

What Would Martin Luther King Jr. Say?

Community residents consider issues of today

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Rev. Martin Luther King had dreams of equality and civil rights for all Americans that live on and inspire generations that follow him. But what if Dr. King was alive today?

In honor of his legacy, the Portland Observer asked community residents what issue King would make his up-
permost priority if he was still with us.

Many of the people we spoke to do not believe we have progressed far enough in social justice and that King would still be speaking to those issues. Others believe he would be outspoken on the violence in America, the lack of care for our children, gentrification and a poor economy.

Portland resident Taucha Bowden, 28, said the gun-related deaths from young people would probably be one of his greatest concerns.

"He would wonder why people are going into theaters and schools with guns. He'd ask what is the problem? What is going on in people's heads? What do they need? I think he would address mental health issues and

what's going on in people's homes."



Taucha Bowden

Bowden said she believed King would help young kids have more opportunities in the community, such as after-school programs that they could look forward to.

Glenn, a 52-year-old Portland resident, also thinks King would be foremost concerned with our children who are at risk.

"His relevancy is still there, even after all these years, and I see the

need for Dr. King's approach and philosophy today," said Glenn. "Dr. King would continue to deal with the plight of the underprivileged."

An elderly northeast Portland resident echoes some of those sentiments, "I think he would address the young, black male, aged 18 to 40," she said.

Margie Burks, 78, of north Portland shared the personal experience of her son's struggles to gain housing and employment after a long period of incarceration.

"He's learned his lesson," she said.

"If I had a chance to talk to Martin Luther King, I'd ask him to fight for equal rights for our many sons and brothers. For those who have served prison time and come out and still can't get equal rights and fair housing."

A 28-year-old female of southeast Portland said gentrification or the displacement of people from their neighborhoods, would be an issue King might address.

"He fought against segregation," she said. "It's not as bad or prominent, but it still goes on today."

She added the thought that King would help the different races in the north and northeast Portland communities focus on self sufficiency.

"That way, no one can push you out the way. Because if you have the skills and the education, there's no way anyone can tell you where you



Debbie Ezumah

can reside," said the woman.

Debbie Ezumah, 27, said the late civil rights leader would probably be concerned about privacy rights, men-

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