

Dear Friends:

Martin Luther King Jr. still remains the most widely known African American leader of his era. Satan killed Dr. King April 4, 1968 but his dream will never die.

At age 26, Dr. King introduced to America a new voice, a proficient political rhetoric, an inspiring personality, and in time a powerful principle of nonviolent resistance. Although King was stabbed, jailed, his home bombed, and his family's safety threatened, he continued to promote nonviolent tactics, such as the historical March On Washington (1963), to achieve Civil Rights.

On Nov. 3, 1983, President Ronald Reagan set aside partisan political and signed legislation for a King Holiday. Today is the day for all "Americans to reflect on the principle of racial equality and nonviolent social change espoused by Dr. King."

In Dr. King's first speech to the Montgomery Improvement Association, following Rosa Parks' arrest in 1955 for refusing to surrender her bus seat to a white passenger, he declared: "We have no alternative but to protest. For many years we have shown an amazing patience. We have sometimes given our white brothers the feeling that we liked the way that we were being treated. But we come here tonight to be saved from that patience that makes us patient with anything less than freedom and justice."

Those words are just as relevant today as they were 56 years ago. The violence in urban America has been the greatest contribution to the mass incarceration and murders of youth. If this country could break the cycle of segregation, surely it can break the cycle of violence.

From the Birmingham jail, King wrote a letter and spelled out the Gandhian concepts of peaceful noncompliance (satyagraha): "You may well ask: "Why direct action? Why sit-ins, marches and so forth? Isn't negotiation a better path?" You are quite right in calling for negotiation. Indeed, this is the very purpose of direct action. Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue."

Dr. King's emerging wind of civil turbulence brought about a profound effect on national opinion and resulted in a national solution in the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. But like all unruliness, like all brutality, like all senselessness, it arrived to the point that the people got "sick and tired of being sick and tired." And that spirit must come alive in each of us. We must develop a burning desire to fight for our children's future. We must concentrate on prevention and intervention instead of incarceration. Twenty-nine thousand kids die a day from preventable causes.

If there had not been a Dr. King in America with all of his noble followers, America would still be full of racial injustice. If there had not been a Stanley Tookie Williams, I would still be uninspired to make a difference from a prison of indifference. If there had not been freedom fighters in America, of all races, we might still live under the rule of Jim Crow.

The aftermath of sacrifice is always the creation of a better life. The aftermath of standing up now is the pleasure of sitting in peace later. The aftermath of not doing something is genocidal youth assassination and incarceration. This is what we all should be concerned about. Let us fight passionately and persistently for the purpose of love and peace, but let's be sure that our hearts are free to forgive. Let us never fight with fury or fear, but always fight with love, so that when the hour come that the cycle of violence is broken in America that we will be able to live in peace as children of God.

I look forward to working with you all to make this world a better place for our children.

Yours for the cause of Love and Peace,

Cedric Dean