

The Courage Of Martin Luther King, Jr.

by Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.

"But I want you to know tonight, that, as a people we will get to the Promise Land. I'm not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord." These were some of the last public statements made by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. It was on April 3, 1968 at the Masonic Temple in Memphis, Tennessee, that Dr. King gave this famous and last speech. Dr. King affirmed that he had been to "the mountaintop" and he encouraged the huge crowd present to continue to make a stand for justice. On April 4, 1968, an assassin's bullet attempted to silence the dream and the dreamer. Dr. King's tragic murder has had a continuous impact on the civil rights movement during the last twenty years. We are still in need of the kind of leadership that Dr. King exemplified with his ministry and life.

As 1989 begins and as the nation focuses on the birthday celebrations of Dr. King, we believe that it is important to re-emphasize what we believe to be one of the essential qualities of Dr. King's leadership the courage to struggle. Dr. King's courage to wage struggle on behalf of the downtrodden was based on his faith and the God of liberation. Dr. King's religion did not prevent him from being an activist and an outspoken articulator of the interest of the oppressed. In fact, it was Dr. King's religious beliefs and faith that enabled him to take unprecedented risks in behalf of the cause of justice, freedom and peace.

Within the African-American community across the nation, as well as in other racial and ethnic communities, there is a deep void in the kind of leadership that is present. At a time when our communities are facing a multifaceted resurgence in racism, we are in need of bold and courageous leadership in the tradition of Martin Luther King, Jr.

How will a new generation of leaders emerge to take up the torch of Dr. King? This will only be possible if a serious effort is organized by the major civil rights organizations to recruit, train, network and nurture thousands of youth who are out there searching for a meaningful future. If the freedom

movement remains reluctant to put a priority on youth leadership development, then the possibilities of future victories for racial justice will be severely limited.

The courage of Dr. King to mobilize the powerless in order to effectively challenge the powerful was one of Dr. King's remarkable characteristics. Dr. King was not interested in just getting his name in the newspaper or his face on television. Dr. King used the media strategically to heighten the national consciousness not only about the extent of racial discrimination, but also about the determination of African-Americans and others to fight against racial injustice.

Unfortunately, today there are too many leaders who allow the media and the systems of oppression to use them against the interest of the poor and the downtrodden. We will not engage in name calling but suffice it to say if Dr. King were alive, he would denounce some of the cowardly, bumbling buffoons who are just pretending to be civil rights leaders loyal to Dr. King's dream.

We believe if Dr. King were alive, he would be courageously struggling to lead a national movement against the racial bigotry that has been enhanced as a result of the Reagan-Bush years. Dr. King would simply not compromise the truth about the injustice of current domestic and foreign policies. It is our prayer, in the advent and wake of the national celebrations in tribute to Dr. King's legacy, that more of us will be inspired to shoulder more of the leadership responsibilities toward an effective socio-economic transformation of this society. We all should contemplate and take up the courage of Dr. King's leadership.



Birthday presence.

What would you give Martin on his birthday?
 Can you separate the man from his ideas?
 How do you gift wrap a dream?
 Can you put Peace in a box?
 Maybe you could send him a world of people who are glad that he lived, who are trying to live the lessons of compassion of courage of a right and wrong where truth does not discriminate, but can be found in the soul.
 A world of people trying simply to do what is right.
 —Those lessons, that he left us.
 Happy Birthday, Dr. King



"We have a responsibility to help our children understand and appreciate not only the charisma, commitment and courage of Martin Luther King, Jr., but his dream as well."

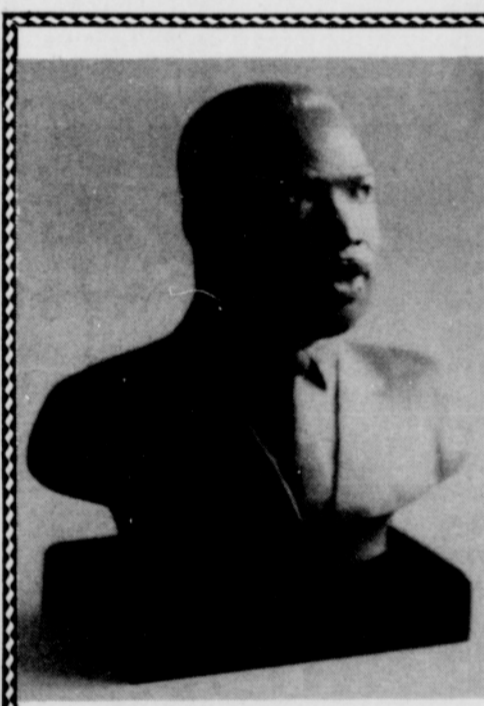


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"His Dream to Live on"

Postal Issues Honoring Martin Luther King Now Available

A special memorial collection of postage stamps is being offered by the International Stamp Collectors Society to mark the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King. The collection includes two complete uncancelled large commemorative stamps called Souvenir Sheets issued by the United Arab Emirates, plus the 15-cent United States stamp commemorating the fallen civil rights leader. Those ordering these items will also receive at no extra charge, the U.S. stamps which pay tribute to president John F. Kennedy and Robert Kennedy. Checks or money orders for \$14.95 should be sent to the International Stamp Collectors Society: P.O. Box 854, Van Nuys, California 91408. Telephone: (818) 997-6496 (24 hours).



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What begins with a great idea sometimes takes a dream to see it through. We're proud to honor the man who gave Americans, both black and white, a share of his dream.



Martin Luther King
 1929-1968

"I have a dream that one day the nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed...all men are created equal."