"If Martin Luther King were alive today, he'd be organizing"

Next General CD-CAAR Meeting
Thursday, Jan. 24, 1991 - 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.
Albany Public Library
Washington Avenue, Albany, New York

Why would Martin Luther King be organizing?
We encourage all to come and participate in a community discussion on Dr. King's legacy and how it applies to local, national and international issues today.

Please note article inside on Dr. Martin Luther King.
**Some CD-CAAR Business...**

**Steering Committee Election** - At the November 1990 general meeting of CD-CAAR, election to the steering committee was held. The following people were elected:

- Merton Simpson, Co-Chair
- Vera Michelson, Co-Chair
- Eileen Kawola, Newsletter Editor
- Anita Thayer
- Deborah Maxwell
- Vicki Smith
- Mabel Leon
- Mike Riddick
- Anita Thayer
- Mark Mishler
- Jim Bouldin
- Pat Trowers Johnson

(Roll Varma will continue as Treasurer)

**Membership Letter** - Early this month a membership letter was sent to everyone who receives this newsletter. This letter was the annual request for your $5.00 (or more!) yearly dues. If you haven't sent your dues in yet, please do so. This will guarantee you continued mailing of the newsletter, and a membership card which will be sent to you on receipt of your dues. Most importantly, it means you are continuing your commitment to the fight against apartheid and racism.

**Coalition Events - Past and Future**

On December 14, 1990 the Coalition held a fundraiser "Party with a Purpose." Thanks to party chair Mike Riddick and his committee, Judy Rubenstein and Deborah Muhammad, the party was a financial and a social success—continuing the tradition that CD-CAAR throws the best party in town!

Speaking of parties, in September, 1991, CD-CAAR will celebrate its tenth year anniversary. This will be a very special event and we are beginning to organize for it now. If you would like to be involved in the planning stages, call Pat Trowers Johnson at 463-4486.
Dale McGrath, an Albany County jail inmate, underwent a hunger strike this summer to call attention to the longheld practice of using bail for purposes other than that intended. Bail should be used only as a measure for assuring the defendant's appearance in court. Historically, bail has been used in Albany County in many instances strictly as a measure of social control and oppression directed against certain people. The practice has been to set unreasonably high bail in cases of the poor and powerless who find themselves accused of a crime. Most recently we saw how it was used to harass and punish those who dare to challenge the system. A case in point was that of Donna DeMaria, longtime community activist whose bail was set at $10,000 on a trumped-up felony charge.

A large number of admissions to local jails in New York state are pretrial detainees, and most are confined for want of modest amounts of bail. Consequently, those unable to afford their release are poor. It also follows that people of color, who are disproportionately represented among the poor, will suffer the most. In Albany County, they have suffered for years from the destructive impact of this practice in terms of loss of jobs, housing, the breakup of families, the foster placement of children, and higher conviction and incarceration rates. Research shows that those who fail to be released are much more likely to be convicted.

...There is a growing awareness that certain ill-defined criteria, once relied upon as "objective criteria" to be used in making release decisions, are not objective at all.
For example, "employment" and "residence" may simply have more to do with defining one's ethnic group or economic status than one's "riskiness." Therefore, Assistant District Attorney Lawrence Wiest was wrong in suggesting that McGrath, who admittedly has lived at several different residences within the community, poses a "risk to society" simply because he has "...a checkered employment history and has lived in at least four different places this year." For often those characteristics simply describe the plight of the poor and the homeless.

The practice of unreasonable bail increases disrespect for the law and adds to the overcrowding problem in the jail, as well as the burden placed upon taxpayers.

The Center for Law and Justice, as well as the Coalition for Criminal Justice, supported McGrath's valiant effort. He has asked all of us in the community to reexamine our commitment of the cherished constitutional principle that the accused should stand innocent until proven guilty. He has also asked that the community at least explore more creative measures that both honor this principle and provide protection to our community.

CD-CAAR's Subcommittee on Police Abuse and Racist Violence is working with Dr. Green and the Center for Law and Justice to coordinate the anti-police abuse campaign. On January 7, 1991, the two groups sponsored a community meeting to address the problem of police abuse. From the time of the planning of that meeting and the actual meeting there was the suicide of Corey J. Sheldon, a robbery suspect, in the Albany City Division II Lockup. This case as well as other issues of police abuse which were brought up at the community meeting will be discussed at the general CD-CAAR meeting on January 24th.

UPDATE...
Jail death spurs blacks' protest against police

By Richard Wexler
Staff writer

ALBANY — Singing "We Shall Overcome" and braving bitter cold, about 65 people demonstrated in front of the home of Mayor Thomas Whalen III Monday night, protesting what they charge is widespread brutality against blacks by Albany police.

For 20 minutes, the demonstrators chanted, "What happened to Corey Sheldon?" a reference to a black robbery suspect who died in a cell in the Division 2 lockup. Police say the death was a suicide, but the demonstrators did not believe it. They also chanted, "Whose mayor are you?" and, "Where is Whalen?"

Lights were switched off at the Whalen household on South Pine Avenue as the protest began and the mayor did not come to the door when reporters sought comment after the protest. Shortly after the demonstrators left, police arrived. Whalen, clad in a bathrobe, opened the door, asked, "Is it quiet now?" again refused comment, and shut the door. One of the officers on the scene said he did not know who had called police.

The demonstration was unplanned. It happened after people attending a meeting at the Arbor Hill Community Center about alleged police brutality demanded that some sort of action be taken immediately. More than 100 people attended the meeting, which had to be moved to the gymnasium from a smaller room.

The meeting was called in the wake of the Sheldon death and the alleged beating of several members of the Cancer family in Arbor Hill last month. John Cancer, a family spokesman, said Monday night that formal complaints would be filed with the Police Department's internal affairs unit this morning.

"I brought with me a copy of the Constitution of the United States," said Alice Green, who has resigned her job with the New York Civil Liberties Union to work full time on issues of police abuse. "The Albany Police Department doesn't seem to believe it exists for black people."

"I was scared (to speak out) but I couldn't take it any more," said Carolyn Edmonds, a merchant in Arbor Hill. "I have seen people harassed, abused, beaten and charged for no reason at all." though she added that she has seen "good officers, too."

"Racism is alive and well right here in Albany," charged Deborah Muhammad, a human relations specialist for the state Division of Human Rights. Like other speakers, Muhammad said what she said was the widespread feeling among blacks that they faced retaliation if they complained about brutality. "Even if there is no abuse, there is a problem when people are this afraid," Muhammad said.

See PROTEST / B-3

THIS AND OTHER ISSUES INVOLVING POLICE ABUSE AND RACIST VIOLENCE WILL BE PART OF CD-CAAR'S JANUARY 24TH MEETING.
Corey Sheldon's aunt Joyce Frederick, who now lives in Maryland, came to Albany to plead for help in investigating her nephew's death. "Help me find out what happened to my nephew," she said. "He didn't kill himself." The pastor of Sheldon's church, Emmett Jeffress, said that shortly before his death, Sheldon "led the devotion service. He sang, he praised God, he was happy, he rejoiced. . . . I just don't believe he did this."

Mark Mishler, an attorney and former member of the city's Police-Community Relations Board, alleged that police routinely stop young black men on the street for questioning, and sometimes partial strip-searching, without cause. He charged that searches at the Greyhound Bus Terminal targeted blacks. And he blasted the county public defender's office for allegedly failing to fight for its clients. Mishler is now representing the Cancer family.

Mishler called for creation of an independent civilian review board with the power to conduct its own investigations into alleged police misconduct.

Green said her newly formed Center for Law and Justice Inc. will serve as a clearinghouse for complaints against the police. Green said she and an attorney on her staff will help people file complaints and accompany them when they are questioned by the police. She urged people with complaints against the police to call her at 427-8361.

No one from the Police Department attended the meeting. The moderator, Merton Simpson, said they were not invited, but "they knew about it." Police Chief John Dale has an unlisted phone number and could not be reached for comment Monday night.

A few people at the meeting said peaceful protest was not enough. "It's been a long time since there's been a riot here," said one speaker. "When we start tearing up (stuff) we'll get better taken care of."

But several speakers said violence was self-destructive. "In the long run, what will it accomplish?" asked Edmonds.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO GET INVOLVED IN ISSUES OF POLICE ABUSE AND RACIST VIOLENCE, CD-CAAR IS WORKING WITH THE CENTER FOR LAW AND JUSTICE. CALL MERTON SIMPSON IN CARE OF ALICE GREEN, (518) 427-8361.
THE EMERGENCY COMMITTEE TO END U.S. INTERVENTION IN THE MIDDLE EAST IS ORGANIZING SEVERAL EVENTS IN RESPONSE TO THE U.S. ACTIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST. ON JANUARY 19TH AND ON JANUARY 26TH NATIONAL MARCHES ARE BEING HELD IN WASHINGTON TO CALL FOR PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND FOR THE U.S. TO BRING THE TROOPS HOME. BUSES ARE BEING SENT FROM ALBANY. FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE BUSES CALL THE SOCIAL JUSTICE CENTER, 434-4037. FOR INFORMATION ON FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE EMERGENCY COMMITTEE, CALL DAVID AT 482-7448.

Education News...

The election of Barbara Allen as President of the Albany Board of Education is one of the most hopeful things to happen to the public school system in Albany since there's been public schools! As the first African American Board president, Barbara, a community activist and member of CD-CARR, promises to make her main concern the education of all of the children. Congratulations Barbara!

Education '91 - Tapping Every Talent: Expanding Achievement Opportunities for All Students, a community based conference designed to promote a long-term, broad-based effort to enrich, diversity, and strengthen education in Albany, is planned for Saturday, February 2, 1991 from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at Philip Livingston Middle School, 315 Northern Boulevard, Albany. The conference is being sponsored by the Albany Citizens for Education, the Albany City School District, the NAACP-Albany branch, and the Albany Urban League. CD-CARR is one of the many endorsers of the event. The basic fee is $6.00 which may be reduced for anyone to whom it presents a hardship. On-site child care will be available free of charge. Reservations must be made by January 22nd by calling telephone #447-5877. If you are interested in the changes taking place in the Albany Public Schools, if you want to see that these changes meet the needs of all students, plan to attend this important conference.
Important meeting date
Thursday, January 24, 1991
Albany Public Library, 7-9 p.m.

The main topic of discussion at our regular monthly meeting in January will be "If Martin Luther King were alive today, he'd be organizing." We urge you to attend this important meeting where we will be discussing the real meaning of the King legacy and the importance it has for the struggle against racism and injustice today.

Note the announcement of a community forum below:

Forum set on filing brutality charges

ALBANY — Two civil rights organizations will stage an informational session Monday on how people can file complaints of police harassment or brutality.

"Stop Police Abuse: Do the Right Thing," organized by the Capital District Coalition Against Apartheid and Racism and the Center for Law and Justice Inc., will be held from 6:30-8:30 p.m. at the Arbor Hill Community Center.

Speakers will advise those who attend how to file complaints in cases in which they believe they were abused by police officers. For further information, call 427-8361.

This forum was held on January 7th. In addition to our discussion of Martin Luther King, at our meeting on the 24th we will hold a follow up discussion on the outcome of this forum.
Over the years, CD-CAAR members have expressed concern and frustration over the way the true meaning of Dr. Martin Luther King’s vision has been manipulated by the mass media, politicians and professional "dream organizers and merchants."

Each January celebration we are left with the image of a great man who went to a mountain top to have a dream. Our children (Black and white) are led to believe that he died so that they could hold hands.

This sanitized view of Dr. King is a discredit to all that he lived and died for. This version of the struggle numbs us and enables us to create a perspective on King’s life which is more comfortable, more easy to digest and which fails to disturb or significantly challenge us.

Remembering the real King and learning the lessons of that time in history means that we remember the Martin Luther King who:

1. denounced the U.S. government as the "greatest purveyor of violence in the world" and spoke of America as a "malignant society."

2. called for a "radical redistribution of wealth and power in America" as a way of providing food, shelter, medical care, jobs, education and hope for all of its' people.

3. described the ills of American society as "systemic rather than superficial flaws."

4. linked wealth and power to race and class oppression.

5. in discussing the war in Viet Nam commented that "the western arrogance of believing that it has everything to teach others and nothing to learn from them is not just..."and "...a nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death."

We believe that if Martin Luther King were alive today he would be outraged at a Bush administration which shows total disregard for domestic issues of housing, drugs, AIDS, homelessness, health care and hate crimes. We believe that instead of walking hand in hand with the Governor of New York State he would be organizing protests at the Capitol in support of the thousands of workers who will be laid off in the upcoming months. He would make us face reality; the Bush veto of national civil rights legislation is a declaration of war on people of color in this country. He would organize us to protest against this country’s preparation to engage Blacks, Latinos and white working class youth in a devastating and senseless war for profit and control in the Middle East. We believe unequivocally that Martin Luther King would be organizing to get U.S. troops out of the Persian Gulf.

We hope that all CD-CAAR members and friends will be able to join us at our January 24, 1991 monthly meeting which will include a community discussion of the real meaning of the life of Dr. Martin Luther King and it’s relevance for our work today. The meeting will begin at 7:00 p.m. at the Albany Public Library (main branch on Washington Avenue). We urge everyone to be on time since we have to be out of the library by 9:00 p.m. sharp.
On December 16, 1991, in Johannesburg, South Africa, the African National Congress ended its first national conference inside South Africa and announced that 1991 will be "a year of mass action" to press the government into fulfilling its commitments to release all political prisoners and allow the return of exiles. The ANC also said it would push Pretoria into accepting an elected constituent assembly to draft a new constitution and allow the formation of an interim government with Black participation. The ANC position on continued sanctions was also clarified. We reprint for you below the proposals from the December 16th conference and the document on sanctions which came out of that conference.

We, the African National Congress dedicate ourselves to making the year 1991 a year of mass action for the transfer of power to the people through following programme of action.

We propose:

1. The launching of a campaign to culminate on Solomun Mahlangu Day (6 April) for the release of our prisoners, (including those on death row) the return of our exiles, the cessation of political trials and the detention of our people.

2. The launching of mass action around the opening of parliament to highlight our demands for an interim government and constituent assembly and to demand the abolition of the tricameral and bantustan systems. This to be followed by a mass door-to-door signature campaign to popularise and mobilise our people around the objectives of an interim government and constituent assembly.

3.

3.1 The convening of workshops with our allies to develop a joint programme of action against violence in our country.

3.2 The NEC set up a National Defence Committee to take charge of the speedy implementation of self-defence units in our structures.

3.3 That our structures be encouraged to actively participate in the campaigns of our allies in our communities and in our factories. To this effect, we propose the setting up of local alliance structures.

4. The convening of a patriotic conference on Sharpville Day, 21 March, to mobilize all anti-apartheid forces against this regime.

5. That we consolidate our organisation by synchronising our mass recruitment campaigns with our campaigns of mass action, by improving the communication efficiency and effectivity of our structures, by deepening democratic practices and by correcting rural-urban imbalances.

6. That conference reaffirms its policy on affirmative action for women and directs all structures of the ANC to implement it, and calls on the Women's League to spearhead this process.

7. That the Land Commission of the ANC be given a specific mandate to consult widely on drawing up a programme of action to rally and mobilise our people for the return of the land to its rightful owners.

8. Conference resolves to embark on a campaign for the reorientation of the community and students towards a culture of learning, and therefore undertakes to campaign for mass education, a common education system for all, and a demand that the regime provides adequate resources for education.

Document on Sanctions

Conscious of the necessity to correct the growing perception that DeKlerk and his government should be rewarded for recent reforms, we are aware that the basic institutions of apartheid are still firmly in place, that the South African government continues to use violence and police repression to suppress legitimate political and civic actions, alarmed over the orchestrated violence against defenceless citizens, especially in African residential areas, in which elements of the SA security establishment are deeply implicated, noting that many of the obstacles to genuine negotiations such as the Internal Security Act and others, remain in the statute books and are still vigorously enforced.

We resolve that the existing sanctions package be maintained.

As such as the ANC appeals to the EC, U.S Congress, EFTA and other international bodies to postpone any consideration of the issue of sanctions against apartheid SA until the ANC and all other democratic formations inside our country including Trade Unions and Religious bodies initiate discussion with them on the issue.

15/12/90 1200 hours