

Viewpoint

Respect

USC should suspend classes in honor of civil rights leader

He was the leader of the civil rights movement. He was the catalyst for long-needed change in attitude and practice towards African-Americans, especially in the South. And today is Martin Luther King Jr.'s officially observed birthday.

However, USC, along with the state government and other local entities, have chosen to remain open.

This policy bucks the trend of what most of the nation's state universities are doing. Public universities across the country, including fellow Southeastern Conference schools Florida, Georgia and Tennessee, recognize King's birthday by not having classes.

However, in South Carolina, buzz words such as "cultural activities" and "working voluntarily" are used by the university and the state to get around an official observance of the holiday.

The negative symbolism of this policy by USC is disturbing and makes a casual observer wonder about the university's commitment to racial harmony and diversity.

Incidents from the past year are hard evidence that there is racial tension on this campus.

Gamecock Fever, a newspaper given out at football games, created a firestorm for the second straight year with its racial jokes. Additionally, the poor turnout of white students at the race relations forum in the fall and racial slurs printed in The Gamecock are more evidence that race relations at USC are all but sterling.

In addition to USC, every institution in the state of South Carolina should be more sensitive to possible offensiveness to minorities because of its abhorrent record over the years.

USC cannot afford to maintain stupid policies that adversely affect recruiting of top students. A university's policy towards race relations, whether the administration would like to admit it or not, has been and will be an important factor for many students in their consideration of where they go to college.

No wonder African-Americans make up only 13 percent of the USC student body and 33 percent of the state.

But observing King's birthday is not just a symbolic gesture to keep minorities happy. There's a lot more to it.

Martin Luther King is arguably the greatest African-American leader ever. And few leaders did more to help such a large group of Americans.

He was also a great orator and is greatly respected by all for his emphasis on non-violent protest.

Without his leadership, the civil rights movement would have come later, and more blood would probably have been shed.

True leaders deserve respect, and honoring them with a holiday is traditionally the American way of doing it. Besides, it's also quite painless.

This not only goes for King's birthday, but also for two other men who left their mark on us: George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. The university should also recognize Presidents Day in February.

The Gamecock hopes the administration will realize next year that the benefits of observing King's birthday far outweigh the costs of suspending classes.



Congress must cooperate to accomplish change

My prayers are with Bill Clinton when he is sworn in Wednesday as the 41st president of the United States.

This is not directly related to the enormous budget deficit, the international problems in Bosnia, Somalia and elsewhere, nor does it concern the national epidemics of crime, pollution and poor health care.

Instead, my problem is with Congress and its 535 voices, spouting off 535 different ideas on any issue you can think of.

I understand those voices represent many different districts with hundreds of competing interests, but this is a time to put the nation first before a region, state or county.

My recent fellowship in Washington provided me with invaluable insight on the methods and attitudes, both positive and negative, which dominate on Capitol Hill.

The institution of Congress is inherently slow for many reasons, including the tremendous decentralization of power through committees and sub-committees and the increase in support staff for both congressional members and



GORDON MANTLER

mittees. The slowness of Congress is not necessarily the fault of the members or of anybody else in particular, but blatant greediness for power and survival do come into play with some decisions made "up on the hill."

A good example of this decentralization and lack of unity within Congress was a particular provision of last fall's energy bill that I worked with.

Offshore drilling has been an important issue to many coastal states, especially since the 1970s. States such as Louisiana rely heavily on the oil production industry.

This issue became a center of controversy during negotiations over the energy bill, where it pitted environmental advocates and states without drilling against business supporters and states which depend on oil.

The majority and the minority in the House of Representatives could not decide on a compromise stance on offshore drilling, even after extensive meetings between members of the Merchant Marine Committee and congressional

members representing the affected states. That was not the only problem either. The Senate had its own version of the offshore drilling provision, and it did not correspond with the House's.

Neither side budged within the House, so the provision was dropped entirely.

I was dismayed to see all those efforts by numerous staffers and members wasted because of the stubbornness and sometimes selfishness of a select few who have their own personal agendas.

Yes, there is such a thing as states' rights, and local districts need to be tended to, but the new president will ask these legislators to make some hard decisions and to look beyond their states.

The country is a mess, and nothing, not the congressional bureaucracy or short-term political gains, should jeopardize this nation's progress.

So I ask Sens. Thurmond and Hollings, and South Carolina's six House members to work with the new president in getting something done.

Congress might be a slow institution, but with cooperation and compromise, anything can be accomplished, and that's exactly what the American people expect.

U.S. needs commitment to president's ideals

November 3 was more than just an ordinary day this past year.

It was a day of change, redirected focus and, most importantly, responsibility. It was a day the American voters took the bull by the horns and demanded that problems like the deficit, civil rights, human rights and a sagging economy be fixed.

And there at a podium in Little Rock, Ark. stood the symbol for that change. The small-town politician known as "Bill" preached to us how courageous we were to place such power in his hands.

But the real question is: Are we ready to change?

We see a cliff in front of us, but we are too scared to see what's over that cliff. We haven't seen the other side for the past 12 years. And now, we still don't want to.

Two days before a new administration takes power and a new Congress begins work with that administration, there are too many minor problems blocking the road to fix the major problems in this country.

We worry about what kind of school Chelsea Clinton will attend rather than what kind of future she'll have.



TIGÉ WATTS

David Letterman receives front-page attention for his multi-million dollar salary, while racism plagues the front offices of baseball and is covered on the back pages of the sports section.

And to top it all off, we are just now focusing on the problems of a deficit we have rung up through 12 years of heavy borrowing. Had it not been for the Ross Perots of America, last year's election would have been 1988 all over again.

If you are reading this, President Clinton, take this advice: Don't lose the courage you had in the campaign. Focus on the social and economic problems of this nation. Keep your people devoted to putting the country back on track. Show this world you are not an indecisive and waffling leader.

Stay committed to overturning the ban on gays and lesbians in the military. Don't waste time by stalling and consulting with top military advisers when they are the same ones who have matured in a military without gays or lesbians.

Keep our direction turned to cutting the deficit by half in four years. Don't lay blame on the Bush administration and argue about whether it would be better to stimulate the economy or cut the deficit.

You must keep your promise for a middle-class tax cut. The middle class has been squeezed too much; they need a break, even if it is less than \$200 per person.

You promised this to us. Now, you've noticed we're not too hip on taking responsibility for our actions. We've begged for a leader with courage and conviction. Don't change just because we're afraid.

Show us it's okay to be afraid, but also show us that things will work out as long as we stay focused.

And to the American voters, don't be too afraid to be responsible. It was our irresponsibility that got us into this mess. It's the end of the innocence, and we must take responsibility to fix our problems.

Our generation will be the first to mature in an environment that is as uncertain about the future since the Great Depression. Things will get worse before they get better. In order to survive, we must realize that we must be tough enough to get through the difficulties.

We must keep the sense of responsibility we had on Election Day, everyday.

We must be committed to fixing our problems. If we don't fix the country and our problems, who will?

They won't just go away. After all, they didn't disappear after 12 years.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Remembering Gamecock founder

Diversity, accuracy important in new year

A good friend of mine recently asked me if I was aware of a prominent Hispanic USC student who had a major impact on the university more than 80 years ago.

Of course, I had no idea about whom she was talking, and I soon became embarrassed that I didn't know about the life of Robert Elliott Gonzales, a 1910 USC graduate.

To my surprise, Gonzales, who was part Latino, was the founder and first editor-in-chief of The Gamecock in 1908.

And although he wasn't predominantly Hispanic, I am proud that a person who had some Latino roots was able to create a worthy student publication of which I am happy to be a part of today.

If I have learned anything from this little anecdote, it's that culture and heritage do matter in today's society. As Americans celebrate the accomplishments of Martin Luther King Jr. today, we must continue to remember our past to help retain a sense of our future. This is especially so in a college setting.

Because of this belief, I want The Gamecock to maintain a sense of diversity in its writings. As editor for the spring semester, I encourage writers of all different backgrounds to write for their student publication.

I admit this publication has become narrow-minded in its past coverage, and believe me, it's about to change. I want to ensure all people that The Gamecock will be a more respectable college paper that will represent the entire student body.

As for other changes in The Gamecock, consistency and accuracy will become a staple



PATRICK VILLEGAS

for this publication. We understand that being student journalists doesn't give us the right to make mistakes that can be avoided. The law states that student journalists are just as responsible as journalists working in the "big time." There will be no room for incompetent mistakes.

We have re-tooled the Viewpoint section of the newspaper, and hopefully, it will be more pleasing to the eye. The editorials and columns will cover more aspects of USC and the local community, and strong opinions will still be a mainstay.

The comic strip "Mother Goose and Grimm" will see its final days in the next two weeks. We have decided to add a national comic strip, which we will soon unveil.

Finally, we will focus our content on matters that pertain not only to students, but to both faculty and university staff. This will include local and community issues that affect our well-being as residents of Columbia.

If The Gamecock can hold the truths of proper journalism as Robert Gonzales did, maybe, just maybe, we can live up to his initial expectations.

NEWSROOM
777-7726

ADVERTISING
777-4249

P.O. BOX 85131 • UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA • COLUMBIA, SC 29208

<p>Editor in Chief..... Patrick Villegas</p> <p>Associate Editors..... Lee Clontz, J.T. Wagenheim</p> <p>Viewpoint Editor..... Gordon Mantler</p> <p>Copy Desk Chief..... Brian Garland</p> <p>News Editors..... Jack Dunn, Melissa Tennen</p> <p>Asst. News Editors..... Lea Clayton, Rochelle Killingbeck</p> <p>Carolina! Editor..... Jennifer Fuller</p> <p>Asst. Carolina! Editor..... Melinda Waldrop</p> <p>Sports Editors..... Nancy Salomonsky, Tim Thorsen</p> <p>Photo Editor..... Stephanie Newlin</p> <p>Asst. Photo Editor..... Kelly Johnson</p> <p>Graphics Editor..... Gregory Perez</p> <p>Asst. Graphics Editor..... Chris Muldrow</p> <p>Cartoonist..... Paul Jon</p> <p>Copy Editors..... Chris Davis, Thom Harman</p> <p>Student Media Coordinator..... Jim McKellar</p> <p>Production Manager..... Laura Day</p> <p>Asst. Production Manager..... Jim Green</p> <p>Advertising Manager..... Renee Gibson</p> <p>Faculty Adviser..... Erik Collins</p> <p>Graduate Assistant..... Brian McGuire</p> <p>Darkroom Technicians..... Erin Galloway, Rika Hashimoto</p>	<p>The Gamecock is the student newspaper of the University of South Carolina and is published three times a week on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays during the fall and spring semesters and weekly during both summer sessions, with the exception of university holidays and examination periods.</p> <p>Opinions expressed in The Gamecock are those of the editors or author and not those of the University of South Carolina.</p> <p>The Board of Student Publications and Communications is the publisher of The Gamecock. The Student Media Department is the parent organization of The Gamecock.</p> <p>Change of address forms, subscriptions, requests and other correspondence should be sent to The Gamecock, P.O. Box 85131, The University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC 29208.</p> <p>Subscription rates are \$46 a year. First class postage paid at Columbia, SC. The Gamecock is a registered student organization of the University of South Carolina and is partially funded by student activity fees.</p>
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------