

Remembering Dr. King

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(Jan. 11, 2011) -- Every January, throughout the United States, as well as Toronto, Canada and Hiroshima, Japan, people gather to celebrate the life and works of civil rights and peace activist Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. On Jan. 10 the Soldiers and civilians of Carlisle Barracks gathered at Wil Washcoe auditorium in Root Hall, to remember King's life and works.

"It is important that we remember Dr. King because he tried to make people realize that all men and woman are created equally," said Sgt. 1st Class Timothy Banks, the equal opportunity advisor for the Army War College. "Without his vision, efforts and leadership we would not be where we are today."

Dickenson College Professor Kim Lacy Rogers, who has written two books on the civil rights movement was the events guest speaker. Rogers compared King's philosophy of nonviolence and service to the core values of military service.

"Dr. King promoted peace and reconciliation among all warring parties," she said. "His love of community, his love of the common man and woman who worked together for the common good, represented the sacrifice and self service for the greater good."

Rogers explained that one of the reasons King and his followers were able to practice nonviolence was because there were, within the movement, armed protectors who were willing to do what it took to protect themselves and others.

Her story of Jerome Smith, a member of the Congress of Racial Equality, was one example. As part of Rogers' oral history project, Smith recounted how he was escorted to safety by a black minister. When Smith expressed concern for the minister who had to walk home alone, the minister smiled and showed Smith the Bible and handgun he was carrying. The minister told Smith that keeping him alive so he could change the world was more important than worrying about death.

"My strongest memory was never being isolated due to the strength of purpose of being united under one purpose," said Smith. That strength of purpose rang true for those in the audience.

“We are the protectors of the country and its freedoms so people can exercise their rights,” said Sgt. 1st Class Jason Bowden.

Rogers drew parallels between King’s “beloved community” and the Army’s core value of sacrifice for the common good.

“We are not free until all of us are free. We are not safe until all of us are safe. We are never alone in this work,” said Rogers.

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