

# King Plus 40 Years

**A Proposal for 12 months of Study on the Use of Power in Greensboro with a focus on the Progressive Mystique**

**If you are interested in discussing and further developing the proposal below please join us at 12:00 noon, Wednesday April 23 at the BCC office 417 Arlington Street.**

(Below is an excerpt from the Beloved Community Center's two year plan. The whole plan is more than 30 pages.)

*King-Plus 40 years: a critique of the use of power (the progressive mystique) and the struggle for beloved community in Greensboro. I have come to the point of believing that the capacity to confuse people, promote conflict, and hide the real working of power in Greensboro is a most urgent question. Chafe hit the nail on the head when he identified a kind of deceptive "civilities" that promotes a "progressive mystique" which conceals a very reactionary use of power. How are people unconsciously drawn into being unwitting servants of the "progressive mystique?" How does this process work in concrete situations? Unless we struggle to understand the actual use of power in our concrete context and unless we help the public understand this way of using power, our city is likely to remain trapped in an enclosed circle of confusion, conflict, and manipulation for years to come. Without that clarity, we will probably continue to hurt and cannibalize each other while the mechanisms of real power remain hidden to us.*

*With this challenge in mind, a 12 month period is proposed to discuss, breakdown, analyze and explore possible alternatives to how specific issues were handled. In that process we will seek to draw out the particular workings of the "progressive mystique", to expose it so that people can see what is happening to them and why. The idea is to identify 12 specific struggles and to use each one as a case study of how power is used in Greensboro. Since we are talking about the 1969 struggle for democracy by the black community let us take that one as an example.*

- 1. What was the core issue, the central initiating issue, involved in what became known as the Dudley/A&T Revolt?**
  - a. The record will show that it was the refusal to seat the duly elected Student Government President at Dudley High School in the spring of 1969.*
  - b. Who made the decision not to allow him to be seated? The all white school board.*

- c. *Why did they make that decision? Because they stated that Claude Barnes was a militant aligned with the Greensboro Association of Poor People (his parent's and community's group).*
  - d. *How was the refusal to seat Claude Barnes handled? ( in many different ways, too many to be discussed here)*
  - e. *What efforts were made by black community leadership, and how was it handled. A great many efforts were made by black clergy and civic leaders, but all were rebuffed.*
- 2. What became the defining issue and why; what happened to the central initiating issue?**
- a. *How did the central initiating issue get changed to A&T students rioting?*
  - b. *What was the string of events that lead to the revolt at A&T?*
  - c. *What was the police reaction to the killing of Willie Ernest Grimes?*
  - d. *What was the role of media, Chamber of Commerce, the Human Relations Commission, etc, etc?*
  - e. *How does the "progressive mystique" way of using power look concretely in this situation?*
- 3. What might have been an alternative to the "progressive mystique" use of power? In what ways can this struggle point out the patterns of what Chafe calls "civilities" used in service of the "progressive mystique," an illusion that covers for the brutal, vicious use of power against those who dare to challenge the existing power and privilege structures?**

*Of course, all of this has to be fleshed out but the idea is to have a forum each month on different issues in our community over the last 40 years. We would need to identify the central initiating issue or struggle, what the issue became, and how it was transformed (the role of the progressive mystique), the actual use of power and what might have been an alternative to the way the issue unfolded if an approach of integrity had been used. We could put forth 12 topics or struggles on our web-site that framed the issue, set forth what it became and what might have been an alternative and invite people to comment on the web site. At the end of the month we would have a panel of people associated with the issue to host a forum to discuss the responses from the web site and explore together the same questions raised on the web site. Some of the issue might include:*

1. *The 1960 Sit-Ins at Woolworths*
2. *The 1968 response to the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*
3. *The 1969 (or was it 70 or 71) Sanitation workers struggle*

4. *The 1969 Struggle for Democracy at Dudley and the A&T/Dudley revolt*
5. *The struggle for a ward system or district system of government (from the late 1960s thorough 1982)*
6. *The 1979 Klan/Nazi killings*
7. *The 1990 purging of leaders from public bodies and the cuts in indigent health care and other services (this resulted in a march from St. James Baptist church to downtown).*
8. *The 1991 Tammy Howard Public housing struggle ( the gas leak explosion)*
9. *The 1994 Darryl Howerton Struggle*
10. *The 1996 K-mart struggle*
11. *The 1999 civilian police review board struggle*
12. *The 2002-2007 the truth and reconciliation process*

*These might or might not be the best examples to reveal the way powers works via the “progressive mystique,” but I hope it is clear enough for us to begin a discussion. I was hoping we could kick this off in April of this year, the month of King’s assassination, but Lewis told me it might be three months before we could get this properly set up and moving. I think we should do it as soon as we can but to take care to insure that it is quality work when we do.*

*This work could result in a book, a series of public television programs, as well as a powerful station on our web-site. As it is further developed, this proposal might also be a wonderful undertaking for interns, a class (or several classes) project. The challenge is to transform the culture as it relates to power, how it is understood and how it is used. This, of course, blends with democracy, as knowledge is a critical component of a democratic culture.*

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**For More Information Please Contact Us At:**

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