

2019

King and I:

New Jerseyans Reflect on the Life and Legacy
of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in commemoration
of his 90th Birthday

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

1.15.29 – 4.4.68

...GOD'S CHILDREN, WHO HAD BEEN
...GO DOWN IN HISTORY AS THE
...S OF NEGRO SLAVES WHO HAD BEEN
...ACTS OF SEGREGATION AND THE CHAINS
...OF EXILE IN HIS OWN LAND, SO WE'VE COME
...GIVING A PROMISSORY NOTE TO WHICH EVERY
...HIS PROMISSORY NOTE IN SO FAR AS HER COUNTRY
...REFUSE TO BELIEVE THAT THERE ARE INSUFFICIENT
...OF THE FERCE URGENCY OF NOW, THIS IS THE
...R OF RACIAL JUSTICE; NOW IS THE TIME TO LIVE
...THE SWEETEST SUMMER OF THE NEGRO'S LEGITIMATE DISCONTENT
...THE NATION RETURNS TO BUSINESS AS USUAL
...I MUST SAY TO MY PEOPLE, WHO STAND ON THE
...ATRED, WE MUST FOREVER CONDUCT OUR STRUGGLE
...CY, WHICH HAS ENGULFED THE NEGRO COMMUNITY, MUST
...IS INEXORICABLY BOUND TO OUR FREEDOM, WE CANNOT
...OF NEGRO IS THE VICTIM OF THE UNSPEAKABLE HORROR OF
...TY IS FROM A SMALLER GHETTO TO A LARGER
...RK BELIEVES HE HAS NOTHING FOR WHICH
...SOME OF YOU HAVE
...FROM NARROW JAIL CELLS, NONE OF YOU HAVE
...S REDEMPTIVE, GO BACK TO MISSISSIPPI,
...I SAY TO YOU NOW, MY
...I WOULD THESE TRUTHS TO BE SELF
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...THEIR CHARACTER
...AND BLACK GIRLS WILL BE ABLE TO JOIN HANDS WITH
...AND THE GLORY OF THE LONG
...ABLE TO TRANSFORM THE JANGLING SCORDS OF OUR NATION INTO
...AND THIS WILL BE THE DAY, THE DAY WHEN ALL OF GOD
...TO BE A GREAT NATION, THIS MUST BE TRUE, SO LET FREEDOM
...THE CURVACEOUS SLOPE
...S, AND WHEN HIS HANDS, AND WHEN WE ALL
...AND SING IN THE VOICES
...A GREAT NATION, IN WHOSE
...THEIR CAPTIVITY
...OF A VAST OPEN
...CHECK, WHEN
...WOULD BE CHANG
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...GOD'S CHILDREN
...WHOSE WHO HOPE THA
...WILL CONTINUE TO SHAKE T
...OF WRONGFUL DEEDS. LET US
...TOLERANCE. AGAIN AND AGAIN WE MUST RISE
...HENCE HERE TODAY, HAVE COME TO REALIZE TH
...THERE ARE THOSE WHO ARE ASKING THE DEV
...CANNOT GAIN LODGING IN THE MOTELS OF THE HIG
...I AM NOT UNMINDFUL
...FOR WHITES ONLY." I AM NOT UNMINDFUL
...AND STAGGERED BY THE WINDS OF POLICE BRUTALITY, YO
...OF OUR NORTHERN CITIES,
...I HAVE A DREAM, I HAVE A DREAM, I HAVE A DREAM, I HAVE A DREAM THAT
...GEOORGIA, SONS OF FORMER SLAVES AND THE SONS OF FORMER SLAVEOWNERS WILL BE ABLE TO SIT DO
...WILL BE TRANSFORMED INTO AN OASIS OF FREEDOM AND JUSTICE. I HAVE A DREAM THAT MY FOUR LITTLE CHILDREN W
...THE WORDS OF INTERPOSITION
...VERY HILL AND MOUNTAIN SHALL
...TO HEW OUT OF THE
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...THE PILGRIM'S PRIDE, FR
...THE HILLS OF NEW HAMPSHIRE; LET FREEDOM RING FROM THE MIGHTY MOUNTAINS OF NEW YORK; LET FREEDOM RING FROM THE
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Dr. King's actions, words, and unwavering commitment to justice put into stark relief the example of a life that all Americans should emulate. The profound legacy of Dr. King's life and accomplishments should be cherished, here in New Jersey and around the globe.

— Philip D. Murphy, Governor
State of New Jersey

This month we celebrate the legacy of Dr. King's leadership that helped steer the course for a more just and equal society. Dr. King set his sights on the issues that are a result of systemic racism — poverty, a lack of affordable housing, homelessness, and wage inequality — because he knew systemic change was the only way to incite social change. I hope to build upon his legacy as Lieutenant Governor by influencing and implementing policies and programs that will create a more just and equal New Jersey.

— Sheila Oliver, Lieutenant Governor
State of New Jersey

Dr. King was the quintessential luminary for justice whose wisdom and moral courage inspired me to serve my community. His leadership made it possible for a generation to create change, and for the generations thereafter to continue on that path. Many times he was asked how long it would take to achieve social justice and Dr. King's response resonates with me still. "How long? Not long . . . because the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice."

— Tahesha Way, Esq., Secretary of State
New Jersey Department of State

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. often spoke about power and justice, such as when he said: "Power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love." That is the message I wish to amplify; just as Dr. King loved America and had a deep, abiding, unbreakable love for humanity, we too must demonstrate this same love in these difficult times. For those of us in positions of authority, we should strive to use our power to eliminate any obstacles that stand in the way of love as Dr. King wanted us to do. This is how we can best honor him as we celebrate his life and legacy today.

— Gurbir S. Grewal, Attorney General
New Jersey Department of Law & Public Safety

As we celebrate his 90th birthday, the results of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s tireless work ensuring equality for all continues to have a resounding impact on the State of New Jersey. In making certain that there is no place for hate, we at NJOHSP are building on the foundation set by Dr. King to value the rich diversity in faith and culture that makes New Jersey and the United States so special and unique.

— Jared M. Maples, Director
New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness

Dr. King's legacy is a constant reminder of the power of the collective and the individual effort in securing justice. The cost of justice is not cheap and he reminds us to valiantly pay the price any time we see a threat to its proliferation. Through his legacy of leadership, Dr. King inspires us to be better, do better and love better.

— Tiffany M. Williams, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State
New Jersey Department of State

“Shallow understanding from people of goodwill is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection.” This quote is a call to action, rooted in deep self-reflection. I am reminded of my own “shallow understanding” of diverse social justice topics. Even though I may be a purveyor of “good will” that good will can be overtly and inadvertently used to thwart the very people I have sworn to support.

— George Guy, Jr., Chair
NJ Martin Luther King Jr. Commemorative Commission

Dr. King was a fearless advocate for equal rights and justice, as all public servants should be. In his short 39 years, he built a legacy that we still honor today — because the values and the dreams he fought for, and the words he valiantly spoke on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. It's why we gather, regardless of creed or color or party, to honor his memory with a day of service. As long as people are living in poverty, as long as our neighbors are struggling with racism and inequality, we must continue to fight to make Dr. King's dream reality.

— Kristin Corrado, Senator
NJ Senate, 40th Legislative District
NJ Martin Luther King Jr. Commemorative Commission

Growing up in Camden, NJ in the 1960s and 1970s, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. inspired me to dream beyond my neighborhood. To have aspirations of greatness and to have a positive impact on systems, youth, families and communities. Yes, and to Still Have A Dream.

— Kevin M. Brown, Executive Director
NJ Juvenile Justice Commission

“Life’s most persistent and urgent question is, ‘What are you doing for others?’” We honor and thank Dr. King for providing the inspiration for all citizens, no matter their background, to focus their lives on selflessly helping those in need.

— NJM Insurance Group
NJ Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemorative **CORPORATE SPONSOR**

One cannot learn about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. without recognizing his passionate idealism and vision for unity among all people, regardless of their race, gender or economic status. While he wrote and spoke in a manner that inspired millions, he just as importantly acted on his convictions. He inspired us to not just speak, but to embody his legacy of unity and love for one another in our deeds.

— Troy Singleton, Senator
New Jersey Senate, 7th Legislative District

Let Freedom Ring! The “I Have a Dream” speech contains Dr. King’s great geography lesson. “So let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire. . . from the snowcapped Rockies of Colorado. . . Let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia. . . from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee. . . from every hill and molehill of Mississippi. . . from every mountainside, let freedom ring.” These soaring words, which I heard at the March on Washington at age 20, still inspire me. And today, let freedom ring in every town, in every state, at every ballot box. Dr. King’s message means as much today as when we gathered at the Lincoln Memorial so many years ago.

— Rowena Madden, Executive Director
Governor’s Office of Volunteerism/NJ Martin Luther King Jr. Commemorative Commission,
NJ Department of State

It was Dr. King’s words that inspired me to see my work in this world as my service to this world. Dr. King’s assertion that “Everybody can be great. . . because anybody can serve,” helped me understand that there is no greater work than service to others.

— Hugh Bailey, Assistant Commissioner
NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development

Through his powerful words, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. inspired change, and through his example, he showed us that anything is possible. Today and every day, let us remember Dr. King not just in our thoughts, but in our actions, and celebrate his life by making a difference where we can, when we can and for those who need it most. That is the power and the promise of his legacy.

— Steve Westhoven, President and COO
New Jersey Resources
NJ Martin Luther King Jr. Commemorative **CORPORATE SPONSOR**

“Let no man pull you so low that you hate him. Always avoid violence. If you sow the seeds of violence in your struggle, unborn generations will reap the whirlwind of social disintegration.”

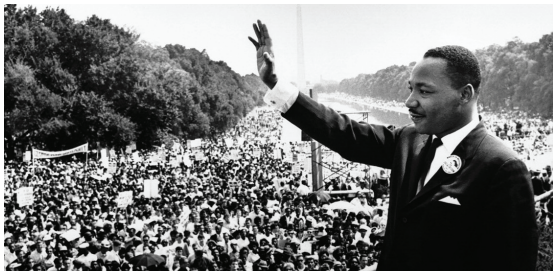
— W. Reed Gusciora, Esq., Mayor
City of Trenton, New Jersey

Martin Luther King, Jr. was a beacon of hope during an unprecedented time in our nation’s history. He was a leader who painted a picture of the way things could be, with peace and equality for us all.

— Linda Bowden, New Jersey Regional President
PNC Bank

Dr. King was an extraordinary moral force whose leadership spoke to the soul of this nation. Because of his convictions, we hold firm the American Dream, deeply rooted in our constitutional foundations — “That all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” I thank Dr. King for his love and personal sacrifice, which has paved the way for my generation and future generations.

— Elizabeth Parchment, Deputy Director
Governor’s Office of Volunteerism



My father, Rabbi Joachim Prinz, was shocked to encounter racism against African Americans, when he arrived in the United States as a refugee from the Nazi regime in Europe. Soon he joined Dr. King in the Civil Rights struggle as a prominent leader of the American Jewish community. In the speech that he gave at the March on Washington, immediately before Dr. King's address, my father said, "Neighbor is not a geographic term. It is a moral concept.....of our collective responsibility for the preservation of man's dignity and integrity." His words ring true in our times and all times and places.

— Deborah Prinz, Commissioner
NJ Martin Luther King Jr. Commemorative Commission

Attainment of college degrees by historically underserved populations will fulfill many facets of Dr. King's legacy by directing a kaleidoscope of hope, faith, talent and skills toward prosperity and economic equality for all.

— Barbara Bernard, Executive Director
The Malcolm Bernard HBCU College Fair, Inc.

"The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands in times of challenge and controversy." With these words Dr. King underscores how important it is to stand tall in the face of adversity and test our willingness to do what is right, for the greater good. Along my journey the occasions where I've made the greatest impact were the result of difficult decisions that were guided by principals of integrity and courage.

— Linda Coles, Commissioner
Martin Luther King Jr. Commemorative Commission

"Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase." Dr. King's vision of a beloved community without regard to any racial or ethnic moniker was deeply rooted in his faith in God, and faith in a democratic society that honors the humanity of all its citizens.

— Rev. Dr. Deborah K. Blanks

"I do think there must be centralized leadership in the sense that, say, in our struggle all of the leaders coordinate their efforts, cooperate and, and at least evince a degree of unity."

— Ronald Jones, President
Mercer Regional Pan Hellenic Council

Growing up in the 60s through today, in a household that was politically aware and held high value to service, I have been led to a lifetime of service and informing others of just and available opportunities. Whether my passion affects children, families or communities, many of which I will never actually meet, it is in my knowing that I have done all within my power to change the narrative in a peaceful and logical manner as Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. had.

— Sheila Caldwell, BSN, RN, CSN-NJ

“The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.” Every time I think of Dr. King, I think of the hope that he gave so many people and of the dedication and sacrifice that he gave to mankind and the world.

— Bahiyyah Abdullah, Commissioner
NJ Martin Luther King Jr. Commemorative Commission

The life and legacy that Dr. Martin Luther King has left behind has made this country a more just place, a more peaceful land and a tolerant one for all. Dr. King stood up to great opposition and prevailed because of what he believed in, equality for ALL. These morals and values had a great impact and particularly in building a strong partnership with the Jewish Community in fighting racism and antisemitism. I hope and pray that we can fulfill the dream of Dr. King that one day we will be able to work together, pray together, struggle together and stand up for freedom together.

— Rabbi Mendy Carlebach, Administrator of Chabad House Rutgers
Chaplain of the Port Authority Police Dept of NY and NJ

In unity, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Greek Orthodox Archbishop Iakovos marched over the Pettus Bridge. In defiance, they proved the strength of their convictions. In peace, they remind us of the supreme worth of all mankind. Having suffered 400 years of Ottoman persecution and a brutal NAZI occupation in our ancestral homeland, along with brazen attacks by the KKK in America, the Greek American community understands the universal struggle for freedom and human rights. The NJ Hellenic American Heritage Commission and Greeks everywhere are dedicated to the fight against bigotry and intolerance.

— Dr. Zenon Christodoulou
New Jersey Hellenic American Heritage Commission

In his speech on economic equality, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said economic equality means that everybody has an equal chance to live a good life. That means EDUCATION, HEALTH CARE, JOBS and HOUSING. He said in the richest country in the world there's no reason we can't do that and eliminate dire poverty. The New Jersey State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs & Youth Clubs founded in 1915 is a volunteer women's community service organization whose members focus their energies on programs that reflect Dr. King's vision.

— Barbara J. Cobb, 27th President
New Jersey State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, Inc. & Youth Clubs

Dr. King's life and legacy is the reason I am a public servant. When I was eight years old, I distinctly remember watching a movie about Dr. King. I told my mother that when I grew up, I wanted to be just like Dr. King. I am forever grateful for the sacrifices he and others made so that all people could be treated equally.

— Dr. Yolanda H. Allen, Assistant Director
Office of Youth Programs, NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development

Dr. King asserted, "Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'What are you doing for others?'" The NJ Governor's Jefferson Awards honor those ordinary individuals who respond to this question by doing extraordinary things in service to others.

— Bob Provost
NJ State Governor's Jefferson Awards/NY State Tourism Industry Association

Martin Luther King: A crusader for voting rights. . . . In a 1957 speech titled "Give Us The Ballot," Dr. King spoke bluntly about the need for equal voting rights. "So long as I do not firmly and irrevocably possess the right to vote I do not possess myself. I cannot make up my mind — it is made up for me."

— Stephenine Dixon, Commissioner
NJ Martin Luther King Jr. Commemorative Commission

Decades after his transition, his dream, his love of civil rights and his passion for serving others, continues to inspire and motivate throughout the world. The dream is still alive!

— Kieanna Alexander
Hamilton, NJ

Martin Luther King Jr. Day is for celebration, remembrance, education and tribute, and above all a day of service. As we honor the legacy of Dr. King, we have an opportunity to reflect on our own values and give back to the communities in which we live and work.

— Bob Doherty, New Jersey President
Bank of America

Although I was only 16 years old when Dr. Martin Luther Jr. was assassinated on April 4th 1968, he was and still is my hero. Dr. King was a scholar, activist Civil rights leader, humanitarian and so much more. He was a compassionate person who wanted equality for all. Dr. King's Legacy will live on forever.

— Bessie Emanuel, Volunteer
Foster Grandparent Program

Dr. King said that, "Everybody can be great because anybody can serve." He understood that service is in the hearts and minds of so many volunteers across our Nation that offer themselves in the service of others.

— Joseph Geleta, Director of Emergency Management
NJ Department of Human Services

Blessed, Honored, and Humbled am I to have known Mrs. Coretta Scott King well. Through Mrs. King's good graces, I learned the Six Principles of Kingian Nonviolence as practiced by Dr. King. Among these were "personal commitment," "discussion/negotiations," and "reconciliation." My friendship with Mrs. King illuminated her insider's view of the Civil Rights Movement. Much like Nelson Mandela, they both believed in peaceful negotiation and seeking a "win, win" solution to conflicts. As Mandela once encouraged me to "talk to your enemy!" I have had the privilege of working with hundreds of Mandela Washington Fellows over the past five years. It comforts me to observe how many of these young African Leaders embrace the philosophy, life and work of Dr. King. I join with Secretary Tahesha Way, the MLK Commission, and Citizens of the World to learn Kingian Nonviolence, teach and practice it in our own lives.

— Dr. Ronald Quincy, Professor of Professional Practice
Bloustein School of Planning & Public Policy, Rutgers University

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s legacy championing civil rights and fighting against racism has been an inspiration for Raritan Valley Community College and its commitment to diversity, social justice, and inclusion. Our students, faculty, and staff strive every day to uphold Dr. King's teachings through our diversity initiatives and service learning efforts that have earned the College national recognition.

— Michael J. McDonough, President
Raritan Valley Community College

The legacy of Dr. King endures because his message of peace, equality, justice and unity continues to inform today's fight for civil rights and inspires those walking in his path.

— Michele Hayes, Associate VP, Marketing
NJ Advance Media

“God has not failed us we have come this far by faith.”

— Shirley Hicks
Beaty Grove Primitive Baptist Church

Dr. King's legacy is not just about what he did and the millions he has inspired, but also about those who engaged in direct action alongside him, who went on to fight for justice in a myriad of ways. In a sense, AmeriCorps is about the unfinished business of the Civil Rights movement.

— Marty Friedman
Founder of Education Works and the Power Corps

“An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity.” I am moved to represent his legacy and press forward to continue my work within communities to provide opportunities of freedom for vulnerable persons and families. Especially those faced with Human Trafficking.

— Ingrid Johnson, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Champion Award Recipient
NJ Governor's Jefferson Awards

Without empowering ourselves with immerse financial education, economic injustice and financial insecurity will continue to destabilize individuals, families and our nation for generations.

— Sabrina Lamb, Founder and CEO
WorldofMoney.org

The passion I have towards bettering my community is foundationally built upon the many lives lost during and after the movement. The unfettered access that I enjoy and that my sons enjoy, even though shrouded under the guise of freedom and clouded by systemic racism and bias, is based upon Dr. King's belief that I am created equal and that I have a right to attain the same freedoms, and be treated with the same dignity as anyone else in this country and on this planet. His legacy is in the knowledge that the fight is real, the struggle persists, and I must continue to do my part to assure that the very freedoms I have and enjoy are secured.

— Edward LaPorte, Director
Office of Faith Based Initiatives, NJ Department of State

As we celebrate the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., we also reflect on his long-standing commitment of service to the community. As educators, each day we can empower our students to make a difference, by merging classroom instruction and community service through service learning projects.

— Lori Moog, Director of Service Learning and Community Outreach
Raritan Valley Community College

“Modern man suffers from a kind of poverty of the spirit, which stands in glaring contrast to his scientific and technological abundance; we've learned to fly the air like birds, we've learned to swim the seas like fish, and yet we haven't learned to walk the Earth as brothers and sisters.” I believe that we are only as good as we treat each other. Not as colors, not as creeds, or status, or gender, but as human beings living together on this planet.

— Chris Woodstock, St. Bernard's Parish AmeriCorps

I have been inspired since day one to be the best that I can be, especially after hearing Dr. King's Speech. I live to be intentionally and the Best that I can be... to make impacts and positive deposits in this lifetime for every student, person that I have ever coached. I have always asked them to be “The Best that You Can Be.”

— Coach Felicia Oliver, Newark, NJ

Dr. King was a man of great compassion, humility, and an unwavering sense of justice. He helped build a Poor People's Campaign ("a multiracial army of the poor") to challenge the structures in our society that create advantage for some, while poverty grew. He famously declared, "True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar; it comes to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring . . . A true revolution of values will soon look uneasily on the glaring contrast of poverty and wealth . . . and say "This is not just."

— Renee Koubiadis, Executive Director
Anti-Poverty Network of New Jersey

"Every Step toward the goal of Justice requires sacrifice, suffering and struggle; the tireless and passionate concern of dedicated individuals." I was blessed to be raised in a family where I was instilled with an unending passion for social justice and concern for all and have tried to live my life by Dr. King's words.

— Edward J. O'Malley
Mid Atlantic Region Practice Leader
Chair Emeritus, Governor's Advisory Council on Volunteerism

"The time is always right to do what is right."

— Elaine Spears
Montclair African American Heritage Foundation

"Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter."
"In the end we will remember not the words of our enemies but the silence of our friends."

— Dr. Joan Rivitz, Commissioner
US Civil Rights Commission Special Advisory Committee to
New Jersey/New Jersey Civil Rights Commission

One of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr's most famous quotes is: "Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'What are you doing for others?'" I ask myself this question every day. You never know what a simple act of kindness can do. Will you be the person to hold open a door, will you smile at a passerby, will you allow a young mind to ask questions infinitely, will you raise funds, or collect food items for those less fortunate? So, I ask of you — what are YOU doing for others?

— Linda V. Rivera, Program Officer
Governor's Office of Volunteerism

Dr. King influences my life because his life's work, while against all odds, was a reflection of LOVE, PEACE, ECONOMIC equality and RESPECT for all mankind. The Best of HUMANITY.

— Gilda Rogers, Vice President
T. Thomas Fortune Foundation, Red Bank

“We have flown the air like birds and swum the sea like fishes, but have yet to learn the simple act of walking the earth like brothers. “How Pleasant it is for Brethren to Dwell Together in Unity,” Psalm 133

— Ruth Scott, Freehold, NJ

“In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.” Maybe at first glance, one might interpret this quote as being about standing up for those we care about and love, but I think it's so much more than that. We have a responsibility to the communities we are a part of to treat everyone as our friends and to stand up for them.

— Heather Tedesco, Regional Executive Director
New Jersey Students In Action

As a young adult during the civil rights movement in this nation, I was constantly inspired by the moral and spiritual leadership that Dr. King provided. Some of his speeches and quotes will stay with me forever such as the “I Have a Dream” speech, his statement that we should judge people by the content of their character — not the color of their skin and his reminding us that the “length of the moral universe is long but bends toward social justice.” These thoughts sustained me and countless others in our personal and professional lives. Dr. King's legacy will live on and we need in more than ever in these perilous times.

— William Waldman, Professor
Rutgers School of Social Work
Former Commissioner of NJ Department of Human Services

Martin Luther King Jr. is someone who has inspired generations. He proved that we can reach our goals in non-violent ways, with Peace in our hearts. “Every man must decide whether he will walk in the light of creative altruism or in the darkness of destructive selfishness.”

— Lynn Cremona, St. Bernard's Parish AmeriCorps

My favorite sermon/speech written by Dr. King is “The Drum Major Instinct.” Dr. King’s sermonic words have inspired me daily to live a life of public service. A segment of his sermon states, “Yes, Jesus, I want to be on your right or your left side, (Yes) not for any selfish reason. I want to be on your right or your left side, not in terms of some political kingdom or ambition. But, I just want to be there in love and in justice and in truth and in commitment to others, so that we can make of this old world a new world.”

— Sheila Woodson, Passaic, NJ

When I think about Dr. King, I pray for more voices like his, because the inexcusable silence of good people harms the potential for healing racial divides in our communities. May we individually, experience healing from inappropriate silence.

— Carole Dortch-Wright, Communications Director
Cathedral International Church

Much like the radiant light of the North Star, Dr. King’s legacy, by way of his words and actions, serves as a guiding light for us all, especially those of us working towards social justice for our communities.

— Carlos Lejnieks, President & CEO
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Essex, Hudson & Union Counties (Newark, NJ)

“Life’s most persistent and urgent question is, ‘What are you doing for others?’” This quote really resonates with me as I try to live my life giving to others. As a parent, I have instilled in my sons that giving to others, should be a way of life, and not only a moment in time, one day a year. I believe that if everyone took a step back and understood the importance of giving and how those small, yet important acts make a huge difference in human lives and the world at large, then we as a society, would be in a much better place.

— Tawayna Bailey
Jewish Renaissance Foundation, AmeriCorps

“No one can win the war individually, it takes the wisdom of the elders and young people’s energy.” (Glory by Common and John Legend, inspired by Dr. King) Knowledge, passion and unity are three factors that can make a lasting impact on our nation. As service members, we have the ability to apply those attributes to fight for ourselves, our friends, our families, our community and even strangers.

— Jessica Daniels
St. Bernard’s Parish AmeriCorps

New Jersey Youth Corps: “Our Musings on Martin”

“I look to a day when people will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.” It’s all about how you carry yourself as a person and not how you just so happen to look.

— Jaquee Chapman, Newark-Essex Corpsmember

If you can’t fly, then run. If you can’t run, then walk. If you can’t walk, then crawl, but whatever you do, you have to keep moving forward.” Don’t ever say what you can’t do; there’s always another way. . . Never let anyone keep you from moving forward.

— Briana Combs, Newark-Essex Corpsmember

“Be a bush if you can’t be a tree. If you can’t be a highway, just be a trail. If you can’t be a sun, be a star. For it isn’t by size that you win or fail. Be the best of whatever you are.” These inspirational words are from Dr. King’s speech to a group of junior high students in Philadelphia in 1967, inspiring us, at whatever stage of life we’re in, to strive for excellence.

— NJYC Elizabeth Corpsmembers

“If our differences trouble us, maybe we should focus on our commonalities.” Marouane

“Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about the things that matter.” Luis

“We must learn to live together as brothers or perish together as fools.” Javier

Martin Luther King is viewed to me as a life-saver. He saved thousands of African Americans. Through speeches and non-violence, we have freedom and justice because he and others showed the way. Shymeire

— Paterson Corpsmembers



“We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity in this nation.”

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

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