

40 Years In The Wilderness By Paradise Gray

Written by Paradise Gray ID4285
Wednesday, 09 April 2008 06:31 -

A diverse group of Freedom Ryders from Pittsburgh, PA members of The League Of Young Voters, Teens Against Senseless Violence, (T.A.S.K.), Healcrest Farms, Student Conservation Association (S.E.A.), GTECH, the Millions More Movement and One HOOD loaded up vehicles with young people and joined thousands of other committed and aspiring young people from across America on a mission of organizing, information gathering, networking and leadership training. As guests of Van Jones's/Green For All "A Dream Reborn" Conference, Elder Harry Belafonte's "The Gathering" and Rev. Al Sharpton's National Action Network 2008 National Convention it was a very busy and informative weekend.

We have seen the image of Dr. King laying on the balcony of The Lorraine Motel in Memphis Tennessee with Rev. Jesse Jackson, Hosea Williams and Rev. Ralph Abernathy pointing in the direction that the fatal bullet was fired from many times. In magazines, documentaries and in history books, it is the image of one of the most tragic moments in American history. Noting however, prepared me for the emotions that I would be overcome (no pun intended) with by standing at the very spot on April 4th, 2008, the 40th Anniversary of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s Assassination. The Lorraine Motel is now the site of the National Civil Rights Museum.

Friday morning April 4th, thousands of people came together in pouring rain and marched to the Lorraine Motel, Davey D walked with one of the original sanitation workers that Dr. King came to town to help. He told Davey that Dr. King was not in Memphis discussing civil rights, he was in Memphis helping sanitation workers who were on strike for better wages and benefits when he was shot and killed, 40 years later the sanitation workers of Memphis Tennessee still don't have a pension. We also found out that African-American's who make up over 50% of the population of Memphis only control 1% of the business's.

"It seemed that most of the preachers and leaders of organizations who spoke from the balcony were trying too hard to be King like, some even copying Dr. King's cadence and voice, like they were trying to make the media's high-lite reel by delivering the definitive speech of the day. The subject of racial issues was not handled well after it had been brought up, there are some serious problems in Memphis between Black and Brown people that no one touched upon. I'm also disappointed that no one from the Hip-hop generation was offered an opportunity to speak. Especially after noticing that in 1967 Dr. King spoke of the important role that music played in bringing different races together and the Hip-hop generation has done that very well."

- Davey D

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Davey D was not alone in his disappointment of the days activities as there were multiple marches and separate events instead of one organized, unified voice and movement. There was grumbling and people were noticeably upset that 3 people who were on the balcony with Dr. King: Jesse Jackson, Dr. Wyatt Walker and Billy Kyles did not get a chance to speak during an event organized by Rev. Al Sharpton at the Lorraine Motel. And prior to the National Action Network's event the founder of the Civil Rights Museum Judge Bailey had his microphone cut off in the middle of his speech. The struggle was divided during the life of Dr. King between different factions and organizations; you had The Civil Rights Movement, Malcolm X and The Nation Of Islam, The Black Panthers, The U.S. Organization and others who were played against each other by government sponsored COINTEL-PRO and similar programs. Those divisions are obviously still present as we have seen recently with the mis-handling of the marches and legal cases in Jena, Louisiana and now with the 40th Anniversary of Dr. King's assassination.

Thankfully, there are many organizations who are willing to work together in our struggles to keep the dream of Dr. King alive, we have to continue to keep the pressure on and fight against oppression and poverty for the sake of all people. We also have to hold each other accountable, not just leaders of organizations, elected officials and spiritual leaders but every individual citizen of this nation.

There was a great speech by Elder Harry Belafonte during the April 4th Foundation's 8th Annual Awards Gala where he received The "I AM A MAN" Award: "Mr. Belafonte used his speech to articulate the true "Dream" of his close friend Dr. King and explained to the audience that if Dr. King were alive he would be in the streets where our children are dying and being incarcerated everyday. He said Dr. King told him for just 50 brothers from the streets he would trade 5000 preachers. Mr. Belafonte also defended Rev Jeremiah Wright, saying the only problem with what Rev. Wright said was that more preachers are not saying it. He ended his speech by introducing the young leaders from the Gatherings Executive Committee and informing the crowd he would be helping us to develop an new movement to save America" - Jasiri X

After being introduced by Van Jones, President and Founder of "Green For All" as the Dr. Martin Luther King of the Hip-hop Generation, Rev. Yearwood of The Hip-hop Caucus brought the house down at the Dream Reborn Convention with a fiery speech, letting everyone know without doubt, that "We Are The One's That We Have Been Waiting For" and it was our responsibility to continue the struggles of our elders and ancestors. Rev. Yearwood preached that Dr. King was watching our efforts from heaven and he approves of what was going on to the left of the spot where he was assassinated.

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I asked Khari Mosley about his experiences in Memphis: "I spent this past weekend in Memphis with the country's emerging progressive leaders discussing the next phase of the civil rights struggles: connecting the social justice movement to the environmental movement. We can no longer afford to exist in silos, the planet is in peril. We can save the planet and shift the global economy in ways that ensures wealth, natural resources and access clean land, water and air is available to all 6 billion members of the human family. This is our moral obligation of the 21st century. I am convinced that the future of our human existence depends on the next 100 years. I am convinced we have much more in common, than we have differences. I am convinced we share a common destiny. We shall either prosper or perish together. In these coming days embrace your "higher angels", if not for yourself, do it for those who await us in the next world. Do it for those who have yet be born. Dr. King once said: I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word in reality. This is why right, temporarily defeated, is stronger than evil triumphant." - Khari Mosley

It is obvious that a time has arrived for new voices, new tactics and new opportunities, a time for this generation of leaders to stand up and take up the struggle for Freedom, Justice and Equality for all people going forward. New voices carrying an old message that America has not taken heed to for much longer than 40 years. We have the opportunity to frame our struggle in more inclusive ways, tying our struggle to the struggles of other's in areas that we all have a stake in. 40 years after the death of a man of God who was not afraid to let his "voice cry out from the wilderness", a man who had been to the mountain top and seen the promised land, a man who's eyes had seen the glory of the coming of the lord.

His voice still cries out to us from beyond the grave with a message of Peace, Unity, Hope and yes, of Dreams. In his words: "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.

Paradise Gray

One Hood

[Http://www.myspace.com/onehoodorg](http://www.myspace.com/onehoodorg)

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