

Speaker at PSU lauds King, others in equal rights fight

By Bernie Mixon
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In a speech yesterday honoring the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., the president of the National Urban League said it's necessary to remember not only King but also others important in the struggle for equal rights.

In his speech, part of the Pennsylvania State University's observance of Martin Luther King Day, John E. Jacob described King as one of many in a biracial movement to "save America's soul."

"There were many brave people who sacrificed their lives for the cause... who now are footnotes in the pages of our history books."

Classes were canceled at Penn State Harrisburg from 4 to 6 p.m. so the entire campus could participate in what university President Dr. Bryce Jordan called an "all-university convocation."

About 50 administrators, faculty, staff and students came to the Black Cultural Arts Center to hear Jacob deliver his 30-minute speech that was broadcast via satellite from University Park's Eisenhower Auditorium to the Lower Swatara Twp. campus and 21 others in the Penn State system.

Jacob said the 1963 March on Washington "forced a nation to come to terms with its own ideals," and it was this moral force that was reflected in the passion of blacks and whites during the civil-rights movement.

But he said it's "hard for the young people of today to realize that black people were subjected to laws such as separate water fountains for blacks and whites," he said. "All this is history, but it's recent history, too soon forgotten."

"Civil-rights laws and social programs have opened doors to blacks and at the same time created new opportunities for whites and women," he said.

"The myth that we live in a color-blind society and that there is no need for a civil-

rights movement ignores the persistence of racism."

While the 1963 march, in which King delivered his famous "I Have A Dream" speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, helped win freedom for many blacks, "economic parity was not so easily won."

He said the statistics show that half of all black children grow up in poverty, 2 million black people are jobless and the income of blacks is 58 percent that of whites.

But he said the black community is part of the solution to those problems and neighborhoods across the country have developed programs to decrease crime, curb teen-age pregnancy and increase the quality of schools, he said.

It is his hope that the cries of excellence don't drown out the need for equity in the schools, he said.

"We can't reach out to a world which is three-quarters non-white. There is a need for a change in the stereotypes that prevail at home," he said.

He issued a challenge to President-elect George Bush who he says has an "opportunity to lead America to a higher ground."

"He needs to declare an overriding objective to implement a policy which will increase parity between blacks and in all aspects of their well-being," he said.

But he said "if we are to bridge the gap between blacks and whites we will need the private sector, the black community and the government."

He said the government must be the prime motivator because it has the power, the resources and the ability to marshal private and public grounds for the national objective.

"It's important to close the gap and bring excellence in the mainstream," he said. "If we help America to realize its ideals then we can secure a better place in society for all Americans."