

KING/HOLIDAY

"I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the truth of the meaning of its creed: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.'"

—Martin Luther King Jr., 1963

"The dream that my father spoke of has become a reality to some degree. However, there is still a real prejudice in our society. I don't know if there will ever be a time when color is unimportant."

—Martin Luther King III, 1985

From the voting booth to the class room, black Americans are better off today than they were more than two decades ago when Martin Luther King Jr. rallied the civil rights movement from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial with his "I Have a Dream" speech.

Still, as the first national holiday honoring the slain

civil rights leader approaches on Jan. 20, blacks remain several paces behind whites on nearly all fronts -- political might, education, health and income.

The unemployment rate for blacks is about double that of whites -- just as it was on Aug. 28, 1963, when King stood at the shrine to Lincoln and told 250,000 marchers his "dream" of racial equality and social justice.

Since then, the number of black elected officials has soared from less than 500 to

more than 6,000, most in local municipal offices. The percentage of blacks, ages 20 to 24, who are high school graduates, has also climbed from 50.7 to 79.6, and the percentage of blacks, ages 25 to 29, who are college graduates has doubled to 11.5.

While the figures on blacks may show progress, they are still behind those for whites, who have a high school graduation rate of 84.3 percent and a college graduation rate of 23

percent. Although blacks make up about 12 percent of the population, they hold less than 2 percent of elective offices.

Since King and others marched in the streets and sat-in at "whites only" restaurants, the percentage of minorities living in poverty fell from 51 to 30. But that is still nearly triple the rate for whites, 11.4 percent.

The figures are part of King's legacy, which is eloquently reflected in his speech to the 1963 rally

"I HAVE A DREAM"

Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand, signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of captivity.

But one hundred years later, we must face the tragic fact that the Negro is still not free. One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination. One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. One hundred years later, the Negro is still languished in the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land. So we have come here today to dramatize an appalling condition.

In a sense we have come to our nation's Capital to cash a check, when the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check; a check which has come back marked "insufficient funds." But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. So we have come to cash this check -- a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice. We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism. Now is the time to make real the promises of Democracy. Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to open the doors of opportunity to all God's children. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood.

It would be fatal for the nation to overlook the urgency of the moment and to underestimate the determination of the Negro. This sweltering summer of the Negro's legitimate discontent will not pass until there is an invigorating autumn of freedom and equality. Those who hope that the Negro needed to blow off steam and will now be content will have a rude awakening if the nation returns to business as usual. There will be neither rest nor tranquility in America until the Negro is granted his citizenship rights. The whirlwinds of revolt will continue to shake the foundations of our nation until the bright day of justice emerges.

But there is something that I must say to my people who stand on the warm threshold which leads into the palace of justice. In the process of gaining our rightful place we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds. Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred. We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force. The marvelous new militancy which has engulfed the Negro community must not lead us to a distrust of all white people, for many of our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence here today, have come to realize that their destiny is tied with our destiny and their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom. We cannot walk alone.

And as we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall march ahead. We cannot turn back. There are those who are asking the devotees of civil rights, "When will you be satisfied?" We can never be satisfied as long as the Negro is the victim of the unspeakable horrors of police brutality. We can never be satisfied as long as our bodies, heavy with the fatigue of travel, cannot gain lodging in the motels of the highways and the hotels of the cities. We cannot be satisfied as long as the Negro's basic mobility is from a smaller ghetto to a larger one. We can never be satisfied as long as a Negro in Mississippi cannot vote and a Negro in New York believes he has nothing for which to vote. No, no, we are not satisfied, and we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.

I am not unmindful that some of you have come here out of great trials and tribulations. Some of you have come fresh from narrow jail cells. Some of you have come from areas where your quest for freedom left you battered by the storms of persecution and staggered by the winds of police brutality. You have been the victims of creative suffering. Continue to work with the faith that unearned suffering is redemptive. Go back to Mississippi, go back to Alabama, go back to South Carolina, go back to Georgia, go back to Louisiana, go back to the slums and ghettos of our northern cities knowing that somehow this situation can and will be changed. Let us not wallow in the valley of despair.

I say to you today, my friends, that in spite of the difficulties and frustrations of the moment I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal."

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slaveowners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a desert state sweltering with the heat of injustice and oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

I have a dream today. I have a dream that one day the state of Alabama, whose governors' lips are presently dripping with the words of interposition and nullification, will be transformed into a situation where little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls and walk together as sisters and brothers.

I have a dream today. I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.

This is our hope. This is the faith with which I return to the South. With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discord of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.

This will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with new meaning:

My country, 'tis of thee,
Sweet land of liberty,
Of thee I sing,
Land where my fathers died,
Land of the pilgrim's pride,
From every mountain-side
Let freedom ring.

And if America is to be a great nation this must become true. So let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire. Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York. Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania!

Let freedom ring from the snowcapped Rockies of Colorado! Let freedom ring from the curvaceous peaks of California! But not only that, let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia! Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee! Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill of Mississippi. From every mountain-side, let freedom ring.

When we let freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, "Free at last! Free at last! Thank God almighty, we are free at last!"

Reprint from DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.'s SPEECH — "MARCH ON WASHINGTON, AUGUST 1963"



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CONTACT: Steve Hand

BROOKE REINTRODUCES "MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY" RESOLUTION

Senator Edward W. Brooke, Tuesday, reintroduced legislation to make January 15, the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. a national day of commemoration.

Twenty-four Senators joined Brooke as co-sponsors of the legislation, which is identical to resolutions previously introduced by Brooke in the 90th, 91st and 92nd Congress.

The Crusade For A King Holiday

For nearly 15 years, supporters of a national holiday commemorating the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. fought a long, hard battle to make their dream come true. It finally became a reality on Nov. 2 1983, when the bill was signed establishing the third Monday in January as the King holiday, beginning in 1986.

The national crusade to pay homage to Dr. King with a holiday began shortly after his death, and its leaders included his widow, Coretta Scott King; Black legislators, and entertainers such as Stevie Wonder. In every session of Congress following Dr. King's assassination, members introduced legislation calling for the holiday, while other legislators fought for observance on the state and local level (in 1973, Illinois became the first state to establish a legal King holiday). On the grass-roots level, countless Black Americans took it upon themselves to stay home from school and work on Jan. 15, and thousands wrote letters and signed petitions voicing support for the observance. On Jan. 15, 1981, 100,000 marchers converged on Washington, D.C., to rally for the holiday.

Proponents got their wish when, following passage by the House and the Senate, the bill was signed into law by President Reagan and Dr. King became only the second American (the first was George Washington) to be honored with a national legal holiday.

Nevada Black Chamber of Commerce

says....

TAKE PRIDE!

Let's Celebrate...



Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

**MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.
NATIONAL HOLIDAY**

Gwyn Brown-Coleman - Executive Director
Lee Walker - Business/OJT Specialist
Glynda White - Economic Development Specialist
Julie Harris - Secretary