

King's Assassination 50 Years Later: Looking Back & Moving Forward, George Geder's Perspective

By Shawnta S. Barnes - April 4, 2018



George Geder was a high school student living in New York when Dr. King was assassinated. Today, George is a writer who focuses on multi-cultural representation and all voices being heard. He currently authors the newsletter DeColonize the Mind. He is also a family historian, speaker, and past president of the Santa Fe, New Mexico NAACP. Below is his perspective on Dr. King's assassination and how we continue to move forward.

Shawnta Barnes: Where were you and what do you remember about April 4, 1968?

George Geder: I do recall that everything seemed to stop in Binghamton, New York. I was in the 11th grade at Binghamton North High. Wherever I was (I don't remember), I'm sure someone was screaming out what had happened. I might have been up in my bedroom trying to read *Wretched of the Earth* by Franz Fanon. Interestingly, I remember exactly where I was when JFK was assassinated.

SB: Why do you think you were reading that book?

GG: I know that I had the book because I stole it from a bookstore, and I was in the 11th grade. We had established the Black Student Union in my high school and I was the vice-president. We were trying to get our hands on as much Black literature as possible. In fact, we were protesting the lack of relevant Black themed books in the school library.

SB: Do you find it odd that you remember where you were for JFK's assassination and not MLK?

GG: JFK was the *FIRST* major traumatic national event to affect my generation. A classmate, who delivered correspondence to the principal's office, came running back screaming that the President had been shot. By the time of MLK's assassination, we had gone through Medgar Evers' assassination in 1963, James Chaney's assassination in 1964, and Malcolm X's assassination in 1965. Had I become desensitized to the point of not placing emphasis on where I was when these important and iconic Black figures' lives were ended? Or, was I brainwashed into thinking that White lives mattered *MORE* than Black lives?

SB: What has changed in the past 50 years?

GG: A lot of white folks got the 'memo'.

SB: What is the 'memo'?

GG: A lot of white folks got the ‘memo’ – by that I mean many contemporary white people became aware of the inequities and injustices that were placed upon Black folks. They joined in the protests and marches; coalitions were formed. That was a positive change.

SB: What has stayed the same?

GG: Many *more* white folks got the ‘memo’, balled it up, and threw it away.

SB: What do we need to do now in our community to make life better for the future and carry on Dr. King’s legacy?

GG: We must re-evaluate our space within the colonizer mindset. We need to stop chasing after their dreams. We must pursue our own dreams. Of course, we must *DEFINE* our own dreams more succinctly. We must *DEFINE* our own community, improve our own infrastructure, enable our own prosperity. If we do this, Dr. King’s legacy will not be in vain.

SB: What are you doing to make life better for the future and to carry on Dr. King’s legacy?

GG: The colonizers have shown a distinct and specific disdain for people of color. I’m trying to show people that derision. I’m also trying to show people alternatives to beating their heads against a racist ‘wall’. I’m doing this via the internet, participating in cultural/social focus groups, and by speaking to people within the community and without. Dr. King’s, and many others fight continues.

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