E.D. Nixon, and Bayard Rustin. Moreover, it captures Dr. King's youth and vulnerability—at the time the boycott began he was only 26 years old—thus suggesting that he grew into the powerful, charismatic presence we so commonly associate with him.

What I find so impressive about *Boycott* is that it contradicts the notion that memory need be static or fixed. Rather, through its deliberate use of anachronism, it exemplifies how memory can be made pliable, dynamic, active. For example, it contains a dizzying array of visual images from both earlier and later moments in history that subtly link the boycott to previous and subsequent acts of struggle and resistance. It incorporates diverse musical tracks—rock, hip hop, gospel, jazz, alternative—from the '60s, through the '90s—a technique that pulls the boycott out of the safe past in which it has been enshrined. This compelling and imaginative use of the soundtrack prompts viewers to consider the enduring legacy of the boycott for the present.

The film ends with a striking image that dramatizes the kind of critical use of memory to which I've been alluding. The closing credits roll over a shot of Dr. King, played by the actor Jeffrey Wright, walking in 21st century Atlanta. Looking somewhat bemused by the people he passes—a young man carrying a boom box, someone else speaking on a cell phone—he stops to speak with a group of young African American men. A police car approaches, slowing to check out this group of men. The two officers, a Latina and an African American man, wave somewhat ambiguously at King and his associates before they move on.

At one level this final scene would seem to evoke a powerful, nostalgic longing for the martyred King. It might seem to prompt viewers to wonder how different the world would be if Dr. King were still here. But I believe that something else is going on here. I believe that this final scene is meant to inspire us to reflect upon the politics and the act of remembering. The exchange of glances between the officers and the black men on the street conjures up the familiar iconography of the tense relationship between the police and African American communities. In the context of a film about the end of Jim Crow seating on buses in Montgomery, this closing image links the protocols of segregation to the violence and terror communities of color continue to associate with law enforcement and the criminal justice system. This gesture positions the boycott, and by extension the Civil Rights Movement, within a broader history of oppression and resistance. The deliberately anachronistic shot of King speaking to the young men on the corner might thus be read as a figure for the possibility of a critical dialogue between the examples of history and the exigencies of the contemporary cultural and political scene.

I want to close with a passage from the end of King's Nobel Prize speech that speaks

powerfully to the present moment. For even as he honors the men and women with whom he struggled so tirelessly in the Movement, he denounces military aggression and articulates a vision of global peace:

I refuse to accept the cynical notion that nation after nation must spiral down a militaristic stairway into a hell of thermo-nuclear destruction. I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word in reality. That is why right temporarily defeated is stronger than evil triumphant.

I believe that even amid today's mortar bursts and whining bullets, there is still hope for a brighter tomorrow. I believe that wounded justice, lying prostrate on the blood-flowing streets of our nations, can be lifted from this dust of shame to reign supreme among the children of men.

I have the audacity to believe that peoples everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity, equality and freedom for their spirits. I believe that what self-centered men have torn down men other-centered can build up. . . .

This faith can give us courage to face the uncertainties of the future. It will give our tired feet new strength as we continue our forward stride toward the city of freedom. When our days become dreary with low-hanging clouds and our nights become darker than a thousand midnights, we will know that we are living in the creative turmoil of a genuine civilization struggling to be born.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO CHAR SORENSON

HON. SCOTT McINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 20, 2004

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I am honored to rise before you to recognize a remarkable woman from my home state of Colorado. Char Sorenson was recently recognized as one of four finalists for Colorado's annual Teacher of the Year Award. Char has dedicated her life to the betterment of young people and I am proud to call the attention of this body of Congress and our nation to her outstanding contributions.

Char is a teacher at Vanderhoof Elementary School in Arvada, Colorado. Char's genuine passion for teaching shines through in the classroom each day. As a teacher, Char works tirelessly to provide her students with the educational foundation that will help them to become effective and successful members of their community. In addition to traditional lessons, Char teaches her students integrity, respect and self-discipline through example.

Char's commitment to the betterment of young people does not end with her position at Vanderhoof Elementary. Char is also devoted to teaching children the wonders of the great outdoors. As a volunteer with the Outdoor Education Laboratory School, Char works to ensure that hundreds of Colorado's students are exposed to the wonders of natural science.

Mr. Speaker, it is my honor to rise and pay tribute to Char Sorenson. Char has dedicated her life to the betterment of young people and all of her students have had their future enhanced by her dedication.