



NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 1, 2008 THROUGH MARCH 31, 2009

DR. REVEREND BROOKS ISSUES PROCLAMATION OF HOPE

Before an audience of more than three thousand concerned community leaders and on the eve of the election of the first African American President of the United States, celebration of Christmas and the celebration of the 80th birthday of the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Dr. Brooks, President and CEO of ICDHR, issued an extraordinary call for hope throughout the world.

In his profound message, Dr. Brooks stated:

“As we prepare to remember the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the life and contributions of Dr. King and usher in a new President of the United States, we should remember the profound words echoed in the lives of these great leaders. They each believed that the answers to the many challenges remaining to be conquered can be found by looking inward at ourselves, answers often embedded in an understanding of truth.”

Often our lives are filled with cosmetic ideas that shade our views and understanding of our self worth. Until these shades are removed, we will continue to struggle with who we are and our purpose in life. Answers to the many challenges (i.e. the war, hatred, premature death and unemployment) begins with each of us.

The Apostle Paul in the Biblical Book of Titus reminds us that it is not the condition that we find ourselves in that really matters, for unpleasant conditions will follow us all of our lives. However, what is important is our response to these challenging conditions. Our struggles to respond to these unpleasanties will help us to define our purpose in life and clarify our character.

A number of years ago, as a result of experiencing several challenges, I was moved to pen words that have never been forgotten:

“To find myself to find myself is my wish for today. To find myself to find myself in a God given way. I seek and run and run and seek. Not knowing what I seek and why I run.

But to find myself to find myself is my wish for today.”

The truth in these words recognizes that when we seek to find ourselves, we discover the richness of our abilities to address individual and collective challenges that surround us every day. We must continue to increase our efforts to find ourselves. If we do, our lives become more defined and the road to recovery is seen more clearly.

When the marriage fails, children no longer remember their positive upbringing; when the days of love ones are marked, savings are depleted and friends become rare, our faith and character are measured. Without a doubt, it is our trials and errors, coupled with our faith that helps to determine our future and caring spirit.

We must view troubling times as only “time limited” We must teach our children never to give up; never to be poor, never to cease to value respect for others and to love God and seek to be Godly. We must urge them to save financially early in life and value family. We must teach them to believe in themselves in order to fully understand the Biblical Call for “loving thy neighbor as thyself.” We must encourage our youth to set goals and learn the need to sacrifice in order to achieve established goals; and then, we must teach our children to make Godly Choices for God favors those who make good choices in life.

As we ponder our role in life, we must seek to become models of good behavior for others to follow. Dr. King was right when he said: “You can’t be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be and I can’t be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be. Our lives are inescapably linked together.” Finally, we must challenge our religious leaders to be more diligent in teaching the profound biblical words found in Hosea 4:6:

“Our people perish for a lack of knowledge.” Too often, the infinitive phrase “to perish” is limited to death. However, we must understand that our people can perish spiritually, economically, educationally and in health as well. Please go in peace and love.”

TWO GIANTS MEET

Bishop Dr. G.H. Brewton, Head of the Cook County Ministerial Alliance and a warrior in the Civil Rights Movement of the 60’s, and Rev. Clyde Brooks, President of the Illinois Commission on Diversity and Human Relations and a former ally of the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., united to remember and celebrate successes of their days of civil rights struggles. In his role as President of the Cook County Ministerial Alliance, Bishop Brewton has brought together extraordinary talent to address monumental human challenges in the south suburbs. In referring to Bishop Brewton, Rev Brooks calls him “a leader of leaders.” The Commission salutes Bishop Brewton for the work he is doing.

ICDHR LAUNCHES GLOBAL DIVERSITY MISSION

In keeping with the mission of ICDHR, Rev. Brooks will lead a group of African American Theologians to the Middle East during November, 2008. The purpose of the mission is to promote and encourage peace in a region long troubled by religious struggles. As ICDHR plans the 41st annual celebration of Dr. King's life and contributions, the Mission will also provide an illustration of our remembrance of one of the great ideals expressed by Dr. King – “the ideal of togetherness.”



While some attempted to limit Dr. King as a civil rights leader in the United States, he resisted this attempt to place geographical lines on his work. During the mission, Rev. Brooks and the 20 Pastors who join him will attend seminars on Middle East history, meet with religious and government leaders throughout the region, and pray, speak and preach at sites once done so by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

COMMISSION COMPLETES PROFILE STUDY



On the Planning Table of the Commission, is the need to assess the growth or level of racial profiling by health care providers, mortgage companies and educational institutions.

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. AND THE WAR

As the nation struggles with the war in Iraq, the words of Kwiese Mfume, former president of the NAACP, spoken at the January 2004 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Dinner in Chicago, continue to be a reality for today. In his speech to more than 2,000 attendees (as recorded in the Chicago Sun-Times), we are reminded of one of Dr. King's famous speeches which points out that Dr. King was concerned with more than just his often referred to “Dream.”



President Mfume stated: “Many people just want to see Dr. King stuck on the steps with that speech about having a dream. But Dr. King went through an evolution not that different from what Malcolm X underwent. King stepped out of where he was that day on

the step of the Lincoln Memorial and reminded us that he was increasingly under attack for going beyond just wanting to dream. When he began questioning the war in Vietnam, he was really ostracized.

"The Poor People's Campaign was another occasion where Dr. King was told, 'you ought to just keep giving speeches.' We have an obligation to remember the totality of King."

President Mfume continued: "In later years, King was labeled a communist after seeking to combine the black and white working classes into one powerful movement."

President Mfume reminded us that on April 4, 1967, exactly one year before his assassination, King's speech entitled "Why I Oppose the War in Vietnam" warned that unless the triple evils of poverty, racism and militarism were addressed, global chaos would result.

As the world plans to remember Dr. King on his 80th birthday (January 15, 2009), the Commission encourages all to read his book "Where Do We Go from Here" to gain insights of Dr. King's thoughts and learn how they relate to the War in Iraq and throughout the world.

COMMISSION LAUNCHES FINANCIAL LITERACY INITIATIVE

In cooperation with a number of Chicago area financial institutions, the Commission opened hundreds of financial savings accounts for Chicago Public School students between the ages of 12 and 16. Among the participating banks were National, TCF, Harris, Washington Mutual (WaMu) and Charter One Banks.



Representatives from TCF Bank and Washington Mutual Bank Pose for Pictures at the Financial Literacy Initiative Workshop at Fenger High School

This day long initiative brought parents, students, local community leaders and representatives from area financial institutions together for a day of inspirational music provided by Walt Whitman and the Soul Children of Chicago.



**Musical Performance by Walt Whitman and the Soul Children of Chicago
at the Financial Literacy Initiative Workshop at Fenger High School**

Workshops on credit, savings, financial management and investments were held. The goal of the Commission was to “jump start” the need for parents to become knowledgeable of financial matters and then teach their children these skills.



**Left to right ... Representatives from National City Bank, parent and student
attendees at workshop, and Harris Bank Representatives Pose for Pictures
at the Financial Literacy Initiative Workshop at Fenger High School**

In the words of Rev. Brooks, ICDHR President: “Too many of our citizens wait too late to begin saving, and when they do, it is often too late to insure adequate retirement funds and financial needs of tomorrow.” He called on Ministers to begin to incorporate Biblical lessons on finances into the daily lives and activities of Believers.



Left to right ... Rev. Clyde Brooks, ICDHR President; Ida Manning, Executive Director of the Illinois Institute for Entrepreneurial Education; Kandias Conda, Money in the Bank Project Coordinator at the Financial Literacy Initiative Workshop at Fenger High School

EXCERPTS FROM KING SPEECHES

As we prepare to remember Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his legacy, the Commission believes that readers and followers should re-visit key components of several of his most famous speeches. Some of these are:



1963: “So even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed...that all men (and women) are created equal. I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice. I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their

skin but by the content of their character. I have a dream today. And if America is to be a great nation, this must become true.”

1963: “So let freedom ring. From the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire, let freedom ring. From the mighty mountains of New York, let freedom ring. But not only that: let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia. Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill of Mississippi. And when this happens, when we let it ring, we will speed that day when all of God’s children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual: Free at last, free at last. Thank God Almighty we are free at last.”

1964: “Sooner or later all the people of the world will have to discover a way to live together in peace and thereby transform this pending cosmic elegy into a creative psalm of brotherhood. I refuse to accept the view that mankind is so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become a reality. This is why right, temporarily defeated, is stronger than evil triumphant.”

“Well, I don’t know what will happen now. We’ve difficult days ahead. But it doesn’t matter with me now. I have been to the mountaintop. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place but I am not concerned about that now. I just want to do God’s will. He has allowed me to go up to the mountain and I’ve looked over and seen the promised land. I may not get there with you but I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people will get to the Promised Land. I am happy tonight. I am not worried about anything. I do not fear any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.”

LET US NOT FORGET

Too often we forget about the hundreds and perhaps thousands of Americans who paved the way for the human freedoms that many of us now enjoy. The exercise of these freedoms did not totally come from obedience to the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence but rather through courageous acts of people from many races, religions and nationalities.

In remembrance, let’s not only remember Dr. King and his heroic deeds but also Andrew Goodman, age 20, a volunteer from New York City, James Chaney, 21, from Meridian, Mississippi and Michael Schwerner, 21, also of Meridian. These three young non African American men were murdered because they were helping African Americans to gain voting rights. These three young workers drove to Longdale, Mississippi to see a firebombed black church.

Along the way, police stopped them for a traffic violation, took them to the Neshoba County Jail in Philadelphia, Mississippi but released them later. On their way back to Meridian, they were abducted by Klan members, shot, and buried in a remote earthen dam. These young men are but a few who gave so much to America. Let us never forget.

**NORTHWEST SUBURBS TO REMEMBER DR. MARTIN LUTHER
KING, JR. ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 15, 2009**

Under the leadership of John Eilering, Area President of the Midwest Bank and Trust, plans are being laid for one of the largest celebrations of Dr. King's life. President Eilering has pulled together a group of extraordinary community leaders who also serve as Honorary Dinner Chairs to plan the event. Had he lived, Dr. King would have turn 80 years old on January 15th.



This annual event is sponsored by the Illinois Commission on Diversity and Human Relations. The goal of the event is to elevate the ideals held and acted upon by Dr. King and to encourage all to seek to fulfill these ideals in their daily lives.

While the event includes a dinner, the Commission is seeking to re-position how people view the event. The dinner is only a vehicle -- an instrument that brings good people together on one date and at one time to illustrate their admiration, remembrance of Dr. King and their renewal of his/her commitment to working harder to improve the lives of our fellow men and women.

The ICDHR has chosen to remember Dr. King by way of music. Music was an important part of Dr. King's life as well as the Civil Rights Movement that he led. Walt Whitman and the Soul Children of Chicago will perform in concert. Mr. Whitman and the Soul Children have performed in Israel, India and around the world. They have also performed at the White House and have produced more than twelve CD's.

Honorary Chairs and members of the Planning Committee are: Archbishop Dr. Jacob J. Agepog, Agape India International Ministries; Attorney Malini M. Byanna, Founder and President, Lotus Rising Foundation; Danise Habun, Executive Director, Hanover Township Mental Health Board and Chair of the Promotions and Advertising Subcommittee; Wonzolyn Henderson, Chair, Hoffman Estates Cultural Awareness Commission; Jel Lewis-Jone, Sisters of Living Word; Bill Morgan, American Home Health Care and Co-Chair of the Marketing Subcommittee; Ajit Panikulam, Chief Executive Officer, Lotus Rising Foundation; Sister Jeannine Randolph, Sisters of the Living Word; Diane Popper, President, Northwest Suburban Interfaith Council; Dr. W. E. Scott, Chairman, Elgin Human Relations Commission; and Patrick Seger, Director of Human Resources Management, Village of Hoffman Estates and Co-Chair, Marketing Subcommittee.

The ICDHR would like to thank these outstanding leaders for volunteering their time to make this salute to Dr. King a world class event.

COMMISSION HONORS JOHN BURGESS



After receiving more than fifty nominations, John Burgess, Managing Director of International Profit Associates, has been selected to receive the distinguished Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Excellence in Leadership Award. The honor will be bestowed on Mr. Burgess at the 41st Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Remembrance and Celebration Dinner on Saturday, January 10, 2009.

Each year this event brings thousands of concerned leaders and citizens together to celebrate Dr. King's birthday. Had he lived, Dr. King would have turned 80 years old on January 15, 2009. During the 41 years of this event, only 13 leaders have been identified as worthy of this extraordinary honor.

Former honorees have included Dr. B. Joseph White, President of the University of Illinois; Edward Brennen, former Chairman and CEO of Sears, Roebuck and Company; Ozzie Guillen, Manager of the Chicago White Sox; Lovie Smith, Head Coach of the Chicago Bears; Andrew Young, Former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations; former Heavyweight Boxing Champion Muhammad Ali and Dusty Baker, former Manager of the Chicago Cubs.

Mr. Burgess was selected for his giving heart which has helped send African American Ministers to Israel as Middle East Peace Ambassadors, led the way for the celebration of Dr. King's birthday for more than twenty years and assisted hundreds of not-for-profits in providing needed health, education and social services for the disadvantaged. He will also serve as the speaker for the event.

AURORA POLICE CHIEF RETIRES

Aurora Police Chief William A. Powell retired after more than thirty years of service. Under his leadership, the Aurora Police Department excelled and paved the way for creative law enforcement throughout the State of Illinois. During his tenure, the Commission received a contract to provide Cultural Competency Training for the Department's 400 sworn and non-sworn personnel.

DID YOU KNOW

- ***70 percent of NFL players are African America and only 15% are head coaches.
- *** Dr. King believed that two of God's greatest gifts to humanity were diversity and freedom.
- *** Reverend Clyde Brooks, Head of ICDHR, has led one of the largest annual remembrances of Dr. King -- longer than most others in the State of Illinois and perhaps throughout the United States.

- *** In some cities in the United States, more than 30 percent of eligible African Americans voters remain unregistered to vote.
- *** Many people believe that the “playing field” between Blacks and Whites is equal, and that if Blacks would only improve themselves educationally and stop whining, their situation would improve; and yet such people refuse to examine the way schools are funded in the State of Illinois -- providing advantages for some and disadvantages for many others, especially communities in poor and inner city areas.
- *** ICDHR is recognized as the leader in Cultural Competency Training for law enforcement and other groups.

AN EDITORIAL: BY REVEREND CLYDE H. BROOKS

Many of us struggle to answer many of the “whys” to the numerous issues confronting us today. Why cannot we end the war in Iraq? Why are so many people dying from HIV? Why are young people turning to drugs? Why do young people forsake their elderly parents and leave them to wither away in a lonely nursing home, seldom visiting them? Why are we in the financial crises and why are thousands of Americans losing their jobs and savings? Why is there such racial hatred? Why are 80 percent of the inmates in Cook County Jail African American and Hispanic? Why is it that the cost of drugs is so high? Why are so many people refusing to register to vote after so many have given their life for the cause of suffrage? Why---why—why?



These are but a few of the unanswered questions with which many Americans wrestle. As a minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, I remain concerned with the silence of far too many of our church leaders. For some, they view such issues as secular and not a part of the church.

If we are truly re-born Christians, there should be no secular in our lives. Everything is Sacred. If everything is sacred, why is there so much silence and indifference? Jesus came for the sinner and unsaved and not the saved. Therefore, we as ministers of the Gospel should be involved in resolving issues of the world. We must move the church out of the “brick and mortar” and into the homes, hospitals, jails, streets and struggles of the world. “Sunday Morning Christianity” must move to “Sunday through Saturday Ministry.”