

Man of destiny . . .

by Dr. Matthew Prophet,
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In the course of human events from time to time, individuals rise above the crowd to shape and give direction to great social, political, cultural and economic movements.

They give voice and leadership at times when mankind stands at the crossroads. Their work articulates a time and gives character to an era.

Martin Luther King, Jr. was such a man and he lived in a time of great social change and was the catalyst for the great events of the 1960s that changed forever the way men and women think and work and live together. Whether that legacy endures and enlarges in the future will depend to a great extent on the courage, dedication and character of all of us who are the inheritors and beneficiaries of the legacy of his life. The torch was passed to us.

Whether or not the life and work of Dr. King endures and survives this time of testing will be dependent on the commitment and dedication of all of us.

Let us consider the lesson for a moment. As a young man of 26 in 1955, Dr. King reluctantly accepted the mantle of leadership for the civil rights movement in this country. Before he was felled by an assassin's bullet in Memphis, Tennessee in April 1968, his work, deeds and actions shook the conscience of the world.

His ascension to the leadership role and the political and social climate of the 1960s created a chemis-

try that exploded around the world. It was an explosion of conscience that left enduring commitments and dedication in the conscience of mankind.

We must challenge our colleagues who are indifferent, or who might have some narrow-minded perspective, and work together as an ultimate tribute to Dr. King to keep the dream alive and intact for America's children for generations to come.

This then is our challenge. It is the challenge of the '80s. It is the challenge for our community, our schools, and for our religious, political and social institutions.

Obviously, we alone cannot change the national mood. Nor can we alter the directions and policies that threaten Dr. King's legacy. But we can accept our local challenge. We can become devoted to the cause of improving ourselves, in this community, by acting in harmony with common goals and by keeping faith with the dream.

The great American 19th century philosopher, Ralph Waldo Emerson, wisely wrote:

"While I do what is fit for me, and abstain from what is unfit, my neighbor and I shall often agree in our means, and work together for a time to one end."

Today, as neighbors, as people of all races and backgrounds, who seek together a community of prosperity and goodwill toward one another, let us come together for a time to seek one end.



"History has thrust upon our generation an indescribably important destiny — to complete a process of democratization which our nation has too long developed too slowly, but which is our most powerful weapon for world respect and emulation."

—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

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