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Williams keynotes Black Symposium

RAYMOND...
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GREEN, MAINE 04473

by David Bright

Hosea Williams, keynote speaker for the Student Senate's Symposium on Black America, spoke in no uncertain terms Sunday night as he told an audience in Lengyel Gym that "The major problem in America isn't racism, the major problem in America has always been its sick economic system."

Williams, an assistant to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference's Ralph David Abernathy, went on to explain this thesis as well as that of "The Blacks aren't the problem here, it's the Whites."

The noted civil rights leader, who left a well paying job as a chemist to join the movement, explained that the fathers of this country knew when they set up the economic system it would require exploitation of the poor to keep it running. They first used the Indians by taking land which the Indians has settled on for centuries, he explained, and they used the strong, black men from Africa to build their cities and plow their fields.

They broke the black man by denying him his culture and his self-respect, he said, and "The most damnable, greatest sin of this country was to rob these people of their culture."

Williams explained that Blacks were made to feel they were lazy and useless. He related several incidents from his childhood as well as from recent years which told the story of segregation as vividly as most people in the audience cared to hear.

"I used to wish I was white when I was young because of the way we lived," he said, "and my people used to hate themselves. We were robbed of our culture, our heritage and our

dignity by the white man, that's why there's a problem now."

"But we've come to the crossroads now," he added, "and Blacks are beginning to demand their culture be recognized." He explained that America was in its third era, the first being the American Revolution, the second being the Civil War and the third being the era of Martin Luther King Jr.

Middle aged, but bearded, and with a full head of hair which he described as "not flying in my face when I talk", Williams continued "we're not afraid of jails anymore." There was a time, he said, when every march, every attempt at education was met by violence and arrest.

"If I get threatened with jail now I just say I been in all the rest, I might as well try yours," he added.

Williams explained that it was King who showed the Blacks their self respect. Fear used to control their lives but they are beginning to put that behind them, he said. "Some of us had been down so long that getting up never crossed our minds," he exclaimed, "but Dr. King changed all that."

Speaking on Dr. King's death, Williams explained that King had found the ability to organize the poor Whites, the Puerto Ricans and the American Indians along with the Blacks.

"That's when he got dangerous to the establishment. The White folks needed an Uncle Tom. They groomed him but when he didn't act like Whitey wanted, they killed him."

Williams served as the mayor of Resurrection City and called it a success. We had our fights but we pulled a lot of people together, so now when I say Black I mean Indi-

ans and Puerto Ricans and poor Whites too, he said.

What we are demanding is a basic economy shift in this country, and we're not going to get it without the kind of bonds we had at Resurrection City, he added.

"I don't mean everybody should make the same pay," he said, "but we want more than meager jobs, we want to be able to support a family on only one job. A man can't have any self-respect if he has to work twenty hours a day and never sees his family."

On the riots, Williams explained that until the power structure can understand how a Black maid feels putting groceries onto an already full shelf when she has no food at home for her children, or how she feels while dressing a white child in fancy clothes when her kids have no shoes, the power structure will never be able to see the cause of riots.

You can't stop looting, burning and robbing because you haven't presented any other choice, he told the listeners. The police in Washington had better equipment than I saw during my three years in World War II, but you can't stop riots with guns, they'll just go underground.

Williams stated that unlike Dr. King, he was dedicated to non-violence only as a tactic, not as a philosophy. And he added that

America is heading for trouble and nothing can stop it unless it deals with the problem rather than try to avoid it.

He condemned the Office of Economic Opportunities as a front for buying out Black Power. It manipulates people, he said, they find someone ready to start organizing and they give him a job to shut him up.

In like manner he condemned



Hosea Williams

Black capitalism, going back to his original premise that this country's first problem is economics.

"Making a few niggers rich ain't worth a damn," he declared, "the rest will still burn down the pie store." He explained that SCLC is presently working on a plan to buy a Holiday Inn and sell shares to the poor community in an attempt to distribute the wealth and give all a share in owning their town.

"A lot of Blacks never even thought of owning something before," he said, "this is what we're trying to do." He added "the class struggle is at hand, Black capitalism only intensifies: the struggle."

Williams expressed sorrow at the youth of America who aren't supporting the Black movements. "Most White youth is still their parents' bag," he said. He admitted that there were exceptions but stated that "I just don't see the general trend of White youth supporting the struggle."

Throughout his talk Williams tried to make it clear what the new directions of his organization were. "We want a reshuffling of the economy, guaranteed jobs under a new definition of what a job is, annual guaranteed income for the ill and the old." These things are for everyone, he concluded, for ourselves we want a heritage and self-respect. "We want to be able to stand up and say I am a man."

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