

# 'Pulse of Mourning' strikes the heart of PSH

By Pete Strella  
Press & Journal Reporter

One thing was certain to the people who watched a 40-minute play at Penn State Harrisburg to celebrate Martin Luther King Day last Monday.

A lot of things have changed for the better since 1936.

Over 80 people gathered in the school's Capital Union Building to witness a performance of "The Pulse of Mourning," an original script set in 1936 that was written and directed by area playwright Dr. Dorothy E. King.

Touching on themes such as racism, education and the importance of family, the play centered around the Canes, a South Carolina family mourning the death of a brother who had been lynched by a mob.

The 11-member cast hit an emotional nerve behind lead actors Cassandra Taylor, who played the family's mother Contessa Cane, and Leonard Washington, who filled the role of Uncle Royal Trusty.

King's script was filled with poignant sayings that summed up characters' feelings in one line.

"I know that the final word comes from God," said Contessa when told that her son's killer may be found not guilty.

"I want to start over," said sister Cora Cane, played by Monika Ross, in support of her mother's quest to move up North.

"He is not responsible for their actions," said Leland Stanford, who defended the brother's accused killer, Davis Jefferson, arguing that Jefferson's words may have provoked the mob to lynch the brother, Shea, but that Jefferson was "not responsible for their actions."

The performance received a standing ovation during the curtain call.

Felicia Brown-Haywood, director of intercultural affairs at PSH, praised King's work before the performance.

"She always writes such wonderful plays that have great meaning," said Brown-Haywood.

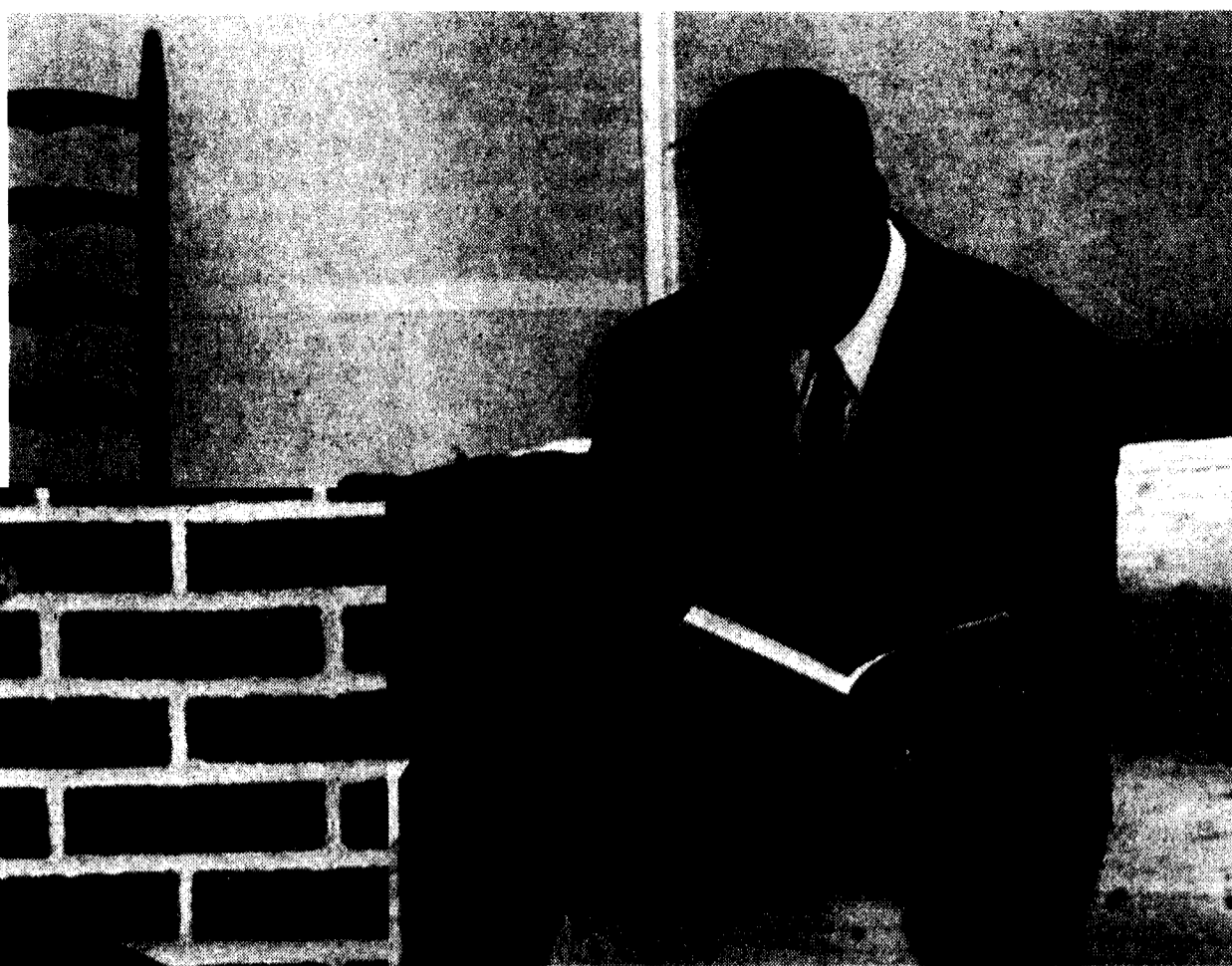
Throughout the script, King entertained the crowd with her

not-so-subtle irony, as found in the name "Davis Jefferson."

The play was emotionally driven and straightforward. Act I revealed that Shea was lynched after attempts to register black voters through the NAACP. After the family learns that Shea had kept several death threats to himself, Uncle Royal reveals to the three Cane sisters that their father was also lynched.



David Payne tips his hat. Payne was one of an 11-member cast in "The Pulse of Mourning," an original script by Dr. Dorothy E. King.



William Rucker played a minister in a play celebrating Martin Luther King Day.

Act II showed the Cane family praying before Jefferson's trial and chanting a hymn as the actors, walking through the aisles of the room, depicted the family walking to the courtroom.

There, Jefferson is found not guilty to the dismay of the Canes. Jefferson's attorney, played by Mitchell Bentley, argued that his client and ancestors has been a pillar in the community.

"And what can the deceased say about his ancestor's, that they are slaves?" said the attorney with a laugh.

Conflict in the second scene of Act II centered around the mother's quest to leave her home, a 12-acre farm that had been in the family since the just after the

Civil War. Resolution was reached when she told her daughters that she would move up North, but transfer the deed of the land to the sisters who wished to stay. King emphasized the importance of land throughout the script.

Bob Scott, a retired PSH professor, talked before the play as well. He is the chairman of Penn Owl Productions and has worked with King to put on plays at the college for the last seven years.

"The universal message of Martin Luther King wasn't just a monolithic view of race, it was a message of bonding people together," said Scott. "And hopefully this play will illustrate that."

Photos by Calobe Jackson

## King Jr. celebrated

By Cortez Bailey  
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On January 17, Penn State Harrisburg celebrated the legacy and lifelong works of Nobel Peace Prize laureate, the late Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. King was assassinated over three decades ago and became the personification of the civil rights struggle/movement that gained momentum during the late fifties and culminated in the sixties. Local residents came out in full force to commemorate King's teachings and ensure that King's legacy continues to live on. The program featured the Middletown area high school jazz ensemble, the Beulah Baptist church dancers, and the Capital Presbyterian Kids Haven(CPKH) martial arts company, among others.

Kevin Preston, CPKH's martial arts instructor, was the winner of the 2004 annual Koushu world champion competition held in Sao Paulo, Brazil. Preston said that the school's success is a testament to the students, as well as their parents' hard work and dedication. Preston also expressed his appreciation for community institutions' choice to become active in sustaining Dr. King's legacy. Preston also said that the CPKH school serves in the development of his students as people of character as well as martial artists.

The highlight of the program was when PSH's own Barbara Thompson reflected on her active role in the civil rights movement, and how it related to students then as opposed to now. Thompson, who is the director of the department of community affairs, was active in

the 1963 civil rights protests in Birmingham, Alabama. She also marched with Dr. King as a tenth grader and gave an insightful account to the political/social climate that fueled the movement. "There was a sense of urgency; jails were filled with students," she said. Thompson went on to point out the importance of diversity in academia and urged the parents in attendance to become pro-active in the educational development of their children.

Although pleased with the overall success of the event, Thompson expressed that she would have been happier to see a higher turnout of PSH students. Her reasoning for why the presence of PSH students was important was because she felt that it was vital for the community to see the diverse make-up of our student body.

Dr. King, through his teachings and ideas, championed the principles that women/men (for my feminist philosophy class) had inalienable rights and as a result, a functional integrated society was not only possible but also inevitable in the continued evolution of our nation as a whole.

Whether we hold the same philosophies, ideologies, or beliefs as Dr. King is irrelevant. As a matter of fact, those who are in sharp contrast to what King represented should appreciate him the most, for he, by example, made them realize that the observation of the principles of the Constitution were not merely a convenience, but an obligation. He forced us to look in the mirror and become capable of eluding our worst enemy-ourselves.



Photo by Calobe Jackson

From left, front row: Shawn Siegle, Cassandra Taylor; back row: David Payne, Tiffany Tirado, Monika Ross, Joy Hymon and Leonard Washington.



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