

Honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The Transformative Legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr., in 2016

As we prepare to celebrate the 87th birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., as part the official federal holiday celebrations, I believe it is very important to focus



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on how Dr King's legacy today is still relevant and transformative for all people who cry out for freedom, justice, equality and empowerment.

Dr. King's vision went beyond changing laws and winning victories against the forces of injustice and repression. Social change for Dr. King was not an abstraction or just a dream or an unreachable goal, but it was a realistic, achievable and tangible outcome of the struggle for freedom and equality: "The Beloved Community."

In his own words, King emphasized, "The non-violent resister must often express his protest through noncooperation or boycotts, but noncooperation and boycotts are not ends themselves;

But today we must also assert in King's transformative tradition that "All Black Lives Matter!" In other words, yes we have to stand up effectively against police brutality and prosecutorial misconduct. Yes, we urgently have to reform the criminal justice system in its totality. Yet, we must also stand up effectively with our activism to stop the self-destructive violence and murders that too many of us perpetrate on each other in our own families and communities.

Reconciliation for Dr. King was not reconciling or compromising to

roots power to promote social change. We could use that kind of grassroots power today to get a massive voter turnout.

Dr. King was in complete solidarity with the poor and marginalized, but yet determined to end poverty and injustice wherever those evils were manifested.

Thus, we should also revisit Dr. King's economic justice demands. It is my opinion that if Dr. King were alive today he would be encouraging "principled youth entrepreneurial development." Participating in the U.S. economy as business owners that help to

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they are merely means to awaken a sense of moral shame in the opponent. The end is redemption and reconciliation. The aftermath of nonviolence is the creation of the beloved community, while the aftermath of violence is tragic bitterness.”

Today, in the bold tradition of Martin Luther King, Jr., we salute the Black Lives Matter movement. It is being led by young, gifted, talented and courageous activists, who are using nonviolent civil disobedience anew to challenge racial injustice and the wanton police violence and murders that have become too frequent against Black Americans and others.

leave injustice or racial bigotry in place. However reconciliation was the active and involved process that resulted in specific social transformation that inured benefits to all people. The success of the Civil Rights Movement under Dr. King's leadership not only benefited Black America, but also the success of this movement for change provided benefits to all people.

In my younger years, I personally worked with Dr. King, Golden Frinks and Milton Fitch in the North Carolina SCLC. I witnessed firsthand how Dr. King transformed and inspired the consciousness of people to believe and exert a grass-

financially sustain our communities should be a priority.

In his last public speech on April 3, 1968 on the night before his tragic assassination in Memphis, Tennessee, without fear Dr King asserted, "The nation is sick; trouble is in the land, confusion all around...But I know, somehow, that only when it is dark enough can you see the stars. And I see God working in this period of the twentieth century. Something is happening in our world. The masses of people are rising up. And wherever they are assembled today, whether they are in Johannesburg, South Africa; Nairobi, Kenya; Accra, Ghana; New York City; Atlanta, Georgia; Jackson, Mississippi; or Memphis, Tennessee, the cry is always the same: "We want to be free."

We want to be free. We want an end to racial injustice and all manifestations of inequity and inequality. But we realize from the living legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr. that we all should remain vigilant and active.

Let's keep Dr. King's transformative legacy alive and vibrant with renewed energy and support.

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