

SCLC of Greater Los Angeles Statement  
April 9, 2008

On the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., I gave a speech at a public meeting of a predominately African American fraternity on the theme of “Leaving an Inheritance to Our Kids and Our Communities”.

Let me first state that at no time did I intend to offend, insult, indict or condemn any person or group of persons during any portion of my presentation. Furthermore, I did not make any statement that was offensive regarding the Jewish community and I completely deny and refute any accusation that I have done so. The accusations do not truly characterize the statements made during the presentation, nor do they accurately characterize my life or my position as President of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference of Greater Los Angeles.

Additionally, I have an existing and ongoing collaborative relationships with the American Jewish Committee (AJC) and the Anti Defamation League (ADL) in which we are committed to the cause of justice for our respective communities.

In a very small part of my presentation, I referenced a meeting I had with Rabbi’s and other community leaders. A Rabbi stated in that meeting that the close relationship between the African American and Jewish communities had been disconnected after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King. I further referenced in my speech that my response to the Rabbi was that the Black Power Movement emerged after the assassination of Dr. King and it was a direct response to the negative characterizations of African Americans through the silver screen, TV and the music industry, industries that are influenced by many in the Jewish community. I then stated to the Rabbis that the Black Power Movement was our effort to define for ourselves our own identity rather than be defined by anyone else. I then indicated in my presentation that I told the Rabbis’ that before a genuine coalition could be rebuilt between our communities, there would have to be dialogue and efforts made to deal with the negative characterizations of African Americans.

The focus of my presentation was that African Americans should embrace our historical legacy as an “Inheritance of Measurable Value”, and that we use our legacy to define ourselves. This message is no different than what Daphne Ziman wrote in the March issue of the Jewish Journal when she stated, “Please tell us who you are, Sen. Obama; don't let your enemies, or your friends, define you.”

The Mission of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), an organization founded by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., is to redeem the soul of America. SCLC of Greater Los Angeles continues the legacy of our founder, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, by promoting the philosophy of non-violent progressive social change. Our roots extend deeply into the African American religious experience with its biblical vision of liberation of all humankind. Our goal is to realize the dream of freedom,

justice, peace and equality for all by recognizing the inalienable dignity and worth of every human being.

The SCLC of Greater Los Angeles has as its mandate to organize and mobilize the strength of America's moral consciousness against the weakness of its social order. We accomplish this through the continued advocacy of justice for all people, regardless of social status, religious belief, gender, sexual orientation, or ethnicity. We affirm nonviolence as the only reasonable basis for social change and interpersonal living. These two principles are reflected in our work.