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Martin Luther King, Jr. died more than 20 years ago, but he is still present in our minds.

As part of the Civil Rights Awareness Program, "Dreams and Justice," a panel discussion about the meaning of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s ideas was held Thursday in Memorial Union's Sutton Lounge. H. Rudy Keeling, University of Maine men's basketball coach, Douglas Allen, UMaine professor of philosophy, and Greg McClaire, a first-year student, explained how they acknowledge Martin Luther King, Jr.'s ideology and work, and what they feel about its consequences today.

Coming from New York City and an all-black environment, Keeling hardly experienced the white society throughout his education.

"At this time, Martin Luther King was looked (upon) as a revolutionary, as a person who was trying to get changes," Keeling said.

"When he started to be known in the North, things were changing for the best," he said. "I really felt that the things that the black leaders, the white society, and the government were doing really had a purpose, and we were moving forward and moving toward Martin Luther King's dream."

Now, Rudy Keeling said, he is disillusioned. "In 1991, I look at things and say that we have regressed to the point of maybe like it was when I was growing up," he said. "I think we've gone full circle and we forgot the dream."

According to Gregory McClaire, the current generation has started to neglect Martin Luther King, Jr. "Celebrating Martin Luther King's day is positive, but now we use his name too much for other things," McClaire said. "Martin Luther King's name on commercials is not the best way of making him known."

McClaire said that schools are responsible of this lack of education. "There's so many things my parents told me and I'm just wondering why I didn't hear about this at school," he said. "There is a blame, but I just really don't know whether it's the school system or

whether it's at home, but a lot more should be said about Martin Luther King."

Allen agreed with McClaire's idea about the use of Martin Luther King's image today. A lot of people have "falsified his name," he said. "They turn him into a Hallmark greeting card. They're making him look like a saint."

This means that Martin Luther King's image is no longer a threat, Allen said. According to Allen, we should be more aware about the meaning of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s thoughts on integration, racism, and violence. Several comments were made by audience members about the resurgence of racism in society today.

The panel discussion was concluded with panelists and audience members alike commenting, on the role taken by UMaine to improve black education on campus.

The consensus of the discussion was that although UMaine has taken some steps to improve black awareness, it has failed in a larger sense to back up its discussions with real action.

From left to right: Doug Allen, Professor of Philosophy, Rudy Keeling, UMaine Men's Basketball Coach, and Greg McClair, member of the men's basketball team discuss Martin Luther King and racism as part of the Civil Rights Awareness Program. (Photo by Jay Picard.)