From Movement to Institution: What Happened?

Four hundred seventy-eight years ago this Tuesday, a small group of believers decided that the doctrines of the European state churches were incompleat, that their own faith might be better expressed if they were baptized as adults. With that, Anabaptism was born, a new voice in the Christian Wind. In 1525, the Anabaptist church became the Mennonite Church, now a worldwide movement, and its members face them, says much about recruiters to campus and losing a prime opportunity to recruit new members of the movement it once was. Hesston College recently made the switch when Constantine decided Christianity looked like a better option than Islam. How did it happen? Movements in general have a tendency to become “legitimized,” to turn into institutions that fit into and work with the power structures of their societies. The first-century Church was the first true NGO, a non-governmental organization, just like the Red Cross or Doctors Without Borders. The Weather Vane is published weekly by undergraduate students of Eastern Mennonite University. Opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the university or its affiliates. Letters to the editor are welcome; the editors reserve the right to edit letters for clarity and space. Advertising is selective, with preference given to local businesses.

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The Weather Vane

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Opinion

By Michael Kniss
Contributing Writer

"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." Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was a hero for the ages. Arguably the most directly active postor since Franklin Roosevelt and a man of Lincoln, King was a fervent voice of right, preaching with such conviction that the nations of the world could not help but hear. The Civil Rights movement of the 1960s was a time of turmoil for our country as bitterness, hatred and fear seemed to be the order of the day. King organized marches, participated in boycotts and gave sermons that defied the then-accepted doctrines of racial inequality. He fought passionately against the cruelty and ignorance of oppression with his two fists of love and hope. His steadfast reliance on nonviolence and passive resistance should remain an inspiration to all those who seek to further the journey towards a just and peaceful world.

Every year, on the third Monday of January, we celebrate the legacy that Dr. King devoted a day to this great man. Yet, this gallant gesture is not enough. How many people spend this day truly remembering King and that which he stood for and represented? How many students truly know about his life and his immeasurable impact on the collective conscience of the American people? King was assassinated on April 4, 1968. As each generation of students and their parents become further removed, the legacy of his life continues to vanish. The magnitude of his life and the emotion of his tragic death should not be lost. I have heard men and women speak of the utter despair that they recall feeling when King was shot. Such a sense of sorrow and hopelessness has not been felt since.

For certain civil rights activists, the day King was killed was the day that hope died. Where are these students today? What is the day of all days? Where is the generation that can speak to a campus of listeners, descriptive of the sound of his voice, the importance of his message, and his invaluable service to humankind?

Here at EMU, an institution firmly grounded in a philosophy of nonviolence and pacifism, King’s memory should be held as an inspiration to all those who seek the continued inspiration to all those who seek the continued...