

Martin Luther King Jr. Embraced World Harmony

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cause and his people stood as solid as a mountain. Those who struggled along side of him were from all races creeds and colors. However, even his most devoted trustees could not equal him in strength and resolve. As the tempers of many of his followers would occasionally boil over, Dr. King would calm them with his Christian and Gandhian styles of leadership. During a particular tough time in Birmingham Ala., when dogs were sent to attack even the little children and fire hoses would injure African Americans of all ages, Martin calmly commented on the situation:

We are not going to let this conflict (in Birmingham) deteriorate into a struggle between black people and white people.

This patient preacher seemed to intrinsically know that if he focused on the "them vs. us" kind of attitude, it would have been turned into even a worse situation than it already was. He always taught his followers to hold the line without raising a hand. After hearing about a tragedy when a white youth injured a young black man in a drive-by shooting, King's words rang out with his usual unruffled tone. He spoke to an angry group of supporters who had revenge in their hearts:

I am sorry, but I will never teach any of you to hate white people.

When continually confronted by even his own people, especially after a violent hate crime, Dr. King repeated his Gandhian style message:

To develop a sense of black conscious and people hood does not require that we scorn the white race as a whole. It is not the race per se that we fight but the policies and ideology that leaders of the race have formulated to perpetuate oppression.

We must not become victimized with a philosophy of black supremacy. God is not merely interested in the freedom of black men, and brown men and yellow men; God is interested in the freedom of the whole human race.

Martin King brought forth to us many positive aspects of life that had been long staring us right in the face, such as love, peace, kindness and tolerance. During his Nobel Award acceptance address on Dec. 11, 1964 he spoke of this love:

I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word in reality.

He continued to share this philosophy through his entire short life:

I solemnly pledge to do my utmost to uphold the fair name of the Jews. Not only because we need their friendship, and surely we do, but mainly because bigotry in any form is an affront to us all.

You've got to love the white man. God knows he needs our love.

If we are going to have peace on earth, our loyalties must become ecumenical rather than sectional. Our loyalties must transcend our race, our tribe, our class, and our nation. This means we must develop world perspective.

During his trip to India, King was appalled by the poverty he saw; it was worse than anything he'd seen in the United States. His heart nearly burst when he saw

all the starving people in that country. One single comment by him spoke of his compassion for them:

How can one avoid being depressed when one sees with one's own eyes evidence of millions of people going hungry at night?

Martin never thought only of his own black race: *I am interested in rights for Negroes, but I am just as interested in Appalachian whites and Mexican-Americans and other minorities.*

The history of racism in America did not begin with the African Americans. It began with the Native Americans. Our nation was born in genocide when it embraced the doctrine that the original American, the Indian, was an inferior race.... Even before there were large numbers of Negroes on our shores, the scar of racial hatred had already disfigured colonial society.

One of the great tragedies of man's long trek along the highway of history has been the limiting of neighborly concern to tribe, race, class or nation.

When speaking out of the need for economic security, decent housing, and quality education for every American his compassion was deeply felt:

The dispossessed of this nation, the poor, both white and Negro - live in a cruelly unjust society.

Segregation in our nation's schools and public or private places deeply disturbed Martin.

Segregation scars the soul of both the segregator and the segregated.

He believed the new generation of students joining his cause gave new life and hope to it:

What is fresh, what is new in your fight is the fact that it was initiated, led and sustained by students. What is new is that American students (of all colors) have come of age. You now take your honored places in the worldwide struggle for freedom.

In his wisdom, this great leader spoke of our need to peaceable work through racism and segregation as a team:

No individual can live alone; no nation can live alone, and as long as we try, the more we are going to have war in this world.

The mere fact that we live in the United States means that we are caught in a network of inescapable mutuality. Therefore no American can afford to be apathetic about the problem of racial justice.

Negroes hold only one key to the double lock of peaceful change. The other is in the hands of the white community.

In the final analysis the white man cannot ignore the Negro's problem, because he is a part of the Negro and the Negro is a part of him. The Negro's agony diminishes the white man and the Negro's salvation enlarges the white man.

Both Negro and white workers are equally oppressed. For both, the living standards need to be raised to levels consistent with our national resources.

It would be hard to imagine how tempted this young theologian and minister was in terms of striking out in retaliation, especially after trying times such as those at Birmingham. But it just wouldn't happen. Though he had to struggle to keep his followers from joining in on the barbaric violence, his efforts would eventually bear fruit. Peaceful marches, sit-ins and speeches slowly turned the Civil Rights Movement in the right direction.

Politicians in power began to see the wisdom. Changes were slow. Many more are still needed. The equality that should have happened over a hundred years ago, post Civil War, is still not here. We still don't know if it will ever be. However, thanks to great leaders like Dr. Martin Luther King, many positive changes did take place and still do today because of his gallant efforts. He pointed us all in the right direction and led us as long as his short life allowed him to. The rest is up to us.

We have only touched a fraction of all that he held dear. Much of the information given here today (*The Wisdom of Martin Luther King Jr.*, edited by Alex Ayres, Meridian Books, 1993) is from one of hundreds of books out there on this great leader. Celebrate Dr. King this year by reading about him. Get to know him more than you already do. Celebrate his legacy and his dream. Remember his words:

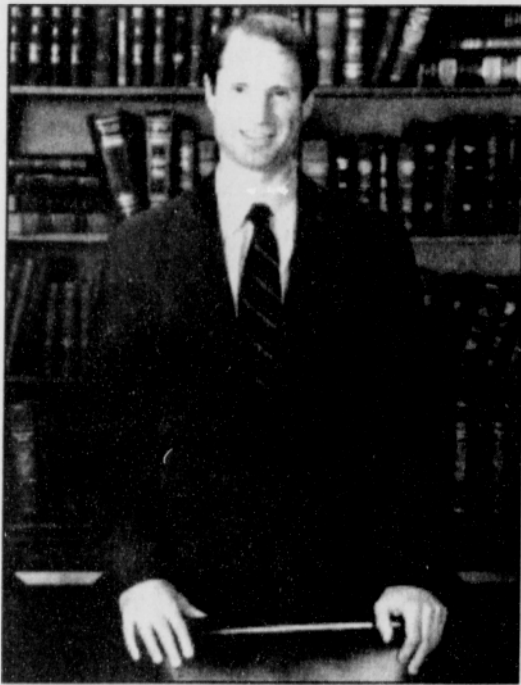
My country 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land of my father's pride, land of the pilgrim's pride. From every mountainside let freedom ring.

Free at last. Thank God almighty. Free at last.

Best Wishes from Senator Ron Wyden

"Let us rise up tonight with a greater readiness. Let us stand with a greater determination. And let us move on in these powerful days, these days of challenge, to make America better nation..."

-- Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.




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MINISTER wanted for local congregation. Must be able to preach strong sermons, teach Sunday school, lead church council, work with youth. Must be willing to work long hours. Should be willing to endure jail and remain nonviolent in the face of threats against family, stabbings and attacks by police dogs. Other duties include leading historic bus boycotts, inspiring 250,000 people to march on Washington to end legal segregation, and winning voting rights for millions. Pay low, but mastery of the above skills may lead to being honored with the Nobel Peace Prize.

Only one man could fill this job.

Let's not forget how much Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. sacrificed for all of us. On his birthday, let's recommit ourselves to living his dream of freedom, justice, and equality for all.

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