

Carver's excellent qualities, their realistic appraisal of his 'scientific contributions,' which loom so large in the Carver legend, is information which must be handled very carefully. . . . Our present thinking is that the report should not be published, at least in its present form, simply to avoid any possible misunderstanding."

By the 1950s, a few realistic appraisals of Carver's career had appeared in print, and the 1953 edition of the 1700-page *Webster's Biographi-*

cal Dictionary has no entry for him at all. Naturally, he has been rehabilitated in subsequent editions, and at a time when virtually any black of modest attainments is fair game as a "role model," Carver's chances of resting in peaceful obscurity are slim to none.

From today's perspective, one of the most significant aspects of the Carver legend is that it grew to giant proportions in a segregated America that had never dreamed of quotas or busing and in which virtually no one

believed blacks to be the intellectual equals of whites. It is instructive—and sobering—to realize that even then the affirmative action impulse was at work in the minds of whites. ●

The single best source for material on the Carver legend is "George Washington Carver: The Making of a Myth," which appeared in The Journal of Southern History, November 1976. It contains excellent bibliographic material and was an important source for this article.

The Doctor in Spite of Himself

Theodore Pappas (Ed.), *The Martin Luther King, Jr. Plagiarism Story*, The Rockford Institute, 1994, 107 pp., \$10.00 (soft cover)

An astonishing tale of misbehavior and the cover-up that followed.

Reviewed by Thomas Jackson

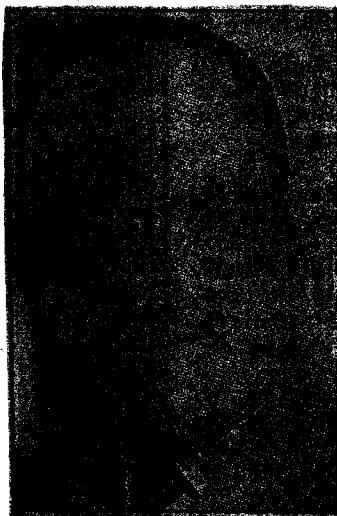
Late in 1987, a graduate student working on the project to publish the collected papers of Martin Luther King discovered that King had plagiarized huge parts of his doctoral dissertation. Clayborne Carson, the director of the project, decided to suppress this fact, thus setting in motion one of the most sordid tales of academic dishonesty and race-based special pleading in recent memory.

This book is an invaluable collection of several accounts of what King did and of the contemptible coverups and justifications that followed. Not surprisingly, its editor, Theodore Pappas, could not find a commercial publisher, so the book is unlikely to be in book stores or even in libraries. Only if enough people buy and read it will its story survive the whitewash.

Starting Early

It is now clear that King began plagiarizing as a young man and continued to do so throughout his career. At Crozer Theological Seminary in Chester, Pennsylvania, where he received a bachelor's degree in 1951, his papers were stuffed with unacknowledged material lifted verbatim from published sources. The King

papers project has dutifully collected this juvenilia, and Mr. Pappas explains how it strikes the reader today:



Martin Luther King, Jr.

"King's plagiarisms are easy to detect because their style rises above the level of his pedestrian student prose. In general, if the sentences are eloquent, witty, insightful, or pithy, or contain allusions, analogies, metaphors, or similes, it is safe to assume that the section has been purloined."

Mr. Pappas notes that in one paper King wrote at Crozer, 20 out of a total of 24 paragraphs show "verbatim theft." King also plagiarized himself, recycling old term papers as new ones. In their written comments on his papers, some of King's professors chided him for sloppy references, but

they seem to have had no idea how extensively he was stealing material. By the time he was accepted into the PhD program at Boston University, King was a veteran and habitual plagiarist.

Some of the most devastating parts of Mr. Pappas' book are nothing more than side-by-side comparisons of material from King's PhD thesis and from the sources he copied without attribution. King was overwhelmingly dependent on just one source, a dissertation written on the same subject as his own—the German-born theologian, Paul Tillich—by another Boston University student named Jack Boozer.

Here is a typical passage from King's thesis that is lifted, word for word, from Boozer's:

"Correlation means correspondence of data in the sense of a correspondence between religious symbols and that which is symbolized by them. It is upon the assumption of this correspondence that all utterances about God's nature are made. This correspondence is actual in the logos nature of God and logos nature of man."

There is word-for-word copying throughout the thesis. Mr. Pappas notes that the entire 23rd page is lifted straight out of Boozer, and that even when King was not stealing Boozer's words without attribution, he was stealing his ideas: "There is virtually no section of King's discussion of Til-

lich that cannot be found in Boozer's text."

Even when King is "quoting" Tillich, complete with footnotes, he may actually be quoting Boozer. Boozer occasionally typed the wrong page number in a Tillich footnote, or made an error transcribing Tillich's words. King copied the errors along with everything else.



What failed to happen.

King's plagiarism is even more breath-taking than it seems. Boozer was not just any B.U. graduate student. He had written his thesis in 1952, only three years before King wrote his, and *had submitted it to the same advisor*. Since the advisor is now dead, we will never know whether he failed even to notice the copying or was simply practicing early affirmative action. The second faculty reader of King's thesis now excuses himself by saying he read it early in his career, at a time when he was naive about plagiarism.

Even after he became famous, King continued to plagiarize. His "Letter From Birmingham City Jail," is now known to contain passages he had cribbed so often that he knew them by heart. Some of the best-known passages from his "I Have a Dream" speech are taken from a 1952 address by a black preacher named Archibald Carey. His Nobel Prize Lecture and his books, *Strength to Love* and *Stride Toward Freedom*, are also extensively plagiarized.

Moreover, it is clear that King did not take from others because he thought ideas and words were common property. He copyrighted the "I Have a Dream" speech, pilferings and

all, and vigorously defended it against unauthorized use. King's estate continues to enforce the copyright. Only last year, in a paroxysm of adulation, *USA Today* printed the full text of the speech, beginning on the front page. The estate sued.

Shielding the Saint

Like his penchant for adultery, King's intellectual dishonesty does not sit well with his reputation as Saint and Great Man. Perhaps it is because they reveal other failings that his FBI files are still sealed. King, alone of all Americans, is honored with a national holiday, and it is awkward for a saint to be caught stealing. The line of defense has been predictable: He didn't do it, and if he did, it doesn't matter.

A three-year cover-up began with Mr. Carson and his staff at the King papers project. He forbade anyone to use the word "plagiarism," and has since written of the "similarities" and "textual appropriations" that were part of King's "successful composition method." Mrs. Coretta Scott King also appears to have played a role in the cover-up by refusing to release King's handwritten dissertation notes. Mr. Carson deliberately misled reporters who had heard rumors of plagiarism, and came clean with the facts only when it became clear that the story would break anyway.

The project leader's disingenuousness has not affected funding for the King papers. They have probably swallowed up nearly a million dollars in tax money as well as support from the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations, IBM, Intel and many other donors. In eight years, the project has published only one volume of a projected fourteen.

To the profound discredit of the American press, it was a British paper, the *Sunday Telegraph*, that first published a story, in December, 1989, about allegations of plagiarism. It was not until nearly a year later, in November, 1990, that the *Wall Street Journal* reported the story to a large American audience. *Chronicles* had briefly mentioned the rumors a little earlier, and Mr. Pappas had prepared a thorough exposé but was beaten into print by the nimble *Journal*. It is now established that the *New York Times*, *Washington*

Post, *Atlanta Journal/Constitution*, and *New Republic* all had heard about the plagiarism but had decided not to investigate it.

Once the truth was out, official reactions were just as craven. The *Wall Street Journal* wrote a typically lickspittle editorial, arguing that King's plagiarisms do not reflect on his character but "tell something about the rest of us.[!?!]"

Boston University formed a committee to look into the matter and concluded that since King had stolen only 45 percent of the first part and 21 percent of the second part of his dissertation, it was an "intelligent contribution to scholarship" and that "no thought should be given to revocation of Dr. King's doctoral degree." The second reader of the thesis actually defended the plagiarism by saying that King had accurately conveyed Boozer's thinking—something not hard to do, since King copied him verbatim.

Boozer, who lived just long enough to learn of the plagiarism, was perhaps the greatest groveler of all. As his wife later explained, "He told me he'd be so honored and so glad if there were anything that Martin Luther King could have used from his work."

Keith Miller of Arizona State University has already written a full-

Even some of King's best-known works are extensively plagiarized.

length exculpation of King called *Voice of Deliverance: The Language of Martin Luther King, Jr.* Mr. Pappas notes that Prof. Miller has come up with an astonishing variety of ways to say "plagiarism" without using the word: voice merging, intertextualization, incorporation, borrowing, consulting, absorbing, alchemizing, overlapping, quarrying, yoking, adopting, synthesizing, replaying, echoing, resonance, and reverberation.

Prof. Miller says that non-whites, who have strong oral traditions, should not be held to stuffy, Western standards of bibliography and that King could not be expected to understand the demands of an alien white culture. "How could such a compelling leader commit what most people define as a writer's worst sin?" he asks;

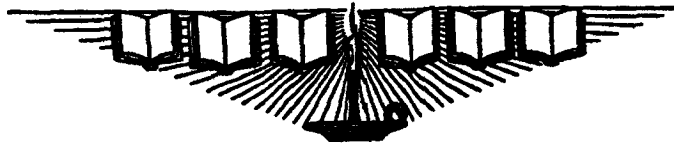
"The contradiction should prompt us to rethink our definition of plagiarism." Since Martin Luther King did it, it must be all right.

Even those who condemn plagiarism claim to have no idea why King should have done it. Mr. Pappas drops us a hint when he writes, "[W]e know from his scores on the Graduate Record Exam that King scored in the second lowest quartile in English and vocabulary, in the lowest ten percent in quantitative analysis, and in the lowest third on his advanced test in philosophy—the very subject he would concentrate in at B.U." People steal ideas when they are too lazy or unoriginal to come up with their own.

Blacks and Whites

Of course, the story that Mr. Pappas tells says far, far more about white America than about Martin Luther King. King was a dishonest scholar and got away with it—a small-time con-man whose degree would be revoked if Boston University had any integrity.

There is no doubt about what would have happened had King been white. Mr. Pappas reminds us that Joseph Biden's bid for the presidency ended when he was shown to have copied from a speech by Neil Kinnock, the



British Labor Party leader. Boston University itself recently stripped a dean of his position when it was learned he had cribbed from a *Wall Street Journal* article for a commencement address.

There is not a single white person, dead or alive, whose reputation academics and journalists would go to degrading lengths to preserve, but blacks are different. It is now well established that Alex Haley, the author of *Roots*, did not merely fake his African family tree but stole parts of it from a novel by a white man. His reputation remains unsullied, his Pulitzer Prize unrevoked. The black poet Maya Angelou's "Inauguration Poem" likewise appears to have been an unattributed adaptation, but her reputation and academic sinecure are unshaken.

To criticize Maya Angelou or Arthur Haley is merely in bad taste but to question the sanctity of Martin Luther King is *lèse majesté*. Why?

In his forward to this book, Jacob Neusner writes that the impulse to defend a shameless plagiarist "stems from insufficient faith in the authen-

tic achievements of Martin Luther King . . ." In other words, anyone who does not find room in King's spacious personality for a few personal failings does not grasp the man's true greatness.

Nonsense.

People toady to King's memory because he is a symbol of white racial atonement. To evoke his name is to confess white sinfulness and to ask forgiveness. Any attitude towards him other than worshipfulness suggests insufficient yearning for atonement or, to call it by its every-day name, racism.

To go further and actually criticize King is to risk more than the taint of bigotry; it is to insult the contemporary idea of America itself. King's birthday is a holiday because he symbolizes what is thought to be America's finest triumph—the triumph over white wickedness. King stands for integration and racial egalitarianism, from which flow quotas, multi-culturalism and non-white immigration. Policies that will weaken the country and dispossess the white majority must have nothing less than a saint as their symbol. ●

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Plagiarism Story is available from King Book, The Rockford Institute, 934 North Main Street, Rockford, IL 61103. The price is \$10.00, postage included.

O Tempora, O Mores!

Poverty Law Center is Rich and Devious

The *Montgomery Advertiser* has just published a sweeping, nine-part exposé of one of the country's best known anti-racist organizations, the Southern Poverty Law Center in Alabama. The paper has concluded that the center, run by Morris Dees, has wildly exaggerated the threat of the Ku Klux Klan in order to get money out of liberal whites. It has been spectacularly successful. Since 1984, the center has brought in about \$62 million in contributions. During this period, it had investment income of \$22.1 million, which is more than it spent on programs.



One of the center's favorite tactics is to bring civil suits against Klansmen and racists in order to bankrupt them. In a series of fund-raising letters, it implied that it had squeezed \$7

million dollars out of a Klan group for the benefit of the mother of a lynching victim. In fact, the mother got only \$51,800 from the impoverished Klansman, while the center collected millions of dollars through the appeal.

The *Montgomery Advertiser* also notes that the center has had a very bad record with black employees. It has hired very few and many of these have left, complaining of everything from paternalism to racial slurs.

Yo, Man!

At one time, academics predicted that black dialect would disappear as blacks learned to speak standard English. The reverse is happening.