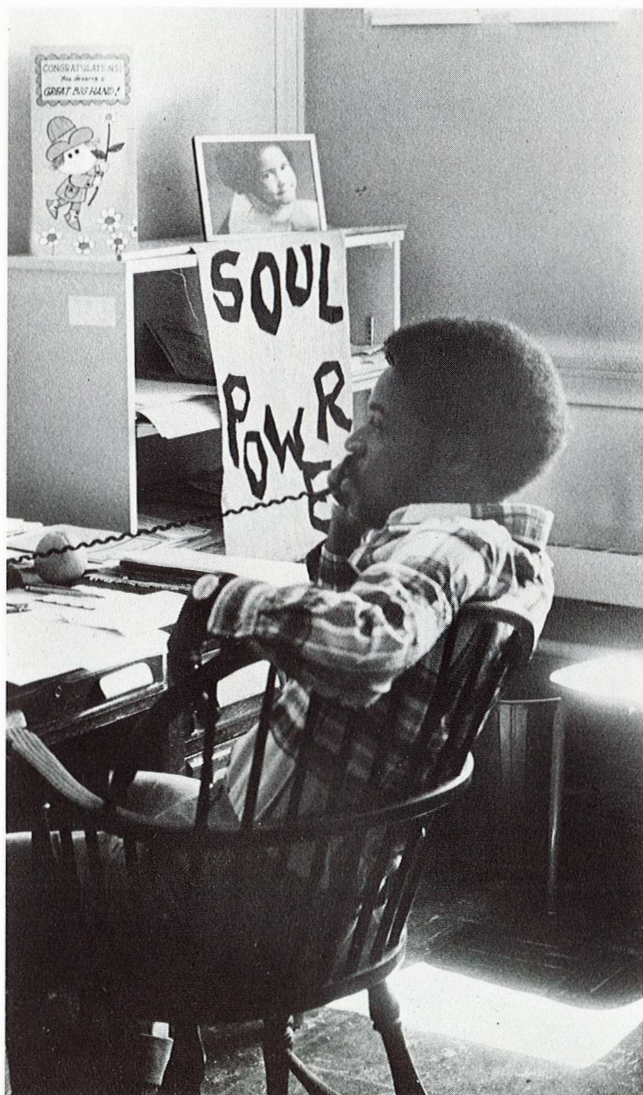


If You Are Sincere, In the End, People Will Believe You Are Genuine

by Lynne White

Reverend Calvin Morris, Adjunct Professor of History at Simmons and Executive Director of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Social Change.



Reverend Calvin S. Morris came to Simmons as Coordinator of Black Studies during a period of crisis for Black students. His reception was poor. He leaves Simmons two years later with the warmth and dedication of Black students, professors, and friends. He has been in the Civil Rights Movement since 1967 and continues his career of social obligation in Atlanta where Ms. Coretta King has appointed him Executive Director of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Social Change.

"A student came to me recently with a problem. She said, 'Reverend, I have man problems. My man is going out with another girl on this Campus whose man is going out with still another Simmons student. What can I do?' You sisters don't know what problems are. You're so hung up with trivia that you don't know what reality is. Sisters, you have to find yourselves. Know who you are and what you are about. If you haven't found yourself, how will you know how to love and be loved?" The message given on Palm Sunday of 1973 brought tears to the students' eyes as they listened with inner recognition to the "righteous Reverend."

His ability to captivate an audience with such erudite phrases of relevance transcends the halls of the Cambridge Union Baptist Church or Simmons College. His relevancy is national. He is one of the few men left with credibility and dedication to our society of all people, Black and white.

He came to Simmons during a period of struggle for the Black Student Organization in its efforts to make a positive communication with the administration. The problem of who would best qualify as Coordinator of the Black Studies program was the basis of the confusion. Several candidates had been discussed by the Black Student Organization. Each B.S.O. candidate was rejected by the administration. Dr. Holmes then appointed William S. Sutton as Vice President. The Reverend recalls his first meeting with Black students as "disastrous." "The students at Simmons didn't know me at all. I came in under the shadow of a Vice President with whom students had had problems. After that first meeting, relations seemed to go downhill for a period of time. Whenever you go to another place with, in a sense, another generation of people, you have to begin all over again."

Begin he did. Then, when he left in June, 1973, he did so with the satisfaction of having completed a most successful career at Simmons. The Black

Student Organization paid tribute to the Reverend Morris by presenting him with a gift of all the profits from the April, 1973, Cultural Weekend to be used for his venture in Atlanta.

He feels that the transcendence of students' feelings is due to his approach. "Even in the movement I have always had a rather behind-the-scenes approach. If you say something and begin to act consistent with what you say, people begin to see it. I understand out of my experience here at Simmons that it takes longer and is often a lot more painful to try to be true. If you can hold long enough onto what you believe, and if you are sincere about what you believe, in the end people will see that you are genuine."

During his two-year span at Simmons, he has successfully integrated new Black oriented courses into the curriculum. He was instrumental in bringing about the employment of additional Black faculty such as Cynthia Hamilton, an Instructor in Government. He helped to organize the very successful symposium of Black Women in the Media in November, 1972. The career program opened the door for other such events to be presented. As one Senior put it, "He treats every student as an individual. He has a sincere sense of concern on a very human level of understanding."

Calvin Morris claims he has always been in and out of causes. "While I was a student, I went to Selma, participated in the March on Washington, and was involved in various other demonstrations." It wasn't until 1967, when he went to Chicago to get his Ph.D. in history at the University of Chicago, that he started his civil rights career. He met Jesse Jackson, who was to become his best friend. Mr. Jackson asked him to take a year off to help with Operation Breadbasket. One year ran into four years. The Reverend Morris became Associate Director of the Southern Christian Leadership Council under Operation Breadbasket. His position led to involvement as Coordinator of the first "Black Expo" held in October, 1969, which was referred to as the Black Minorities Business and Cultural Exposition. He was the Director of Political Education and Voter Registration, as well as a Representative of the Coalition for United Action in Chicago.

His civic involvement led him to such honors as the Chicago Black Father of the Year; as one of Chicago's ten outstanding men, selected by the Chicago



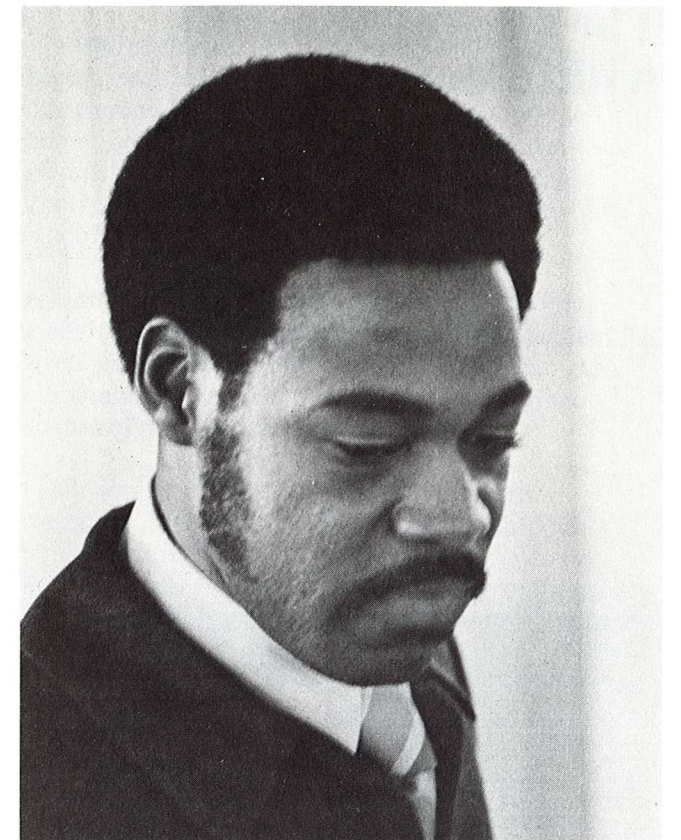
Chamber of Commerce in 1970; and the Whitney Young Fellow (in 1971) which brought him to Boston for a doctoral degree in history and a teaching term at Simmons.

Since he was educated in a predominantly white Quaker high school in Pennsylvania, he was forced to find Black self-identity through his unquenchable thirst for Black historical knowledge. "In that setting, I had to read about Fred Douglass, Mary Bethune Cook, etc. I read anything by Blacks that I could get my hands on. By the time I got to Lincoln [where he received his B.A. in history cum laude], I was racially set. In terms of being a human being, I have found myself since I was married, became the father of two daughters, and participated in the Movement. The older I get, the more I see that after we strip away everything that society says about us, essentially we are all human beings; and we are all human beings who seek to love and be loved."

He believes that the present cutback by the Nixon administration may have more meaning for Blacks than we now understand. "My grandmother had a saying, 'The devil uses for evil what the Lord uses for good.' The cutbacks may be an issue that draws Black people together. It will affect the administrators of the various organizations who never before had to deal with civil rights groups. This whole level of people, who have expertise and knowledge in government, will be forced to relate to the common man. You will have a lot of people coming together who never before related at all." He feels that there are areas of the cutbacks where Black folks are going to remain living the way they have been. "It may be hard for the people who have lost their twenty-thousand-dollars-a-year jobs to find other jobs that will enable them to keep up the life styles they are used to living; and, in that sense, the cutbacks will have a positive effect."

The Reverend Morris attributes his training and interest in history and religion to his grandmothers' Christian orientation and his mother's strong drive to make her only son successful.

Ms. Coretta King recently appointed the Reverend Morris Executive Director of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Social Change in Atlanta. He will be involved in raising ten million dollars to build the center complex within a two-and-one-half block area. He is also responsible for developing staff and programs and seeing that the center relates



to those institutions and groups that are doing positive things. He describes the center as "one of the most useful centers for aid to groups and persons for social change in the country. It will be an opportunity for us to take the experience of the Movement years of the sixties and see whether we can make and fashion some new and creative ideas for the seventies."

When the Reverend Morris took up his new duties in June, the Campus which greeted him at first with mistrust, bade him farewell with reverent feelings of respect and admiration. He has not totally cut his connections with Simmons. He continues as an Adjunct Professor of History. However, at the Center he takes on a greater social obligation for humanity. This seems to be the pattern of his life style—his genuine sense of giving to his fellow man. "When my grandmother died, she died easy; she died the death of a person who lived a full life. When she died, she had nothing materialistic; yet, in a sense, she had everything because she had friends." When the Reverend Calvin Morris dies, he, too, will die easy.