MLK Dinner: Abraham Khan

To me the real magic of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. lies in his ability to get individuals to take action. Anyone who has ever taken charge of a club or organization knows precisely how difficult it is to motivate people. Now imagine for a second how difficult it would be to get everyone you know to stop what they are doing and take to the streets in protest let alone show up to a group meeting. The motivation of my speech was to show people that being a catalyst for change doesn’t require a miracle; all it takes is a functioning moral compass and a voice.

To better understand my point it is important to recognize that humans are fantastically social creatures. We are naturally inclined to work for acceptance, look to others for social cues and be influenced by our peers. Numerous recent neuroscience studies have shown that memory can be altered, unknowingly and with ease by a little bit of social influence. Researchers have literally made subjects recall events which did not occur by putting them in a room with others who say differently. What this means for us is that when we feel something is wrong we need to do something about it. Our sense of justice is at the whim of those around us.

In my speech I talked about how I had overheard one of my friends use the word “gay” incorrectly and did nothing to express my discontent. Despite what my gut told me, I didn’t think what my friend had said was a big deal simply because no one else spoke up. By staying quite I approved of his behavior and within a couple of days, things got out of hand. I was devastated because I had an opportunity to prevent a catastrophe and failed to act. Perhaps the most painful aspect of the event for me was how easy it would have been to show my disapproval.

The idea of speaking your mind is remarkably simple. By saying something you become the influence instead of being influenced by the status quo. More importantly, when you speak about morality people who feel the same way but lack the courage to do anything will agree with you. Suddenly, the forces of culture, social influence and neuroscience will begin to help your cause. Ideas are contagious and getting them out of your head isn’t just the first step but also the most important step in creating positive change.

Speaking out is leadership in its most organic form. Dr. King dedicated his life to speaking out against what was wrong and managed to change the world in the process. Everyone has the power to speak up and with that comes the responsibility to do so.
It was a usual afternoon in Lewisburg and the atmosphere of celebration for the Spring Festival had almost disappeared on the other side of the Pacific Ocean in China. In Larison Dining Hall, however, people were busy preparing for the Chinese Lunar New Year of Dragon. It is the most important festivity in Chinese calendar, which begins on the first day of the first month in lunar calendar and ends with the Lantern Festival which is on the 15th day of the first month.

Traditionally, Chinese people wear traditional clothing like Cheong-Sam, Tang-style or Han-style clothes. Women usually wear new and brightly colored traditional Cheong-Sam while Men usually wear Tang-style or Han-style clothes with copper cash figures on them, symbolizing a wealthy and auspicious life. In Larison, guests sat around the tables to celebrate the Spring Festival Feast. Everyone was enjoying the delicious food and the Chinese traditional performances as well. The food served included fish (symbolizing surplus in the future years), pork (symbolizing a bumper harvest), chicken (symbolizing propitious), tofu and sweet delicacies.

Both members of CCA and the other Chinese people from other schools played several performances, and they had been preparing this celebration for more than two months. The show consisted of Chinese Water-Sleeve Dance Show, Xinjiang Mini Musical, Chinese Traditional Fashion Show, introduction to Animal Zodics and Chinese cities, and Chinese songs and a piano performance. Back in China, we usually have some other traditional performances such as the Dragon or Lion dances, Peking Opera, and firecrackers in the midnight of the first day of the New Year.

If you walk into the library or Dana Engineering building during those days before the festival, you would find that in the front door of each building a pair of scrolls containing a poetic couplet which is a typical Spring Festival Decoration had been put up for display. Chinese Spring Festival, a day when Chinese families gather for their annual reunion dinner, is celebrated in Bucknell as a CCA cultural event. Though we were not able to go back home and enjoy the special moment with our families, we had a special and unforgettable Spring Festival since Bucknell had already become our second home.
You may have heard some students around campus say they are Posse Scholars, or that they have to attend this Posse meeting or Posse Retreat. Ever wonder what they mean by it? The Posse Foundation is a college access and youth leadership development program that was founded in 1989. The selection process for this scholarship is very extensive and composed of several interviews. Posse selects public high school students with both academic and leadership potentials that may have possibly been overlooked by the traditional college selection processes. The selected 10 or 11 students that end up together, spend the remaining of their senior year and their summer, ‘bonding’ and learning in essence how to succeed. These scholars are very diverse in both race, socioeconomic status and sexual orientation. If you ever looked up the definition of the term Posse on Merriam-Webster Dictionary, you will see that it means, “a large group often with a common interest”. The common interest in the case of Posse scholars is the desire and determination to be successful college graduates. Posse has a nationwide graduating rate of 90 percent.

President Obama praised the founder of The Posse Foundation, One of this year’s MacArthur awardees—the “genius” named Deborah Bial. She proposed a model to identify promising students from disadvantaged urban backgrounds, using an alternative set of qualities as predictors of success in college. Candidates for this program are selected using a process based on leadership, motivation, teamwork, and ability to effectively communicate. The students that are selected form a “posse,” and are provided with extra support, and end up graduating from selective colleges with a very high success rate.”

Posse has various sites nationwide, particularly in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, Miami, New Orleans, New York and Washington, D.C. Bucknell accepts Posse Scholars from Boston, Washington, D.C. and Los Angeles and like all other Posse partner prestigious universities, provides faculty members that mentor Posse scholars for the first two years of their college career. Scholars on campus are very involved in organizations and sports; you can see scholars on the executive boards of BSG, BSU and on athletic teams such as the varsity football and track teams.

Posse has a lifetime support system for scholars but throughout their college career, there are career fairs and retreats intended to guide scholars to amazing opportunities and spark deep conversations among each other and their fellow students as well as faculty and administration. The Posse Plus Retreat is a weekend away from campus with all Posse scholars from all cities along with a guest each scholar invites from the general Bucknell community. The Posse Plus Retreat is an annual event that focus’ on widening everyone’s perspectives by discussing controversial issues in a “safe space”. Last year’s retreat focused on race, and whether racism exists. This year, the Posse Plus Retreat that took place on February 24-26 and focused on Gender & Sexuality. The weekend was filled with various activities and discussions that sparked deep thoughts and conversations and left everyone eager for next year’s retreat.
Senior Profile

Name: Simeon Smith-Wimbush

Hometown: Fort Lauderdale, Florida

Major: Music

Favorite Bucknell Experience: Getting Strawberry Slides at 7th Street Cafe!!!

Future Plans After Graduation: Going off to grad school to pursue a degree in Music Technology!

Little Piece of Wisdom: Know what you want to do, know how to do it, then do it! Remain steadfast and focused on your goals.

Name: Morgan Davis

Hometown: Upper Marlboro, MD

Major: Biology

Favorite Bucknell Experience: Enjoying the Art classes here

Future Plans After Graduation: Teaching biology in my home county (Prince George's County)

Little Piece of Wisdom: You validate who you are! A test score, your brand of clothes or your major does NOT validate who you are and is not a TRUE measure of success.

Like to travel? Love FREE international cuisines? Then join us for “A TRIP AROUND THE WORLD” and visit over 20 countries at the Terrace Room on March 28th from 5:30 to 7:30 pm.

Asian Gala: April 7th 6:00—8:00 Larison Dining Hall. Sponsored by SAAB.