

# THE DAILY ASTORIAN

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Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., head of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, addresses marchers during his "I Have a Dream" speech at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., on Aug. 28, 1963. AP Photo/File

## Which nation do we want?

*Martin Luther King responded to injustice with optimism*

The contrast between President Obama's State of the Union and what Republican presidential candidates are saying is profound. In the simplest terms, it was about how one chooses to view America's future — optimistically or pessimistically. The president spoke encouragingly about new opportunities. Donald Trump and his competitors talk mainly about excluding whole swaths of groups that America once welcomed.

When South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley responded to President Obama's speech by encouraging legal immigration, Trump and other Republicans pounced. One GOP critic said that Trump should deport Nikki Haley. All of this prompted *The Wall Street Journal's* editorial page to say: "A party that rejects Nikki Haley as a spokesperson is one that really doesn't want to build a governing majority."

There is something about this that is relevant to today's holiday that honors Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. In response to the racial violence of the Jim Crow era, Dr. King chose to lead what might be called an optimistic resistance. King looked at segregation, intimidation of blacks at the polls and lynchings and he focused on what was possible to make America a better place.

The movement that Dr. King led caused changes that made life better for African Americans. He also liberated the South from a debilitating way of life. Though large parts of it are still less successful than the U.S. as a whole, desegregation, voting rights and other initiatives partially weaned the South of its crippling adherence to outmoded economic and social patterns.

There was a backlash to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which

King's movement inspired. Oregon State University political scientist Bill Lunch discovered it during interviews he did with a Republican right-wing splinter group in 1986. One of the group's followers' dominant motivations was repeal of the Civil Rights Act, as it pertained to the advancement of blacks as well as women.

The anti-immigrant theme of the Republican presidential primary debates is a reminder that racism is always with us. Overall, Republican hopefuls for the White House have far more in common with 1960s white southern demagogue Gov. George Wallace than with the hopeful and aspirational Dr. King. King was about lifting up, while 2016's Republican presidential field is all about putting down: Putting down one another, putting down America's success, putting down immigrants. They are a sour bunch, with messages deeply at odds with their professed patriotism.

America crossed an important line in 1964. We began rejecting the politics of racial division and set course for a future where every child can aspire to greatness.

But we're not going back to a nation where bigotry is set in statute.

**FYI:** Clippings from the press of the Pacific Northwest and the nation

## It's time for change in the rural West

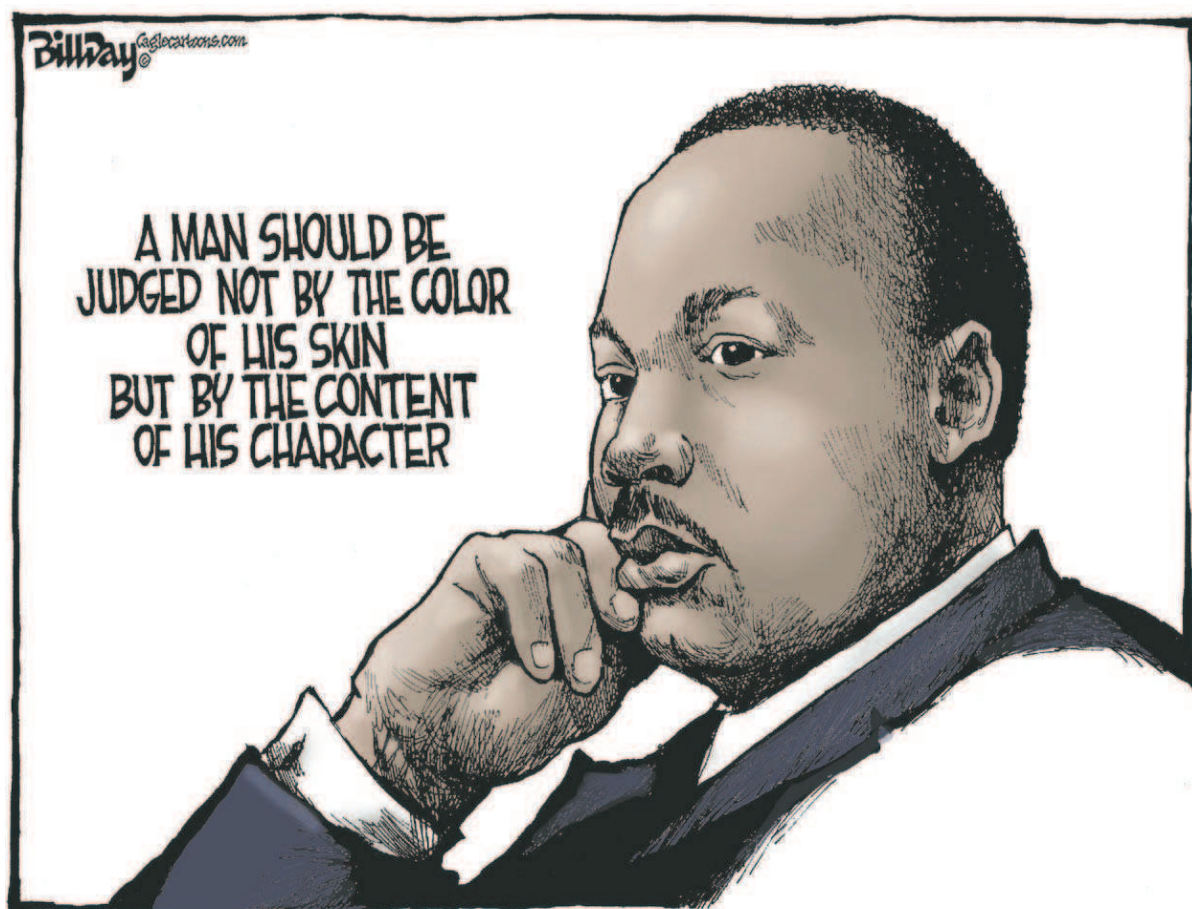
Federal agencies hold 50 percent of the land in the West. The real issue isn't that they own the land, but that they too often administer it poorly, and without regard to the local community.

Decisions take too long because the bureaucracy is paralyzed by analysis required in futile attempts to prevent environmental lawsuits. Agency leadership too often ignores the clear intent

of legislation in favor of political policy, and gives greater consideration to the opinions of distant interests than to local property owners and lease holders who depend on the best stewardship of these lands to maintain their livelihoods.

The bureaucracy has become too big, too unresponsive.

— *The Capital Press*



## 'I have a dream'

This is the conclusion of the speech delivered by the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., Aug. 28, 1963:

I say to you today, my friends, that in spite of the difficulties and frustrations of the moment I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal." I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a desert state sweltering with the heat of injustice and oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

I have a dream today. I have a dream that one day the state of Alabama, whose governor's lips are presently dripping with the words of interposition and nullifi-

cation, will be transformed into a situation where little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls and walk together as sisters and brothers.

I have a dream today.

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plains and the crooked places will be made straight and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall set it together.

This is our hope. This is the faith with which I return to the South. With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.

This will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with new meaning: My country, 'tis of thee, Sweet land of liberty, Of thee I sing: Land where my fathers died, Land of the pilgrims' pride,

From every mountain-side Let freedom ring.

And if America is to be a great nation this must become true. So let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire. Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York. Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania!

Let freedom ring from the snowcapped Rockies of Colorado! Let freedom ring from the curvaceous peaks of California!

But not only that; let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia!

Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee!

Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill of Mississippi. From every mountainside, let freedom ring.

When we let freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, "Free at last! Free at last! Thank God almighty, we are free at last!"

Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill of Mississippi. From every mountainside, let freedom ring.

When we let freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, "Free at last! Free at last! Thank God almighty, we are free at last!"

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## Is vast inequality necessary?

By PAUL KRUGMAN  
*New York Times News Service*

How rich do we need the rich to be?

That's not an idle question. It is, arguably, what U.S. politics are substantively about.

Liberals want to raise taxes on high incomes and use the proceeds to strengthen the social safety net; conservatives want to do the reverse, claiming that tax-the-rich policies hurt everyone by reducing the incentives to create wealth.

Now, recent experience has not been kind to the conservative position. President Barack Obama pushed through a substantial rise in top tax rates, and his health care reform was the biggest expansion of the welfare state since LBJ. Conservatives confidently predicted disaster, just as they did when Bill Clinton raised taxes on the top 1 percent. Instead, Obama has ended up presiding over the best job growth since the 1990s. Is there, however, a longer-term case in favor of vast inequality?

It won't surprise you to hear that many members of the economic elite believe that there is. It also won't surprise you to learn that I disagree, that I believe that the economy can flourish with much less concentration of income and wealth at the very top. But why do I believe that?

I find it helpful to think in terms of three stylized models of where extreme inequality might come from, with the real economy involving elements from all three.

First, we could have huge inequality because individuals vary hugely in their productivity: Some people are just capable of making a contribution

hundreds or thousands of times greater than average. This is the view expressed in a widely quoted recent essay by venture capitalist Paul Graham, and it's popular in Silicon Valley — that is, among people who are paid hundreds or thousands of times as much as ordinary workers.

Second, we could have huge inequality based largely on luck. In the classic old movie "The Treasure of the Sierra Madre," an old prospector explains that gold is worth so much — and those who find it become rich — thanks to the labor of all the people who went looking for gold but didn't find it. Similarly, we might have an economy in which those who hit the jackpot aren't necessarily any smarter or harder working than those who don't, but just happen to be in the right place at the right time.

Third, we could have huge inequality based on power: executives at large corporations who get to set their own compensation, financial wheeler-dealers who get rich on inside information or by collecting undeserved fees from naive investors.

As I said, the real economy contains elements of all three stories. It would be foolish to deny that some people are, in fact, a lot more productive than average. It would be equally foolish, however, to deny that great success in business (or, actually, anything else) has a strong element of luck — not just the luck of being the first to stumble on a highly profitable idea or strategy, but also the luck of being born to the right parents.

And power is surely a big factor, too. Reading someone like Graham, you might imagine that America's wealthy are mainly entrepreneurs. In



Paul Krugman

fact, the top 0.1 percent consists mainly of business executives, and while some of these executives may have made their fortunes by being associated with risky startups, most probably got where they are by climbing well-established corporate ladders. And the rise in incomes at the top largely reflects the soaring pay of top executives, not the rewards

to innovation.

But the real question, in any case, is whether we can redistribute some of the income currently going to the elite few to other purposes without crippling economic progress.

Don't say that redistribution is inherently wrong. Even if high incomes perfectly reflected productivity, market outcomes aren't the same as moral justification. And given the reality that wealth often reflects either luck or power, there's a strong case to be made for collecting some of that wealth in taxes and using it to make society as a whole stronger, as long as it doesn't destroy the incentive to keep creating more wealth.

And there's no reason to believe that it would. Historically, America achieved its most rapid growth and technological progress ever during the 1950s and 1960s, despite much higher top tax rates and much lower inequality than it has today.

In today's world, high-tax, low-inequality countries like Sweden are also both highly innovative and home to many business startups. This may in part be because a strong safety net encourages risk-taking: People may be willing to prospect for gold, even if a successful foray won't make them quite as rich as before, if they know they won't starve if they come up empty.

So coming back to my original question, no, the rich don't have to be as rich as they are. Inequality is inevitable; the vast inequality of America today isn't.

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