

Lt. Uhura's Mission

Star Trek was one of my all-time favorite television shows and movies. There was something fascinating about "space, the final frontier," and the five-year mission of the Starship Enterprise to "explore new worlds, to seek out new life and new civilizations, to boldly go where no man has gone before."

True Trekkies will know that Nichelle Nichols played Lt. Uhura in the original *Star Trek* television program and six *Star Trek* movies. She was one of the first black women regularly featured on a weekly TV show. As such, she had obstacles to overcome. According to Steve Jones in *USA Today*, a few studio executives were hostile toward her character, which was often diminished by script rewrites, and the studio even withheld tons of her fan mail.

After one year on the program, she was fed up. Nichols, who was also an extremely talented professional singer and dancer, told Gene Roddenberry, creator of the program, she was going to quit and pursue her performing career. Before she did, however, she went to a fundraiser for the NAACP. There she happened to meet Dr. Martin Luther King, who urged her not to leave the show. She was a role model for many.

Says Nichols, "When you have a man like Dr. Martin Luther King say you can't leave a show, it's daunting. It humbled my heart, and I couldn't leave. God had charged me with something more important than my own career."

The rest, as they say, is history. Not only did she become a fixture on *Star Trek*, she actually influenced NASA, challenging them to hire blacks and women for their astronaut corps. She led a 1977 NASA recruitment drive that saw 1,600 women and 1,000 minorities apply within four months.

By giving up her plans to sing and dance, Nichols found the defining role of her career -- Uhura -- in one of the most popular TV shows ever and influenced a nation.

Like Nichelle Nichols, as we die to ourselves and our own plans so that we can pursue something far more important -- the cause of Christ and serving others -- we find our true God-given destiny.

--Beecher Hunter