

# Education Called Key to King's Dream

BY ERIN GRACE  
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Had it not been for the GI Bill which helped open higher education to black veterans after World War II, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. would not have had foot soldiers to carry his message, a civil-rights leader said Monday night at the Core Auditorium's Martin Hall.

Arthur Fletcher, keynote speaker for the city-sponsored event commemorating King's birth, was one of those foot soldiers.

A war veteran who went to college, Fletcher used positions in state and federal government to work toward civil rights. Fletcher is also a former head of the United Negro College Fund.

"For the first time, we had college campuses crawling with black students," Fletcher told an audience of about 150.

"Without education, King's greatest speeches would not have had the impact required to set the factors of change in motion."

And after three decades, some of those changes can be seen, Fletcher said, in the increase in the number of black doctors, lawyers and business leaders.

"I cannot find an area where we don't find African-Americans participating," Fletcher said. "The burden is on us now. King's movement has succeeded to the point where you can't say we're not involved."

But, Fletcher said, this participation is just a start.

People must discover their individual gifts and use them to the best of their abilities, he said.

"There's a role for you to play," he said.

Fletcher said that as the national government downsizes, it is up to communities to participate in how government funding is spent. One of the best motivations that needs to be climbed, he said, is the one of economic inequality.

And the way to close that gap is through education, he said.

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## King Commemoration Delay Sparks Petition at Westside

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Honoring Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on the day after the national holiday commemorating his birth is like celebrating the Fourth of July on July 5.

That's what a Westside High School student says.

Angry that no mention was made of the slain civil-rights leader in Westside classrooms Monday, junior Erin Bauer, 16, and another student circulated a protest petition.

Of the 493 who signed, most were students. Some were cafeteria workers and hall monitors.

Principal Pufflis Ushman said the school had tried since the beginning of the school year to line up speakers for the King holiday, but two cancellations forced the school to hold speeches Tuesday instead.

comes increasingly technological and information-based.

"If we don't write ourselves into the future, we have no one to blame but ourselves," he said. "I didn't say it was going to be easy, but the ball is in our court of the court."

During the two-hour event, several community leaders spoke, including Mayor Hal Dahl, and "Loving the

Arthur Fletcher, former head of the United Negro College Fund, and Samuel Cornelius, who formerly administered the nation's anti-poverty program, were selected to address the students.

Ushman said Fletcher and Cornelius will be kicking off a series on diversity for the rest of the week.

Bauer, who presented the petition to Ushman after school, said the effort wasn't about trying to get a day off school. Omaha and Midland School Districts did not hold classes Monday.

"We really don't know anything about Martin Luther King to begin with," she said.

"The majority of the kids didn't even know it was Martin Luther King's birthday. If he was so important, then it should (have been) acknowledged."

First Lutheran Church, opened the program with a prayer. City Councilman Cliff Hard read a proclamation from the city calling on people to be dream navigators for justice.

Awards were presented by Dahl to The African American Book Store, 3206 Lake St.; Jane Bern, executive director of the National Conference of Christians and Jews; and Fran Garthoff for