Remembering Dr. King, Tributes to Greatness

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Monday, January 15th was a federal holiday in honor of Dr. King's 95th birthday, which was observed across the nation and around the world. It is a holiday to some but a holy day to others. Let us take a moment to reflect on the life of an iconic figure in the history of this nation.

We all know that Dr. King is one of the most revered leaders of our times, inspiring millions of us. Why? Dr. King's life and legacy continue to be a timeless source of inspiration for me personally. Dr. King was a drum major for peace, justice and righteousness. He was the conscience of his generation. He was an uncompromising champion of human rights and nonviolence; like Mahatma Gandhi, he believed that nonviolence is an infinitely superior method of achieving social justice and resolving conflicts.

When Dr. King shared his dream in one of the most famous speeches in history, it also became our dream. But he was also a great man of action. He led the successful Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955 nonviolently and led the movement further resulting in the enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, to name just a few of his notable accomplishments.

His activism and nonviolent protests became a triumph of courage and love bringing down the wall of segregation and hate through the power of love and nonviolence. His words sparked a nonviolent revolution that changed the course of history in this nation. He was a nonviolent warrior.

Dr. King is not with us today, but he lives in our hearts and minds. We can still draw on his message, courage and wisdom with these words and thoughts:

His life informs us and enlightens us.
His dream sustains us and nurtures us.
His words inspire us and empower us.
His struggle energizes us and strengthens us.
His cause still endures, and his dream still lives on.

Today Dr. King would strongly condemn the violence that we witness today across the nation — the violence we see in our homes, in our communities, in our schools, as well as the violence that occurred on January 6, 2021 at the Capitol Building, a shameful act threatening our democracy.

Glad we are witnessing some reduction in gun violence in our local community. Thanks for such admirable efforts which need to be strengthened further with community support.

He would not only speak against the epidemic of Gun Violence, but he would also advocate a ban on assault weapons.

He would oppose the war and violence in Ukraine and Middle East as he opposed the war in Vietnam. He would instead strongly recommend dialogue and diplomacy. He would also reach out to moral and spiritual leaders of the world to intervene in the Ukraine-Russian and Middle East Conflicts and would himself join the group to lead.

At The Home Front:

He would want to see a new era in the political history of the nation where Republicans and Democrats would work together and find common grounds for the benefit of the entire nation on issues such as healthcare for all, homelessness, mental health, elimination of student debt, addressing the climate crisis and sound immigration policies that would pave the way for citizenship. He would condemn and protest strongly the suppression of voting rights. Voting Rights for which he fought vigorously.

I believe he would also ask all of us a very important question: "What are you doing for others?" Let us not forget that Dr. King's Birthday is also a "National Day of Service". In honor of the National Day of Service, for example, one can volunteer for programs such as Beautify Fresno and our own campus. HandsOn Central California and Jan and Bud Richter Service Center at Fresno State have a list of other opportunities for service in our community.

I think Dr. King would also say it eloquently today:

My Dear Fellow Americans,

It is a time for healing, not for hate or finger-pointing. There is no room for hate in any form or shape in this nation — no room for antisemitism, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, Islamophobia, Hindu or Sikh-phobia.

It is a time for unity, not for polarization or divisiveness.

It is a time for compassion, forgiveness and understanding, not for revenge or retribution.

It is a time for acceptance and celebration of diversity, mutual respect and civility, not for provocation or harassment or bullying.

It is a time to work for integration, not for separation or segregation.

It is a time for redemption and reconciliation, not for dehumanization or demonization.

It is a time to serve those who lack resources to meet their basic needs and are suffering because of circumstances beyond their control.

On Dr. King's Birthday, let us recommit ourselves to nonviolence and nonviolent resistance. According to Dr. King, nonviolent resistance to injustice is the most potent weapon available to oppressed and marginalized people in their struggle for freedom and human dignity. Dr. King gave us a blueprint to follow on the journey as we fight for justice, equality, and human rights for all.

In his speeches and writings, Dr. King mentioned his dream of creating a Beloved Community. He believed that a community of love, justice and solidarity would eventually be realized.

Let us be the beacon of light. Let us set aside our petty differences for the betterment of all. Let us work together to realize the dream of Dr. King in creating the Beloved Community and Symphony of Brotherhood.

He further articulated his dream in “World House” — a final chapter in his book entitled “Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community.” He wrote, “All inhabitants of the globe are now neighbors…. Together we must learn to live as brothers or together we will be forced to perish as fools.”

The major barriers in the realization of Dr. King’s dream, as mentioned in his writings and speeches are Racism, Materialism (consumerism), Militarism and Sexism.

Let us remember that we are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all of us indirectly because we are one human family and are connected. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

Let us remember the lesson that he taught us, that we will not judge people by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

Let us remember Dr. King’s belief that “Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that. Hatred cannot drive out hatred, only love can do that.” My Mantra: Fear Not, Hate Not and Hurt Not.

Dr. King’s message of love, peace, justice and brotherhood is relevant today, will remain relevant tomorrow and for generations to come.