

“BEYOND THE RHETORIC”

Harry C. Alford

What’s with the Foolishness on the MLK Memorial Project?

Oh, I have seen it before. It “smells” like white manipulation. There was a group of white New England architects who came up with the idea of putting together a fundraiser for erecting a monument to the Tuskegee Airmen. They wanted a ridiculous sum of money which was to be used to pay them to build it. As a son-in-law of one of the four original Tuskegee Airmen I was appalled and thought about driving up to New England and whipping their butts. It was about pure greed and manipulation of the hearts and memories of devoted Black folk. Is this what we have here on the MLK Memorial Project? There are some very out of character things happening here. Why is the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity starting to look like it has lost its mind?

First of all, according to CNN News the cost of the project should run about \$18 million. Why in the world are they trying to raise \$100 million. If the land is free and the National Park Service will maintain it forever what is the excess \$82 million for? Who will get that money? This seems way out of bounds for a public fundraising effort. Public disclosure is definitely due

on this one.

Let's award the design job! They did not actively open competition for this or do a thorough search for an African American, at least an American minority. No they went straight to China. That's right. The designer will be a citizen of Communist China who will build the memorial over there and ship it across the Pacific Ocean. The granite will be from China also. Keep in mind that Georgia, the birthplace of Dr. King, is known for some of the finest granite in the world. So here we have a slap in the face to all American designers, particularly those of color, and to the fine people of Georgia. Also, and more importantly the granite mining process will probably border on an operation of slave labor. Imagine, the statue honoring the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King being made from slave labor.

After that abomination, let's award a contract to a construction firm. The job is going to be about \$15 million. There are hundreds of Black construction firms that can handle that. Let's send the two largest firms (one of whom is owned by a lifelong Alpha) to interview with the Alpha's. That was weird – the Alphas seemed preoccupied with the decision process and abruptly elected to choose Turner Construction Company. This is a huge white owned multi-national firm with German roots. So now we have two abominations, the designer and the construction company.

There is much significance and symbolism to all of this. No white power structure wants a Black designer or Black owned construction company putting on their portfolio that they have done remarkable work on a national monument placed on the Washington Mall. This would destroy a lot of myths and stereotypes. Funny, isn't that what Martin Luther King was all about; the destruction of it not the perpetuation of it.

Turner Construction has ramped up their propaganda on this. They have brought out the “Spook who sits by the door” show. They will hire two or three Blacks and claim them to be the bosses. Look deep into their resumes and backgrounds – it ain’t happening but we are supposed to believe it. Keep this in your mind – right now the MLK Memorial is going to be designed by a citizen of communist China and a lily white owned and managed construction company with a fundraising surplus of \$82 million. Go to www.turnerconstruction.com and click on “Management”. There you will find nothing but middle aged white men. Look at the picture for five straight minutes then take some medicine. It is sickening.

Who is really behind this? Probably the ones waiting to take the profits (it’s supposed to be a nonprofit fundraising project). We need to know. Surely, the Alpha’s aren’t dreaming up this scheme. Who is using them? This is a fine fraternity with a rich history and legacy of its own. Why are they putting themselves up like neophytes?

America, we are faced with a very serious problem here. The legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, who in my book is rivaled only by Jesus Christ for his importance to mankind, is about to be insulted and maligned. We, as a people who have prospered because of his sacrifice, should be outraged and take some quick action. Let’s call for total disclosure and an auditing of this process. It’s being put on given national property and, therefore, is open to public scrutiny and accounting. We need to know: Which white guys are behind it? Then, let’s straighten the whole thing out.

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