

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the Black Leadership Family Plan



Written by: Judy R. Walton

As Black Americans, we have come to realize that we are victims of many broken promises. These promises have endured postponement after postponement. We have waited for more than 340 years for our constitutional and human rights. Impatience is short-fused. Nobel Peace Prize awardee Martin Luther King, Jr. declared, "There will be neither rest nor tranquility in America until the Negro is granted her/his citizenship rights".

These 'citizenship rights' have been defined as full voting rights, equal employment opportunities, quality education, desegregated housing accommodations, and equal justice. Financial cutbacks in education, health, housing, and labor increase the possibility of re-enslavement. Reverend King believed that Blacks had to develop and demand also an economic bill of rights. The economic bill of rights would specifically address decent adequate jobs with equal pay for equal work. "They are working on full time jobs for part-time pay". Consequently, what evolved was a threefold bill of rights concept encompassing human, constitutional, and economic rights. The Black bill of rights was championed.

Over fifteen years ago, Martin Luther King, Jr. developed a four step nonviolent campaign which is the cornerstone to the Congressional Black Caucus' "Black Leadership Family Plan". Dr. King outlined his nonviolent campaign into four categories: Collection of the facts to determine whether injustices exist, Negotiation, Self-Purification, and Direct Action. It is Dr. King's campaign for Direct Action that profoundly illuminates the Black Caucus' Plan.

Examining the history of the Twentieth Century United States' civil rights relationship between black and white Americans, we are able to record and substantiate the facts that determine the legal and illegal injustices inflicted upon Black men and women. Once we gathered and documented cruel, unusual, and unrelenting racial persecutions and prosecutions, the next step was to sit down and negotiate. Black leaders spent many hours, months, and years negotiating for rights not for privileges. We negotiated nonviolently through the legislative, judicial, and executive branches of government.

Appeals to morality were expressed, to no avail. Numerous civil rights court cases regulating and enforcing equal housing, health, education and employment opportunities have been judicially and legislatively circumvented. Negotiations having failed, Black Americans found themselves in a very sensitive and soul-searching juncture in their psychological history.

Self-purification for the Black American meant the purging of self-hatred, the inferiority complex syndrome, and a "degenerating sense of 'nobodiness'". Self purification to the Black American meant shedding the skin of passive submission and growing a new skin of a more direct action with a plan.

The Congressional Black Caucus accepted the challenge of Ossie Davis... a plan of action for active involvement and participation of Black Americans' active involvement and participation. By no coincidence, Martin Luther King, Jr.'s direct action campaign and the Congressional Black Caucus' plan of action are closely interrelated. And it is the final step in Martin Luther King's four point nonviolent campaign that we find a correlation with the Congressional Black Caucus' "Operation Instructions, Action Alert Communication Network, and the Four Point Plan".

Reverend King gave an almost ominous warning when he asserted that nonviolent direct action "brings to the surface hidden tensions and hidden agendas that already exist".

As we examine the Caucus' Black Leadership Family Plan, we note that the "plan of action" for "Black unity, survival, and progress" underscores similar King concerns. Both King and the Caucus analyzed and synthesized, in depth, the status of the Black American with respect to housing, health, education, and employment. They agreed that it is necessary that the call for direct action with a plan of action "create a situation... that it will inevitably open the door to negotiation" and provide an opportunity so that "all of us can play a meaningful part".

Voter registration and voting were top priorities of Martin Luther King, Jr. They still dominate the Congressional Black Caucus' top priority list. The Congressional Black Caucus advocates organizing and supporting Black institutions by contributing funds. Establishing and maintaining Black financial institutions is an off-shoot of Martin Luther King's cry for an economic bill of rights.

Internationally, Dr. King was a most astute statesman. He saw himself as a "citizen of the world" and expressed the need for international support for human and economic rights. And, the Congressional Black Caucus agreed. They, too, espoused this necessity for international technological and financial support to our Black sisters and brothers in Africa and the Caribbean countries. The Caucus' plan of action calling for the welfare, protection, and security of the Black community is similar philosophically to Reverend King's position on civil disobedience.

The legacy Martin Luther King, Jr. has passed on to Black Americans is still very evident in our Black political structure. The Congressional Black Caucus' Black Leadership Family Plan is built on a solid King foundation in an effort to rebuild Black America's sense of "somebodiness".

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MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.'S LEGACY

MULTIPLE CHOICE

- The King legacy is a cornerstone to
 - I Have A Dream
 - Gettysburg Address
 - Black Leadership Family Plan
 - Niagara Movement
- The economic bill of rights talks about
 - Adequate employment and equal pay
 - Adequate Housing
 - Quality Education
 - Adequate Health

- Upon accepting Ossie Davis' challenge to develop a plan for Black America's active involvement, the Congressional Black Caucus developed its
 - Black Leadership Family Plan
 - Four Point Action Plan
 - Action Committee Plan
 - Desegregation Plan
- The Congressional Black Caucus' Operation Instructions, Action Alert Communication Network, and the Four Point Plan are very much like Martin Luther King's
 - Direct Action
 - From The Mountaintop
 - Action Committee
 - Civil Disobedience

COMPLETION-FILL-INS

- List the categories Martin Luther King outlined in his four step nonviolent campaign.
- Martin Luther King, Jr. proposed a bill of rights which involved three critical issues. They are _____, _____ and _____.
- Self-purification for the Black woman and man means purging oneself of _____, _____, and _____.
- When Reverend King died, he left us his _____ as a foundation for the survival of the Black family and community.

TRUE-FALSE

- The King legacy is a cornerstone to the Congressional Black Caucus' Black Leadership Family Plan.
- Martin Luther King, Jr. believed in the sisterhood and brotherhood of Black Americans.
- Voter Registration and voting were and are top priorities for both the Congressional Black Caucus and Martin Luther King, Jr.
- According to Reverend King, after negotiations have failed, a self-purification process is the next step.

The Portland Observer is proud to present its fourth annual documentary of the life of Dr. Martin Luther King.

Dr. King was a complex man who few really understood. In this publication we will explore the reasons why he lost his precious life.

A man of peace and a disciple of Gandhi, King sought to eradicate problems that remain today — problems of poverty, racism, injustice. He attempted to bring to his nonviolent movement a global perspective — attacking the problems of war and oppression.

He captured the heart and soul of the world as no other because he felt the pain and suffering of humanity.

We still need peace, love and humility in the world. Let us look to Dr. King for inspiration and attempt to make his dream a reality.

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