

Archie Smith, Jr.\*

## Martin Luther King, Jr.: A 20th Century Pied Piper?

... the most impressive success of the tour came on June 23, in Detroit, where he led 125,000 people on a Freedom Walk down Woodward Avenue.

David L. Lewis

We love Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. We feel that he is relevant to our struggle here.

A citizen of Kenya

They were sitting on a huge rock at a point where the Indian Ocean, the Arabian Sea, and the Bay of Bengal meet. Martin and Coretta Scott King were "enthralled by the vastness of the ocean and its terrifying immensities." Reflecting upon this moment, Martin Luther King Jr. wrote:

To the west we saw the magnificent sun, a great cosmic ball of fire, appear to sink into the very ocean itself. Just as it was almost lost from sight, Mrs. King touched me and said, "Look, Martin, isn't that beautiful!" I looked around and saw the moon, another ball of scintillating beauty. As the sun appeared to be sinking into the ocean, the moon appeared to be rising from the ocean.

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When the sun finally passed completely beyond sight, darkness engulfed the earth, but in the east the radiant light of the rising moon shone supreme.

To my wife I said, "This is an analogy of what often happens in life." We have experiences when the light of day vanishes, leaving us in some dark and desolate midnight—moments when our highest hopes are turned into shambles of despair or when we are the victims of some tragic injustice and some terrible exploitation. During such moments our spirits are almost overcome by gloom and despair, and we feel that there is no light anywhere. But ever and again, we look toward the east and discover that there is another light which shines even in the darkness, and "the spear of frustration" is transformed "into a shaft of light."<sup>1</sup>

This experience tells us something important about Martin Luther and Coretta Scott King. By way of analogy, metaphor and story, they looked at nature and drew from it a certain inspiration to continue the mid-20th century civil rights struggle in the United States. Here, they imaginatively moved from their experience of the sinking sun and rising moon to the sometimes dark and desolate midnight of the struggle for justice. King imaginatively moved from desolation, "the spear of frustration" to a transforming experience, "a shaft of light".

In the manner of King, we shall use a fairy tale as metaphor to discuss certain of his contributions to the mid-twentieth century civil rights struggle in the United States. We suggest that this discussion is relevant to the current situation in Kenya.

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<sup>1</sup>Martin Luther King, Jr., *Strength to Love*. (London: Collins, Fontana Books, 1964). pp. 84-85.

## II.

Who was Martin Luther King, Jr? Many young people in the United States do not know. Some may say, 'isn't that a holiday?' When asked, this is what I tell them:

Martin Luther King, Jr was born in Atlanta, Georgia on January 15th, 1929. He was a Black Baptist minister and American civil rights leader. He was an outstanding orator who opposed discrimination against Blacks by organizing non-violent mass demonstrations. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964. He was assassinated while standing on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee on April 4, 1969.

Early in life, Martin Luther King, Jr., faced three questions: Who am I? Where am I going? How will I get there? Should he become a doctor? A lawyer? A teacher? or a preacher? He thought about all of these things. Eventually, he made the decision to become a minister like his father.

The American public also asked, who is Martin Luther King, Jr? The American press tended to portray him as a political figure, a civil rights worker, even a trouble-maker. Sometimes he was referred to as a man whose actions were "untimely and unwise."<sup>2</sup> King referred to himself as a drum major for justice.

Perhaps, he was all of these, and more. Today, I want to suggest an additional picture of Martin Luther King, Jr. Was he a 20th century Pied Piper? And can what he offered (and continues to offer) to the American situation provide some signposts in the

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<sup>2</sup>See King's "Letter From A Birmingham Jail." Also, David L. Lewis, King: A Biography. Second edition. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1978), p. 187.

emerging and still fluid Kenyan situation?

What is a Pied Piper? "Pied Piper" in the German language means "rat catcher." The *Oxford English Dictionary* tells us that the Pied Piper is a celebrated German legend about a person in particular-dress who rid the Town of Hamelin of a plague of rats. Legend has it, the Pied Piper was a stranger with a vision. When he came to town, the people asked, "Who is he? Where did he come from?" "Where was he going?" He came to the little town of Hamelin in a time of crisis. He took out his magic flute. Through his music, he was able to rid the town of its danger.

### III

We remember from the story that the rats were everywhere. They were in the wider society having come from upriver and from down river. They were in the shops and in the streets scurrying around corners and buildings. They were in the homes. The rats represent all the forces of oppression and violence that invade, disrupt, exploit and deprive the people of their livelihood. They cause bodily and psychological harm, and when left unchecked, rats can bring disease and death.

As we shall see, the rat problem is the problem of colonialism and racism. In the United States, the rat problem is manifest in unjust laws, specific patterns of discrimination, segregation, and other forms of oppression. In Kenya the rat problem is manifest in ethnic violence, detention without trial, political terrorism, and other forms of repression.

Martin Luther King, Jr. was a 20th century Pied Piper who was born into American society in the midst of a moral, social, economic, and political crisis. Colonialism abroad and racism at home had brought American society to a crisis. Like the mayor in the story, the American leadership seemed incapable of solving it.

King believed he could help rid us of the rat problem through mass struggle and nonviolent revolutionary measures. His magic flute was fashioned from the high ideals of the United States Declaration of Independence, confidence in the people, and an abiding faith in the God of the Bible. King believed that truth unarmed and love without conditions would have the final word. This faith and his nonviolent strategy would be tested against the forces of racism at home, and colonialism abroad.

Colonialism occurs when a larger or more powerful group invades a smaller or weaker group. The powerful group steals the land, imposes its language, system of government, and exploits the inhabitants in every way. Racist beliefs and practices are invoked to justify the open exploitation of the conquered or stolen people. Racism, while not synonymous with colonialism, is highly complementary to colonialism. Racism can operate independent of colonialism, but both are evil systems. Racism is the belief that one group's biological endowment and cultural heritage is superior to those who come from different backgrounds, languages, beliefs, practices and, often, skin color. Those who differ from the dominant group are considered innately inferior. The superior group then believes that it has the right to hold down, enslave, or to destroy the groups it believes to be inferior. Colonization, the process of taking land for exploitation, and racism has a long history. They are the underlying causes of the most insidious patterns of injustice in the world today. Like the rats in the story, colonialism, racism, and the emerging patterns of injustice may at first seem harmless. In the long run colonialism and racism, even in their benign form, serve as the ultimate belief system to conceal or justify the vilest acts against an oppressed group. Therefore, the rats are metaphor for colonialism and racism, and the unjust system of laws, practices and beliefs that justify exploitation. The rats may also stand for feelings of inferiority whereby the dominant group

keeps oppressed groups at a psychological disadvantage.

We learn from the tale of the Pied Piper that there were only a few more rats than usual. Still, the people did not take much notice of them. They believed they could rid themselves of the rats at any time by using their traps, nets and poison. But one day, and with alarm, they realized that the problem was beyond their control. Their land, home, food supply had been taken over by the invading rats. The rats ate all the food stored up for winter, and every day even more rats came. The people of Hamelin were in crisis.

King knew that sometimes people do not respond to a problem until it becomes a crisis. A typical saying today is "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." He knew that colonialism and racism were not always recognized as problems. Yet they are part of the forces, the principalities and powers, that determine the structure of society and the realities of everyday life.

Like the rats in the story, problems come in all sizes. King, the Pied Piper, wanted to sound the alarm so everyone (the collectivity) could see the magnitude of the problems. One day he wrote:

In our collective lives our sin rises to even greater heights. See how we treat each other. Races trample over races; nations trample over nations. We go to war and destroy the values and the lives that God has given us. We leave the battlefields of the world painted with blood, and we end up with wars that burden us with national debts higher than mountains of gold, filling our nations with orphans and widows, sending thousands of men home psychologically deranged and physically handicapped. (*Measure of a Man*, 1959:23)

In his last published statement, he asked Americans to imagine a powerful giant staggering under a burden that could well

bring down Western civilization. He knew what racism had done in Nazi Germany, and how racism had justified slavery, the colonization of Africa and India. He believed that God required the West to repent, that is, do a complete turn around. He preached:

Oh, I can hear a voice crying out today, saying to Western civilization: "You strayed away to the far country of colonialism and imperialism. You have trampled over one billion six hundred million of your colored brothers in Africa and Asia. But, O Western Civilization, if you will come to yourself, rise up, and come back home, I will take you in." (*Measure of a Man*, 1959:29).

King further described racism as a cancer eating away at the very foundations of a democratic society. He believed the greatest threat to democracy was internal, not external. A house divided against itself cannot stand for long. It will surely fall.

Like the mayor of the town in the story, elected officials seemed incapable of solving the problem. In the midst of a society in crisis, Martin Luther King, Jr. came like a stranger and with a dream of a new kind of society. He believed he could help get rid of the rats. He called us to help. He invited us to share his dream. He intoned his vision from Isaiah in a musical way when he said, "Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream." King piped and many resisted, but many also followed. They too believed in his dream. They believed that it would lead to a better place. Was it just an empty dream? A fairy tale? A fabrication? Or was there something to King's dream?

## IV.

Earlier I made the point that the American press tended to portray King as a political figure, a civil rights worker, even a trouble-maker. It sometimes portrayed him as a minister, but almost never as a theologian. As one journalist put it: "we report the facts that people will believe. We try not to bias them (the facts) with religious or theological beliefs."<sup>3</sup> Jokingly, the journalist continued, "we journalists try to clean up your (the theologians') language and print what the average reader can believe. The press, per se, seldom writes about theology." This is an interesting point. Newspapers are among the most powerful shapers of public opinion and ultimate values. They do more than merely "report the facts". They shape the facts by the way information is processed. They offer ways of looking at the world and promote certain values while obscuring others.<sup>4</sup> The press did not consider King's theological commitments news worthy. Nor did they believe his theological commitments to be a significant determining part of his action. According to historian, David L. Lewis, "Martin's deep Christian concern with the brotherhood of man and his abiding faith (until late in his career, at least) in the fundamental decency of his fellow man directed his philosophical speculations far more than cold realism could have."<sup>5</sup>

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Was Martin Luther King Jr., the 20th century Pied Piper, also a theologian? What is a theologian? A theologian is a member

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<sup>3</sup>A personal communication with an American journalist in Kenya, February 3, 1992.

<sup>4</sup>See, Paul Gordon and David Rosenberg, *Daily Racism: The Press and Black People in Britain*. (London: The Runnymede Trust, 1989), p. 1.

<sup>5</sup>David L. Lewis, p. 86.



of a faith community who interprets how God is involved in the life of the world. The theologian is guided by the question: "What in the world is God doing?" Through scripture, experience, tradition, and by way of reason; or through story, analogy, and metaphor, a theologian interprets how the life of God is involved in the life of the world. Certain theologians emphasize the God *and* World relationship. They describe it in circular (systemic), or reciprocal terms. They do this by interpreting how the life of the world affects and is affected by the life of God. King believed that the God of the Bible was personal and therefore, affected by human oppression. The book of Exodus:

I have seen how cruelly my people are being treated in Egypt; I have heard them cry out to be rescued from their slave-drivers. I know all about their sufferings, and so I have come down to rescue them... (Exodus 3:7-8)

If the rat problem was race oppression and violence, then the solution was to be found in a new kind of community based on love, justice, and non-violence. King was not naive about this. He knew from first hand experience that in a violent world, the nonviolent struggle for justice would be met by violence. He knew that church people in South Africa, Korea, Chile, Manila, El Salvador, South East Asia, India, and elsewhere, had used nonviolent strategies in an effort to end social injustice. He knew that many of these courageous people had become victims of violence. They have been abducted, raped, flogged, tortured, exiled, or killed.

This was all the more reason for King to elevate "Divine love" as the supreme ethical imperative underlying the struggle for nonviolent social change. The essence of God is love. But the presence of violence, race oppression, and segregation, is a moral

evil that denies the image of God in people. It destroys the possibility of genuine community.<sup>6</sup>

King distinguished between three kinds of love:

1. Love based on *attraction* (Eros),
2. Love based on *friendship* (Philos),
3. *The love that comes from God* (Agape).

*Attraction*: Perhaps all of us can recognize the kind of love that is based on attraction. We are attracted to something because it looks good, or to someone because what they are saying sounds good. The rats in the story were attracted to the Pied Piper because they liked the sound of his music so much that they could not think of anything else, except to follow. The mayor in the story was attracted to the Pied Piper when he thought that maybe the Pied Piper could save his political career. The townspeople were attracted when they saw the Pied Piper saving their town. The children were attracted to the Pied Piper because what they heard from him was gentle and sweet, and seemed to tell of happiness, fun and games. And the Pied Piper was attracted to the people and their problem. Without them he could not play his magic flute.

Attraction is important because it tells us that we are biological beings with physical bodies and emotions. This means that we must be concerned with the physical and psychological well-being of people. King felt strongly about the physical well-being of people.

Religion must never overlook this, and any religion that professes to be concerned about the souls of men and is

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<sup>6</sup>Archie Smith, Jr., *The Relational Self: Ethics and Therapy From a Black Church Perspective* (Abingdon Press: Nashville, 1982), p. 135.

not concerned about the economic conditions that damn the soul, the social conditions that corrupt men, and the city governments that cripple them, is a dry, dead, do-nothing religion in need of new blood. (*Measure of a Man*, 1959:14)

Attraction is important. But attraction alone is not a sufficient basis for building a new kind of society. It can be selfish and short-lived. It is based on what I want. It seldom includes what someone else may need. Sometimes, attraction alone has a short memory. After the crisis was over, the mayor quickly forgot about the Pied Piper. You know the saying, "out of sight, out of mind." The crisis not only represented a grave danger, it also represented a turning point in the life of the community. It was an opportunity to take stock of their way of life. But after the crisis, someone must have said, "if it ain't broke, don't fix it." The crisis brought the community to the brink of disaster, but it did not break the community. Soon the people had forgotten that they had been brought to the brink of disaster. Love based on attraction alone is not sufficient to build the new kind of community King had in mind.

*Friendship:* Perhaps we have all experienced the kind of love that comes from friendship. Love based on friendship is stronger than love based on attraction alone. When the crisis was over the mayor remembered his friends. He said, "Let us celebrate my good fortune." So, he invited all his friends and advisors to a feast. But the Piper was not among the guests. The mayor ordered the best wine and the finest foods, and boasted of how his clever plan had rid the town of rats.

But was he a true friend? A true friend is not only someone who is attracted to you, but also someone who will stick by you in

the bad times and in the good times. Love based on friendship can bind like-minded people together.

This form of love is admirable. But it is also limited to those who are on your guest list. King believed that in the long run it could sustain certain commitments among friends and associates. But it was not strong enough to build bridges across chasms of hostility and indifference. It did not include positive concern for the enemy. Love based on friendship works as long as friends and associates honor the conditions of loyalty. But a stronger love was needed to build the kind of community King had in mind.

*God's love for us:* King believed that God's love for us was the highest form of love. Why? Because it combines love based upon attraction with concern for all others—every woman, man, and child. God is attracted to people. God does not wait. God's love is active and creative. It reaches in and touches the soul. It reaches out in concern and touches the neighbor. It is willing to make sacrifices, to suffer long and to wait for results in the face of slim evidence.

Perhaps God's love is partially symbolized in the activity of the Pied Piper who does not wait for the mayor or townspeople to come to him. Rather, he took the initiative. He saw a people in need and went to them.

Perhaps God's love was also expressed in the helping action of the children. They were using the principle of *harambee* or self-help. They demonstrated concern for the welfare of others. All the children wanted to get as close as possible to the Pied Piper. Some were much slower than others, but they all helped each other along. Even the youngest who had hardly learned to walk were able to follow because they were helped by others. Boys and girls lifted up those who had fallen. They were patient with the slow ones, or those just learning to walk. They found a way to move forward

together. Without this kind of active love and mutual social responsibility, King believed, it would be impossible to go the distance, to rid injustice of its power and build a new kind of society based upon nonviolence.

God's love for us is not modeled after the human contract, King argued. The prevailing human contract holds: "I will do good to you if you do good to me." Or, "don't get mad, get even." It is based on the law of revenge. "Life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth." In spite of the fact that this law of revenge solves no social problems, it continues to be followed and with disastrous results.<sup>7</sup> God uses a different standard. The standard of unconditional love which extends to all people regardless of race, tribe, social position, or gender. It is unconditional in that it is willing to make sacrifices, even for the enemy. King contrasts the human and Divine contracts when he wrote:

Jesus...admonished his followers to love their enemies and to pray for them that despitefully used them. This teaching fell upon the ears of many of his hearers like a strange music from a foreign land. Their ears were not attuned to the tonal qualities of such amazing love. They had been taught to love their friends and hate their enemies. Their lives had been conditioned to seek redress in the time-honored traditions of retaliation. (*Strength to Love*, 1969:38)

This understanding of God was the ethical premise on which King based his redemptive struggle and commitment to non-violent social change.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Martin Luther King, Jr. *Strength to Love* (Collins: Fontana Books, 1963) p. 39.

<sup>8</sup>Archie Smith, Jr. *The Relational Self*, p. 135.

These ideas of King, a 20th century Pied Piper, were scarcely mentioned by the mainstream press. King was portrayed primarily as a political figure, a civil rights leader, and sometimes as a preacher. He was all of those, but he was first and foremost a prophet and a practical theologian who took his theology to the streets and piped, in order that the rest of us could follow.

## VI.

In the story, the townspeople shouted for joy when the Pied Piper finally rid their town of rats. We remember that they showed no concern when the Pied Piper was refused the reward that had been promised. It is a curious fact of political life that even if people are attracted to and moved by what they hear, that does not necessarily translate into acts that would right the long standing wrongs. Many were moved by King's famous, "I have a Dream" speech in Washington, D. C. on August 28, 1963. Many in the Congress watched and listened to the speech with great admiration.

Hearts were touched; spirits were uplifted. But, like any masterfully produced and thematically provocative spectacle, its intrinsic and durable impact upon those who walked and those who watched was largely, though by no means totally, dissipated against the obdurate mass of prejudice, apathy, and politico-economic stasis in race relations. Senator Hubert Humphrey, who watched and listened with one hundred and fifty other members of Congress that day, remarked, with exact truth, "All this probably hasn't changed any votes on the civil rights bill, but it's a good thing for Washington, and the nation, and the world."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>David L. Lewis, *King: A Biography*, pp. 229-30.

Perhaps African Americans who were also deeply moved by King's speech believed that it would hasten the passage of civil rights legislation. But the politicians who had the power to do so could not find the moral will or political nerve to move beyond mere attraction.

In the story, and soon after the crisis was over, life was back to business as usual. The townspeople and their leaders were not interested in discovering how the rats took over their lives in the first place. They were apathetic toward change and comfortable with the status quo. "If it ain't broke, then don't fix it."

## VII.

God's call is a call forward to a new kind of existence. If it is to be a new kind of future, then the artisans of that future must respond to a different tune. It is in the here and now, and amidst the familiar that the new tune is played. But who can recognize it? The familiar was being enacted once again when the mayor and townspeople failed to honor their contractual agreement to pay the Piper. The Piper recognized that the people had not changed when he reminded them that they had not yet fulfilled their promise.

"Fifty shillings is all I can spare for a gypsy like you," the mayor sneered.

Everyone could see that the Pied Piper was very angry. Having experienced their hostility, the stranger stepped out into the street and put his pipe to his lips. This time he played a different tune. Everyone could hear it. But no one knew why it was being played, or what it meant. Not even the children who followed knew where they were being led.

Alas, we come to the cruel feature of this fairy tale. The children were led away by a stranger. Their parents were powerless to prevent it. "The men and women of Hamelin wept for their sons

and daughters. They named the track that runs along the river bank Pied Piper Street. They cut a story in stone. They painted a church window. Time passed."<sup>10</sup>

But the children never returned. The cruelty is that families were sacrificed, in part, because the people were complacent about their own newly achieved liberation, and about honoring their collective obligation in the form of the Piper's reward. In consequence, and as a cruel form of punishment, the Pied Piper used his magical powers to get revenge. He lured the children away and out of blind loyalty, they followed.

There is a frighteningly close parallel here between the Pied Piper and an event that occurred during the Birmingham, Alabama, campaign.<sup>11</sup> Historian David L. Lewis records the controversy that arose when children, ranging between the ages of six and sixteen, were arrested as they marched and sang enroute from the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church into town. The suggestion was that the children were organized against the advice of their parents. King was criticized for this.

King, however, was not a cult leader who sacrificed children on the altars of the civil rights movement. Nor did he bid his followers to leave family and home to blindly follow him. King did not call us to be mindless followers of his dream. Rather, he called us to open our eyes, to see and to help expose what racism was

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<sup>10</sup>Kevin Crossley-Holand, "The Pied Piper of Hamelin," in *Tales from Europe* (London: BBC Educational Publishing, 1991), p. 16.

<sup>11</sup>David L. Lewis records the time when King was accused of cruelly exploiting children by inappropriately involving them in the struggle for justice. He relates how 959 of some six thousand children, organized by James Bevel, were arrested as they marched from the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham into town. It was, writes Lewis, one of the most unusual spectacles since the Children's Crusade. "The whites of Birmingham were not alone in their shock. Local and national black leaders joined them in the chorus of reproof of Martin's tactics. The use of children was, they said, cynical and cruelly exploitative. The precious commodity, favorable public opinion, seemed about to be compromised." King: *A Biography*, pp. 192-193.



doing to the soul of America, and by extension, to any society that promotes race, class, and gender divisions. But more than that, he called us to be co-creators of a new kind of society. King taught us to incorporate the requirements of that new society by becoming the bearers of nonviolent social change. He warned that the way would be dreary and there would be suffering. There would be times, he said,

when our highest hopes are turned into shambles of despair, or when we are the victims of some tragic injustice and some terrible exploitation. During such moments our spirits are almost overcome by gloom and despair, and we feel that there is no light anywhere.<sup>12</sup>

King believed that unmerited suffering would be redemptive; that the "spear of frustration would be transformed into a shaft of light"; and "that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word in reality."<sup>13</sup> King did not call us to follow out of blind loyalty. But he did call us to make very difficult decisions about loyalty, commitment, and love. A colleague recently asked, "Shall I stand by King's ideals and be beaten and risk my family being beaten, or shall I stay safe? One of my hopes in life is that I never have to face this question and that if I do I will be able to live with myself afterwards."

The work of King, a 20th century Pied Piper is not finished. On April 3rd, 1968, and on national television, Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke these words:

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<sup>12</sup>*Strength to Love*, p. 85.

<sup>13</sup>From the Nobel Prize acceptance speech, but quoted by Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 262.

We've got some difficult days ahead. But it really doesn't matter with me now. Because I've been to the mountaintop. I won't mind. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will.

And he's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you, but I want you to know tonight that we as a people will get to the Promised Land.

So I'm happy tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man. "Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord."<sup>14</sup>

The next day, April 4th, 1967, the nation, indeed people around the world were in shock when news reached them that Martin Luther King, Jr. had just been assassinated. He was felled by a bullet. He leaves to us, the challenge of picking up his dream. He calls us to apply his prophetic insights and his practical theology to the hard-to-get-rid-of problems of racism, classism, unemployment, poverty, and gender violence.

## VIII.

We began with the questions: Who am I? Where am I going? How will I get there? These questions need to be addressed at a different level if they are to have relevance for the emerging situation in Kenya. If we learn anything from the life and work of Martin Luther King, Jr. it is this. One individual may point the

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<sup>14</sup>King, *The Measure of A Man* (London: Fount Paperbacks, 1989), p. 59.

way, but one individual cannot come to town and always save its people. There is a collective responsibility. It is imperative that we ask: who are we, where are *we* going as a nation, global village and planet? What kind of a future shall *we* create? And How shall *we* get to that place where again, and again we experience "the spear of frustration being transformed into a shaft of light?"

Kenya, an East African country achieved independence from British colonial rule on December 12, 1963. Mzee Jomo Kenyatta served as its first president from 1963 to August 22, 1978. He was succeeded by the then Vice President Daniel Arap Moi on October 10, 1978. Moi is the current president. Perhaps this newly independent nation's greatest challenge is to remain united. Like any young nation, its unity has been threatened by internal conflict. This includes tribalism, nepotism, ethnic violence, detention without trial, increased poverty, and social unrest.<sup>15</sup>

Kenya's unity has been held together by a one-party political system. The President, it is reported, believes that the one party system is best for Kenya. Political pluralism would lead the country into social chaos. But there are other voices calling for reform, constitutional amendments, and a change toward a multiparty system. Hence, the questions: who are we as a social entity? where are we headed? and how shall we get there? are politically relevant.

There will be many Pied Pipers in the land as Kenya and other African nations attempt to move toward a multi-party system. Where are the Pied Pipers pointing? What is the dream toward which the Pied Pipers are calling. What kind of future society is envisioned? How will Africa get there? If a multi-party system is the means forward, then what are the ends, that is, the societal goals?

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<sup>15</sup>See, Y.P. Ghai, "Prospects for Asians In East Africa," in *Racial and Communal Tensions In East Africa. Contemporary Africa Monographs*. The East African Institute of Social and Cultural Affairs. Published by East African Publishing House and printed by East African Institute Press, Nairobi, 1966, pp. 9-12.

How shall the forward struggle be described? There must be some ideals or standards by which the people can assess the dream of the Pied Pipers.

Martin Luther King, Jr. saw the need to bring change toward greater justice in the wider social and legal systems if full humanity for African Americans was to be a reality. The Spirit of *harambee* works best when people are able to fulfill their tasks under favorable legal and social conditions. For King the legal system and social practices must work together to protect the fundamental rights and decency of all people, especially those who have been oppressed.

Any law and social practices that conflict with fundamental principles of equal rights and decency are unjust. They must be changed because they injure the soul, the human being, and destroy the foundations for love and justice in community. The way forward then, in Kenya as in the rest of the world, is to rise above the narrow forms of attraction, certain limitations of friendship, and individualistic concerns, to embrace the broader concerns of all the others who can contribute and help to shape a nation's future.

Words from the prophet Jeremiah are relevant here: "Seek the welfare of the city to which you have been sent, for in its welfare you shall find your own." (Jer. 29:7). The well being of each is bound up in the well being of all. With these ends in mind, the collective struggle forward can inject new meaning into a nation's goals. Hence, the nature of the struggle forward is important. It is the harbinger of new meaning. The emergence of new meaning in the struggle forward can be seen in the experience of America's Pied Piper, Martin Luther King, Jr.

The past decade has been a most exciting one. In spite of the tensions and uncertainties of this period something profoundly meaningful is taking place. Old systems

of exploitation and oppression are passing away; new systems of justice and equality are being born. In a real sense this is a great time to be alive. Therefore, I am not yet discouraged about the future. (*Strength to Love*, p. 155).

Can the ideals of *harambee* and King's vision combine to address the difficult questions of social injustice, the rat problem, in Kenya? Again, the rat problem is manifest in ethnic violence, detention without trial, political terrorism, and other forms of repression and oppression. Therefore, the question of violent or nonviolent change in Kenya is a critical part of the current political situation. A legacy of violence or nonviolence will have implications for generations to come. King's words are relevant:

I am convinced that if we succumb to the temptation to use violence in our struggle for freedom, unborn generations will be the recipients of a long and desolate night of bitterness, and our chief legacy to them will be a never-ending reign of chaos. (*Strength to Love*, pp. 15-16).

Which Pied Piper are Kenyans following? Do the Pipers build upon the nation's national philosophy of peace, love, and unity, and the spirit of *harambee* (or self-help)? Can a multi-party system help to increase the possibilities for non-violent political outcomes in Kenya and elsewhere in Africa? Or will it deepen political divisions? Can it help to ensure participatory democracy, greater justice and equality? Or will it function to frustrate these possibilities? What signs would encourage voters to believe that a multi-party system can help to end nepotism, exploitation, corruption, and oppression?

Finally, what is the role of religion and the spirit of *harambee* in all of this and in all Africa? How will the people use the power of the ballot? The answers to these questions will depend upon the kind of dream Kenyans and other Africans are following now. Is it an empty dream? Or is there something to it? The future will be determined, in part, by the dream and by the way the common people use the power of the ballot.