

Issue 4
March 2023

a future of sharing (and caring)

Photography:
Raymond Liu '23

Interview with Martin
Luther King III
| World Languages
Week Recap

CONVERGENCE

BUILDING A NEW LEGACY - MARTIN LUTHER KING III



Mr. King delivering the keynote address on February 9th, 2023.

Photo credit: @caleytaylorphotography

RAYMOND LIU
EDITOR IN CHIEF

In the past few years, we have been constantly reminded of the rampant racism around the world, we have seen the once intrinsic rights of women be stripped away, and we watch on a raging war with endless casualties. Seeing the headlines of any news site can often give a sense of impending doom - societal progress seems static, or even negative.

When Martin Luther King III visited the college on February 9th during WAC, he brought along a much-needed reminder of hope and ambition. While he spoke mostly about his specific activism - through the Drum Major Institute and various protests - he also focused on the importance of "waking up wanting to make a difference".

UCC students are given the privilege to have access to world-class education and a plethora of resources like expert-filled conferences, qualified teachers and great facilities. Mr. King emphasized the importance of using our own opportunities to propagate chances to others—we must first work towards equality to bring a

united effort, politically or economically, for solving other problems.

The goals of the Drum Major Institute, for which he and his wife are the Chairman and President, respectively, is to eliminate the "triple evils": poverty, racism, and violence. They hope to build a climate of peace, justice, and equity with the influence of education. He specifically believes that "if diversity, sensitivity and human relations were taught at early levels, we would have a much better world."

When asked about how we can inspire and manage people who simply do not want to learn, he explained that we must first establish why, and then focus on making learning easy and comfortable. "Everyone grows up wanting to be big stars in Hollywood and whatnot, so make it the same for learning."

As well, he spoke of the importance of establishing a positive attitude in society, "What you put out is what you get back, even for confrontational issues. If everyone believes in an eye for an eye and a

tooth for a tooth, most of us would be without eyes and teeth."

In our daily lives, it is imperative that we are reading positive material, to build a belief in society before helping it. For example, he cited the need for a culture of non-violence, where there should be more constructive video games instead of destructive ones that lead to desensitization.

In regards to Tyre Nichols, a 29-year-old Black man who was beaten to death by five Black police officers in Memphis earlier this year, Mr. King talked about the role of institutionalized violence and racism. Systematic influences cause people to dislike themselves, and in this case, for some police to have no respect for their own community. For the future, he pointed out that diversity training, civilian review boards, de-escalation training, and mental health education are all essential for restructuring the police force to protect, not endanger.

Perhaps Mr. King's most provocative revelation was that his daughter has fewer rights now than when she was born in 2008. In 2013, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which initially gave "colored" people the right to vote, was disseminated by the Supreme Court. Gerrymandering, or partialling out districts to favor one political party, is more prominent than ever. In many Black districts, polling stations have been reduced - leading to long lines and hours-wait for a vote - and laws have been passed to not allow food or water while waiting. This all leads to less engaged voters and biased results. To address these problems in the States, Mr. King talked about the need to organize at the grassroots level to make people realize that the only way to change these barriers is to work through them.

Many racialized issues have come after the election of Donald Trump - a result which still confuses many minorities today. "He was a comedian that said crazy things that the media loved... He could also speak to a population that felt like they were losing out, like from social media posts saying immigrants were taking

away their stuff." In the prevalence of technology and our current divisions, it is safe to say that people have often resorted to voting on their fears instead of their faith.

As a remedy, Mr. King speaks of needing to move beyond fighting extremism with extremism, towards an environment of empowerment. We must see the positives and move beyond stewing in existing problems towards advancing.

For instance, there is a massive income inequality that has not been fixed. This is not only an issue in the states, where there is a 25% wage gap for racial minorities (Latinx, Black, and Indigenous), but also for Canadian minorities, who face a near 20% wage gap today. The solution, according to his Q&A and informed by his conversations with economists, is not by giving out money but by keeping more money circulating in local communities. As well, the solution may come from more programs and financial literacy education in minority communities.

In the end, Mr. King made sure to give another reminder to build interracial alliances during policy information and creation. We need to all collaborate to create inclusive change of any kind. A positive mindset allows for conversations that accommodate people, that make others feel welcomed and can build a true sense of trust and unity.

Below, you will find the transcript from an exclusive interview that Mr. King did with Convergence, in which we asked some hot and current questions. Afterwards, he even mentioned that he'd never heard some of the questions before. Enjoy!

What are your thoughts on violence within activism, or protests turned violent?

Well, anytime there's a protest, my point of view is that the goal is to always maintain a nonviolent posture to have the most credibility. Of all of the protests, what the media never covers is that the overwhelming majority of demonstrations are non-violent. For example, during the George Floyd tragedy, almost 90% of the demonstrations did not become violent. 10% did, and that's what the media focused on. It feels like discounting the entire movement, which you should not do.

I also would say that violence itself is generally, as my dad used to say, the language of the unheard. When people feel that there is someone who is listening, or that they are treated with dignity and respect, there's a stronger possibility that it may not revert to violence. But in our society, we have neglected. But, this is not justified because I don't think you can ever justify violence. However, intellectually, I understand why some people end up engaging in violence, but I certainly don't agree with it.

Do you have specific thoughts on non-Black people working within the race relations movement, as protesters and sometimes as leaders? How do you balance that with not speaking for the group?

So I think that leadership should not be defined ever by a color or ethnic group. Anyone can provide leadership. Sometimes in communities of color, especially the African American community, because people may feel that there's no one out there that is respected, they may want to end up being a leader. But leaders can be in every every genre. And in terms of social justice, I really do think you need diversity, not just one. Your cause gets a more broad hearing when it is diversely led.

You just touched on the importance of diversity in a variety of places. But recently, there have been a lot of restrictions being placed on what is taught in schools, for example, in Florida, they just banned AP African American Studies. How do you feel about the importance of diversity and educating students on social justice issues within schools?

So I think it's very tragic that Florida and other states have imposed restrictions on history, period. To disallow any history is a sad commentary. There are a number of states in addition to Florida who have been talking about the concept of critical race theory, which is generally taught in law schools. It's a misnomer to say that it's taught in primary and secondary schools. But it's a political calculation, that we will take one aspect of what someone said and call that critical race theory, and then discount the whole argument. It's almost like you can't throw the baby out with the bathwater. People need to be exposed to true information and true history. The state of Florida, the governor and others around the country who are discounting

history are doing a great disservice to all of the people. Not just the African American communities, but all people.

In Texas, they used a portion of my father's speech 'I Have a Dream', "I hope my four little children will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character." They used that to say you can't teach 'I Have a Dream', you can't teach Rosa Parks, you can't teach about the Holocaust. That is insane. And there may be some people in the state of Texas who support the governor, but you're doing a disservice to the majority of the population. And if we ever are going to correct the distortion. We've got to start a movement or increase the movement to bring history back into the classroom. AP history particularly - I've actually met some of the educators who put that curriculum together. For Florida, initially, we knew that they were going to do it, it's no surprise. It's just gravely disappointing.

Not all students are activists, but everyone can engage in service for what they believe in and for their community. What can you say, to encourage participation in volunteering, starting initiatives or even engaging in activism?

One of the things that we do is every holiday around my dad's birthday, we have huge community service activations. We have millions of people involved, which is very good, but I really think we need to extend that period. Maybe you can use the King Holiday and that third Monday every January to begin the activations, but it needs to be done throughout the year. So if we have hypothetically 100 million people involved in not just activism, but service in any way. Whether it's working with seniors, whether it's tutoring... we would create a whole different nation. That same notion can be extended to other parts of the world.

Because January is the beginning of the year, many of us establish new year's resolutions. So why not use it as a period to begin engagement, and particularly engaging young people leading those efforts and defining what the issues are. Whether it's environmental issues, whether it's just cleaning up the community, whether it is just about anything we can think of to help.

So in 2018, your daughter, at a young age, spoke at the March for Our Lives movement. So I'm curious what your thoughts were as a father. Do you think activism runs in your family? What did that image of your young daughter mean to you?

So that, you know, it was quite profound more so in what she said, and how it came about. Just to give you context, when we first went to visit President Obama in 2016, which was during Black History Month, ironically. She had two questions for the President. The main question was: what are you going to do about guns? This is prior to Douglas Stoneman High School in Parkland. And the second question, which has not been revealed because she didn't get to ask, was: what can be done, since Donald Trump was running, is there anything that can be

done for her fear of Donald Trump's election.

So in retrospect, it was prophetic, in a sense, because it happened. I was giving you background because then I've never mentioned that to anybody. The question about guns was also profound, because just a little bit later, Parkland occurred. She became a speaker, as you said, at the March for Our Lives. She found out that she was going to speak only two hours prior to the event. And so my wife said, "Well, you know, what are you going to say? What do you want to say? I'll help you a little bit." She said, "No, I know what I'm gonna say, I don't need any help."

What she said was "I'm Yolanda Renee King, granddaughter of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Coretta Scott King". The crowd was about 800,000 people. And

then she said, "My grandfather had a dream, his dream was that his poor little children would live in a world where they would not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of your character. I have a dream, also. My dream is that enough is enough, and we must create a gun free world." I've dropped the mic. All of us were blown away. Because again, these were her words, not something her parents had given her to share. So, as parents, we were extraordinarily proud. And that may have been the first time that we realized that she has a message. She's consistently involved. She was eight years old at that time. She's now 14. Very, very proud.

Thank you so much to Mr. King for the opportunity and the Branksome paper for contributing to the questions.



Mr. King joining members of the Black Excellence Society for an open discussion.

Photo credit: Edmond Shen '27

WORLD LANGUAGES WEEK: A SPECIAL WEEK TO REMEMBER

TOMMY WU
REPORTER

At UCC, one of our most important cultural traditions is World Languages Week, celebrated in January of each year. This year, with the return of in-person events, the UCC community was treated to an exciting week filled with fun activities. Led by Jack Silverson and Stamatis Zelos, the two co-heads of the World Languages Week Committee, this decade-long tradition was a great success.

One of the highlights of this week was the different cultures that students showcased throughout the week. Starting with the Monday assembly, Jack and Stamatis presented a video by the World Languages Week Committee featuring over 16 unique languages spoken by students and teachers at the College, including Mohawk, Ukrainian, Greek, Swahili, and much more. I was personally interviewed by their team, and I talked about how Mandarin Chinese can be mistaken for other Chinese dialects and how it can be expressed elegantly in poetry. Songs in these various languages could be heard during club time, as a cultural karaoke was held in the student center on Tuesday. Students also had the chance to wear clothing from their own cultures, dressing up in kilts, traditional Chinese clothing, Greek tunics, and more. In addition, the UCC community was encouraged to submit recipes from their cultures for a multicultural cookbook in December of last year, which was sold at World Languages Week to raise money for charities.

The second highlight of this week came



from the special cultural celebrations. A cultural fair was held in the student center where representatives from the school's culture clubs gathered together to allow everyone to try food from around the world. The next day featured a Lunar New Year celebration by the WeChat parent group, where students had the experience to enjoy and learn about many of the traditions and activities that were done in celebration of this holiday.

To get a deeper understanding of World Languages Week, I reached out to Jack Silverson for a chat on the preparation that had to be done before this event, as well as his thoughts on how it went.

The World Languages Week Committee began planning the event months before in September. The group brainstormed what they would plan throughout the entire week, and kept track of their weekly results. Having finalized their plans in late November, they began preparing for the activities in December, talking with Aramark and cultural club heads, along with filming interviews with students and staff speaking another language in our community. By the beginning of January, the team had finished setting up the World Languages Week posters and decorations, arranging the events such as the cultural fair and the presentation at assembly, and editing the video exhibiting the language diversity at UCC.

"The process was tedious and took a lot of effort, with all of the filming issues we ran into and the subtitles needed, but we knew what we wanted the final product to be, and the video turned out to be really well done. We got a lot of positive response for the video, both from the community and the people that were interviewed," Jack remarked.

To make this event successful, they kept one main point in their mind. With World Languages Week returning to be the first in-person event in the last three years, the group wanted to create the atmosphere that previous events generated around the school, and make sure everyone created some fond memories throughout the activities during the week.

"We tried to recreate as much of the fun and excitement around World Languages



Week to highlight the language diversity around the school as past events have done. I have a lot of fond memories of the activities hosted in 2020, including the game of Pamplemousse, a game based on counting in French, during our Friday assembly, so our team focused on bringing the fun in this event back."

In addition, by planning efficiently as well as hard work and dedication by the entire committee, the event was particularly special this year. Every day of the week, there was at least one unique and enriching activity.

"Everyone had so much fun at the karaoke during Tuesday break, with Randy and the Chinese culture club making a special appearance. Wednesday's cultural fair was fun for everyone, and the Chinese parent organization really did a phenomenal job on Thursday, inspiring and helping a lot of people learn about Chinese culture."

This year was also the first year of special Aramark food throughout the entire week. The themed menu included cuisine from Europe, Latin America, Quebec, Asia, and Africa.

All in all, the featured activities were enjoyable and informative for everyone involved, and several fond memories have been made throughout the week. Many learned about the traditions of a new culture for the first time, and others enjoyed expressing their own cultures from around the world. We look forward to experiencing this event again next year!