

King

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tions man for a coal company. "But I certainly don't think we made the improvement that we should have, and I don't think our generation will.

"Our children and their children will have a better chance."

A generation ago, King had hoped for the same.

He hoped that the nation would seize the opportunities unleashed by the civil rights movement to allow his children and white children to walk together, talk together, face life on an equal footing. But a quarter century after the Nobel Peace Prize winner's assassination on the balcony of a Memphis motel, some of the movement's soldiers and its chroniclers agree with the two men in the mall — that people let the opportunities pass.

Alice Windom, grew up in St. Louis during its time of open discrimination. Windom now teaches public policy at the University of Missouri at St. Louis and lectures on human rights.

"Society has not really opened up where black people can succeed on the basis of merit. In race, we are slipping back," Windom said.

The reason, says Windom, is institutional racism and apathy among blacks.

"We don't have the physical barriers to employment and accommodation," said Windom, who is black. "But the limitations have not come down. I don't think people have the same enthusiasm."

Priscilla Dowden, one of Windom's colleagues, shares that view. Dowden is a lecturer at UMSL and, this year, a research fellow at the Missouri Historical Society. She has studied the

history of blacks in the United States.

Dowden asks: "What are we celebrating? It seems so difficult to celebrate when black people are in so much trouble."

The trouble, says Dowden, who is black, reaches from the highest levels of government into the neighborhoods, the streets, the homes where so much of children's lives is left to chance.

"We have a few African-Americans who have been appointed and elected to high posts within our local and national governments," Dowden said. "But most of us still have a deep concern about what those few African-Americans can actually do to change the political condition of the vast majority of African-Americans."

She laments that communities often fail to support black children.

"They are being encouraged to go into jobs that will not allow them to go

into any substantive employment, that will have a contribution to society," Dowden said. "We have not literally put hands on our children and said, 'Take another path. It's worth it.'"

The result, she says, is a generation of young people who will not take out a \$20,000 loan to pay tuition, but do not hesitate to take out a \$20,000 loan for a car.

At St. Clair Square, Beltz and Ellington had said much the same thing.

"I don't think we can legislate it; it has to come from within here," Beltz said, his index finger pointing to his heart, his comment eliciting a nod from Ellington, who now leaned toward Beltz.

At almost the same instant, each man's wife arrived at the bench, their shopping finished. Ellington and his wife headed for the western exit of the mall. Beltz, his wife and daughter headed south.

Downtown March To Mark King's Birth

Monday is the federal holiday marking the 64th anniversary of the birth of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

St. Louis will mark the occasion with a march through downtown, beginning at 11 a.m. at the Old Courthouse and continuing to Christ Church Cathedral, 13th and Locust streets.

All federal offices will be closed. Regular mail delivery will be suspended, but special delivery and Express mail will be delivered. Post offices will be closed. The airport mail center and self-service postal centers

will be open.

The St. Louis Public Library system will be closed. St. Louis County libraries will be open.

St. Louis public schools will be closed, as will Harris-Stowe State College, the campuses of St. Louis Community College, St. Louis University, Washington University, Webster University, the University of Missouri at St. Louis and Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville.

Classes will not meet at Fontbonne College. Lindenwood College will be open.



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