

OPINION

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Continuing Dr. King's Noble Work

A shining example to follow

BY BENJAMIN TODD JEALOUS

Dr. Martin Luther King was a moral giant and cherished hero of the world.

He was a tireless champion of the poor and oppressed against the powerful. He understood the inescapable mutability of our fates and entreated the nation to embrace peace, justice and equality. He called on us to love humanity and one another and to fight for a just society. He was a man of vision and prescience. Sadly, many of his speeches are just as relevant today as they were over 40 years ago.

Dr. King courageously raised his voice against war. He spoke of the destructive impact of the Vietnam war draining resources from the fight against poverty and exhorted people to see the war as "an enemy of the poor and to attack it as such."

He spoke on behalf of the Vietnamese people that we were fighting, "They must weep as the bulldozers roar through their areas preparing to destroy the precious

trees. They wander into the hospitals with at least twenty casualties from American firepower for one Vietcong-inflicted injury. So far we may have killed a million of them, mostly children.

Dr. King asked us all to give of our time and our voice to change the injustice around us.

They see the children selling their sisters to our soldiers, soliciting for their mothers. It is clear to them that we are on the side of the wealthy, and the secure, while we create a hell for the poor."

Today, we are at war in two nations.

Much of Dr. King's work was to end the scourge of poverty and he

began to question the essence of our prevailing economic system.

"We must ask the question why there are 40 million poor people in America; and when you begin to ask that question, you are raising questions about the economic



history.

Dr. King championed labor describing the labor movement as the "principal force that transformed misery and despair into hope and progress. When in the 30s the wave of union organization crested over our nation, it carried to secure shores not only itself but the whole society," he said.

Today, the laws on union organizing have been weakened and the percentage of unionized workers has fallen from 36 percent in 1945 to 12.4 percent of American workers, only 7.6 percent in the private sector.

And Dr. King asked us all to give of our time and our voice to change the injustice around us. "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter," he said.

Dr. King would be deeply satisfied at the progress we have made. The historic election of our nation's first African American president, the rise of many prominent Black Americans to the pinnacle of politics and business.

But Dr. King was a man of the

poor and he would remind us that the struggle is not over. The dream has not yet been achieved. That the disparities in the criminal justice system, in poverty, in health and in employment that still plague our communities means that we have a long way to go.

Dr. King won a Nobel Peace Prize, and the hearts and minds of millions of people around the world. He changed our country and our world for the better. He offered us a shining paragon that we can strive for and ideals that we should endeavor to live up to.

Today we can best honor Dr. King's life and commemorate his death by continuing his noble work for a just society with equal opportunity for all, humankind, peace, economic democracy and a political system within which the rights of all are enshrined.

"In the end", said Dr. King, "we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends....Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

Benjamin Todd Jealous is president and chief executive officer of the NAACP.

On Martin Luther King's Legacy: There is more work to do

BY SAM ADAMS

When I dream of what Portland will be in 50 years, I dream of a more equitable, more livable, more vibrant place. I dream of living in a city that not only strives to be the best it can be,

but a city where people come to feel inspired, a place where people have every opportunity to live happily, healthy and prosperous



lives. Dr. King gave us many gifts. He gave us hope. He gave us courage. He inspired countless people to make their voices heard, to be bold and to take "the first step" toward change. His legacy lives on in our community, through individuals, groups and organizations that strive to fulfill Dr. King's philosophy of being brave in the face of adversity and becoming better because of it.

Portland honors his legacy by taking bold risks and aiming to

Faith is taking the first step, even when you don't see the whole staircase.

— Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

exceed expectations. We are known for being a forward-thinking city, from leading the nation in

sustainability efforts to developing innovative education pro-

grams to ensure all our youth have the opportunities and support they need to be successful. I truly

believe that Dr. King would be proud of the progress we've made in the past 40 years. But, there is more work to do. We must continue to work to make Portland the city of our dreams.

On this day, as we honor a great man, I challenge everyone to look inside themselves. It took one man to empower and ignite hope in the hearts of thousands. We can all be that change. We can all work to make our city the city of our dreams. And I know we will.

Sam Adams is Mayor of Portland.

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news@portlandobserver.com

ads@portlandobserver.com

subscription@portlandobserver.com

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