

# What Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Means To Me

*Beaufort O. Bailey, member of the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County School Board:*

What Martin Luther King meant to me:

He meant people united to save humanity.

He meant equality for all people.

He meant better income, better jobs, and better housing.

He meant register now, vote later.

He meant preserving black institutions.

He meant black elected officials.

He meant the survival of black public school teachers.

He meant the Constitution of the United States.

He meant the Declaration of Independence.

He meant the Bill of Rights.

He meant self-pride.

He meant self-confidence.

He meant hope.

He meant dignity.

He meant do your best at whatever you attempt.

He meant "I am somebody."

He meant peace and non-violence.

He meant a lot of things to a lot of people.

*Dr. William Sheppard, chairman of the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County School Board:*

Any objective history of our era will have to feature the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. among our great leaders.

The advancement of civil rights and his effective use of moral appeals to the basic sense of fairness, which is a hallmark of the American people, are among his major contributions.

I was particularly impressed by his emphasis on non-violence in the tradition of Ghandi and Thoreau. During the decade of the 1960s, I was completing a 20-year career in the U.S. Marine Corps, and the use of strength and power were the only tactics I knew. Rev. King's career caused me to rethink my personal philosophy and the process, I believe, modified my behavior and made me a better person.

As a Caucasian historian at a predominantly black university over the past 14 years, I have had some opportunity to experience the role of a racial minority. This has led me to appreciate more fully the importance of Dr. King's goal of a society where people are judged by the "content of their character" rather than "the color of their skin." Prejudice and bigotry come in all colors. These evils are no less ugly and reprehensible when the source is non-white and I believe Rev. King opposed them regardless of their

source. As an elected official, I am sometimes stunned by the insensitivity exhibited in the operations of government. Appointments, contracting and promotions are just a few of the areas to which special attention must be devoted if true equity is to be achieved. To me, the meaning of Rev. King's career is that non-discrimination can be achieved, but only if fair-minded people of both sexes and all races want and are willing to work for it.

*Johnnie Johnson, executive director of the East Winston Restoration Association Inc.:*

Martin Luther King Jr. was the awakening force of the moral and human rights consciousness of white America. He was the catalyst, the needed ingredient that released the complacency, passivity and fear that had stifled a real drive for true emancipation by black America before his time.

King caused America to re-examine the Constitution its founding fathers had written to protect the "people" of this country from the human injustices that their forefathers had sought

to rid themselves of in their flight from England.

Martin Luther King Jr. was the embodiment of all the strength, humanitarianism and perseverance that is America.



Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

*Willie Anderson, teacher, and president of the Forsyth Association of County Teachers:*

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was a hero to me as I grew up in Charleston, S.C. He was a person who was unafraid of the people who believed that blacks were second-class citizens. And he made me believe that I could become anything I wanted to be.

As seventh-grade student, I did not understand

why it was necessary to go see a movie after it was a year old. We had one major movie house in Charleston, and I would read in the newspaper about a new western but was told that only the whites could see the new release, and that I would have to wait for a year. I could not understand.

When I was 14, I read about a man named King who was demanding changes in Alabama. I soon saw some mention of him in

the *Charleston Post* and then on the national news. Dr. King made me want to study harder in school and do something with my life aside from going to the Army. As I grew older, he grew in national prominence. I wanted to be a part of what he was doing.

He convinced me that one person could make a difference if that one person were willing to work hard and stick to a given task. And I owe my concern about teachers and students to Dr. King.

I am certain that I would not be as involved in my present cause had Martin Luther King Jr. never lived.

*Mary K. McCurry, retired teacher and storyteller:*

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. went straight to the mark, which was the human heart. What he could not break he bent.

He worked unceasingly and was direct in speech. He fought previously-unfought battles and was a master of human destinies.

His climbed, though the rocks were rugged. He will forever live.

*Thomas J. Elijah Jr., president of the Winston-Salem Urban League:*

Martin Luther King Jr. was undisputedly one of the world's greatest inspirational leaders.

As I reminisce, I can immediately recall his visits to

New York during the 60s, giving speeches and raising funds to promote civil rights. At that time, I was chairman of the Metropolitan Council for Fair Housing. We always looked forward to his coming to town.

After briefing him on the local scene, we would set up an entourage, which amazingly grew as we paraded throughout Long Island.

The crowds were tremendous. Adults and kids lined up for miles along the streets to catch a glimpse of this great man and shake his hand if they could.

Although I initially became involved in the movement for personal reasons, I sincerely believe that Dr. King's tireless dedication to the betterment of humanity inspired me to become more involved -- more committed to the "cause."

Martin believed in the "American Dream" for everyone. He was not merely a black leader but a brilliant symbol of peace, hope and love that cemented all races together.

The successful battle he waged for equal opportunity made history around the world. Yet, the passing of crucial civil rights legislation ironically revealed further inequities in our American system. Blacks were now "getting into places" but still lacked the economic power to prosper.

This is where the Urban League comes in. Our purpose is to provide the means

by which the socially and economically disadvantaged can develop their full human potential because we believe that everybody deserves a chance to make it on their own -- everybody.

*Eurline Parmon, chairman of the Forsyth County Democratic Executive Committee:*

Dr. Martin Luther King's courageous stand for justice and equality has been one of the influencing factors that has made dreams realities for me as well as for many other blacks.

The doors that were opened by Dr. King have allowed many of us to become active, first-class participants in a society that once held all blacks as being inferior and ignorant.

Dr. King very much influenced me as a black woman. His philosophy broadened my perspective on life as a minority. His actions made me realize that nothing happens unless you make it happen.

*The Rev. Carlton A. G. Eversley, interim pastoral assistant, First Baptist Church:*

I believe the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was God's prophet in America in the second half of the 20th century. The proper way to honor him is not to freeze him as a pleasant

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## I HAVE A DREAM

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING

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