

A Call to Realize Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s Dream

I sometimes refer to myself as Brown vs. Board of Education baby to remind myself of the changes I have seen in my lifetime.

Growing up in the nation's Capitol, I was scheduled to attend one of the segregated kindergartens of that city. But during the summer before school began, the Brown decision changed all of that.

Those of use over the age of 30 are intensely aware of the changes we have seen in our lifetime. We know, first-hand, what the segregated world was like. We remember what it felt like not to be able to stop at a restaurant or a rest room on a long automobile trip. We know what it meant not to be able to get any job we wanted, despite our education or background. We remember when there was no Congressional Black Caucus, when no major cities had African-American mayors, indeed when many African Americans were denied the right even to vote.

But for young people that world is history. It is difficult for many of them to understand the emotional and physical toll that living in that world took on African Americans. It is hard for them to imagine what it felt like not to be hired for a job or to be paid at a lower wage. They cannot understand easily the significance of the historically black colleges which were the only higher education option for most. They cannot imagine what it was like not being able to try on clothes you wanted to purchase or not being able

to get a cool drink of water on a hot day.

That is the real significance of the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. holiday. It is a time for remembering and for sharing that memory with our young people and our children. In order for them not to take for granted living wherever they want, attending whatever school they have the ability and funds to attend or working at whatever job they are qualified for, they must understand their not-so-distant history. If they are to understand the importance of voting, they must understand what it was like when we couldn't.

But the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday must be more than memories. It must become a time of re-dedication and revisioning, because the times we are living in are more dangerous to our survival than any time since we arrived unwillingly on these shores. Our children are killing each other. Our men and women, our babies are dying of AIDS. Children 10 and 11 years old are planning their funerals. Children are having children. Mothers, hooked on crack, are abandoning their babies. Fathers have given up any hope of jobs in their lifetime. Our ancestors, who survived the Middle Passage, who survived the horrors of slavery, who survived lynchings and Jim Crow laws, cry out to us. Martin Luther King Jr., the champion of peace, cries out to us.

We in the Commission for

Racial Justice use this occasion, after more than a quarter-century of work, to rededicated ourselves to

We rededicate ourselves to work tirelessly around upbuilding the health and wellness of our com-

on health an wellness issues.

As we celebrate the life of Martin Luther King Jr., we in the Commission for Racial Justice rededicate ourselves. And we ask

you to join with us in the struggle. Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks would demand no less.

CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL

By BERNICE POWELL JACKSON

continuing the struggle for racial justice in this country and the world. My predecessors, Dr. Charles E. Cobb Sr. and Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis Jr., have left a rich legacy for me, as I take over the helm of the Commission and for our staff as we begin our new journey together. We thank them for that.

We rededicate ourselves to work tirelessly to help end the violence which is destroying our communities. We say enough. We say enough of the violence which is killing innocent children, which is destroying a generation of our young men. We want to find ways to enable churches and community organizations to take back our children, to steal them from death's grasp and to give them life and hope — hope for a future which includes them, hope for the world which Martin Luther King Jr. dared to dream.

Our health care needs parallel those of undeveloped countries. If our young men survive the violence, they face higher mortality rates in adulthood. We face higher incidences of cancer, heart disease, hypertension, alcoholism and drug addiction. Our babies are more likely to die. AIDS is rampant through our communities. Toxic wastes continue to be dumped on our communities, and we are unhealthy from living next to these deadly chemicals. The Commission for Racial Justice will work harder than ever



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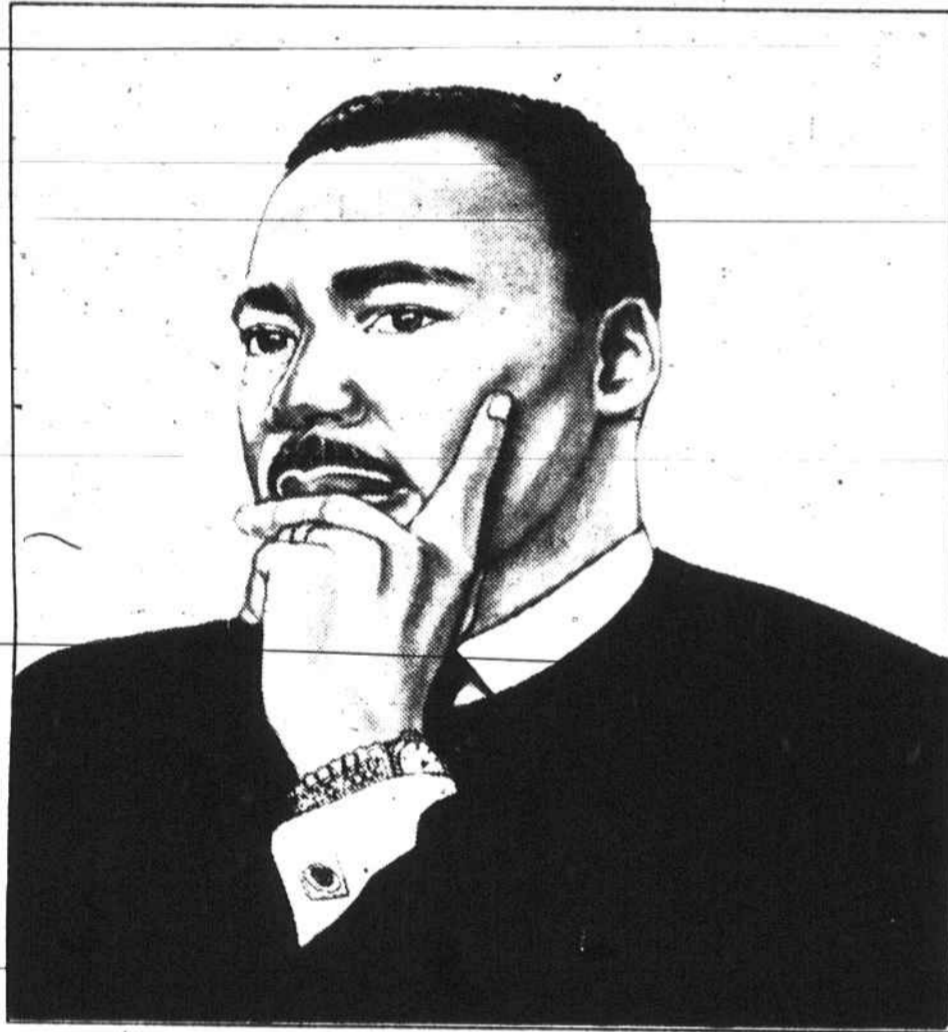
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Martin Luther King Jr.
Jan. 15, 1929 - April 4, 1968

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Living The Dream Pledge

In honor of Martin Luther King Jr.'s life and work, I pledge to do everything that I can to make America and the world a place where equality and justice, freedom and peace will grow and flourish. On Jan. 15, 1990, I commit myself to living the dream by: Loving, not hating; Showing understanding, not anger; Making peace, not war.

Me and the Preacher from Georgia

As recall, it was a rather cool spring evening. But the standing-room-only crowd that packed Goler Metropolitan A.M.E. Church made it seem like July inside.

My father — in his attempt to expose me to as many varied experiences as possible — had insisted that I tag along with him. Personally, being only a young boy of 9, I would much rather have been home playing with my train set. However, as the evening wore on, I could sense something special was about to happen.

The audience was predominantly African-American, though it seems there was a sprinkling of Caucasians present. Uniformed and (what I now realize were) plain-clothes policemen were scattered everywhere. After the customary selections from the choir, the audience began to stir with excited anticipation. And though I had perhaps the best seat in the house — the piano stool near the pulpit — I was still quite oblivious to what was happening.

The crowd arose as the master of ceremonies introduced the speaker of the evening. The short, well-dressed preacher from Georgia began his speech very deliberately but before long had worked himself into a crescendo that shook not only the walls of "Old Goler," but nearly me as well off that piano stool!

The preacher from Georgia rapped for a long time that evening, but he was by no means boring. From what I can recollect, he spoke of "making the best out of whatever situation you find yourself." He stressed that "it matters not whether

you are a sanitation worker or a doctor, just strive to be the best at your chosen profession or job. ... Each of us has a responsibility to our communities and ourselves to make a contribution and to continue the fight for justice and equality for

ished opportunity to see, hear and touch that courageous preacher from Georgia.

Thus, as we commemorate what would have been the 64th birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and join the millions of African



GUEST COLUMNIST

By CLIFTON E. GRAVES JR.

all ... The preacher received a well-deserved standing ovation that evening. And when it was over, my father, in his wisdom, perhaps sensing the historic significance of the moment, led me to the pulpit to shake the hand of this great preacher from Georgia.

Several years passed before the impact of that spring evening hit me. For it was not until after the marches on Washington and Selma, the passage of the Civil Rights Bill, a Nobel Peace Prize, the desired coalition with Malcolm X, the intense struggle in Chicago, the courageous stand against the Vietnam War, numerous arrests, several books, memorable quotes, malicious smear campaigns, and yes, that fateful April day in Memphis, that I could fully appreciate what transpired that spring evening at "Old Goler."

I will forever be indebted to my father for his concern and foresight which gave me the now-cher-

Americans and people of conscience the world over celebrating his life and legacy, let us recommit ourselves to the tremendous work left unfinished. Let us be inspired and motivated by the fact that Dr. King was not a "dreamer" but a proactive visionary, who believed as did Frederick Douglass that "Power concedes nothing without a demand. ... If there is no struggle, there can be no progress. ..."

Yes, a proactive visionary who challenged us to combat injustice where it reared its ugly head, for "injustice anywhere threatens justice everywhere."

Yes, a proactive visionary who admonished each of us that the "surest way for evil to triumph is for good folk to do nothing."

Thus, in the name of Martin Luther King Jr. and all those who preceded him, let us dare to challenge, dare to struggle, dare to be visionaries.

Happy Birthday, Dr. King!

BE KING FOR A DAY.

January 17 marks the observance of the national holiday honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. What better way to celebrate his birthday than by living his dream?

From sunup to sundown, let's all try to see each person as a brother or sister. Look for the ways in which we are similar, not different. Learn something new about a different culture. Commit ourselves to world peace.

As a company dedicated to bringing the world closer together, AT&T supports the ideals of Martin Luther King, Jr. On January 17, let's all try living them. Chances are, it's the only present Dr. King would have wanted.

