

## **DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING CELEBRATION SPEECH**

JANUARY 16, 2020

REX FORTUNE

THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND INTRODUCTION & INVITATION FOR ME TO SHARE THIS CELEBRATION OF WHAT WOULD BE DR. KING'S 92<sup>ND</sup> BIRTHDAY.

### **FOUR QUESTIONS WILL GUIDE OUR DISCUSSION TODAY.**

- HOW DID MICHAEL KING BECOME DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.?
- WHAT WERE THE MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF DR. KING?
- IF DR. KING WERE ALIVE TODAY, WHAT WOULD BE HIS MAJOR CONCERNS?
- WHAT WILL I DO THAT DEMONSTRATES THE EFFECT DR. KING'S LEGACY ON MY LIFE?

DR. KING'S COMMITMENT TO NON-VIOLENT PROTEST OF THE VARIOUS INJUSTICES THAT WERE FORCED UPON AFRICAN AMERICANS WAS ESPECIALLY REMARKABLE, IN VIEW OF WHAT HE KNEW ABOUT THEIR STRUGGLES IN AMERICA. HE KNEW OF THE ATROCITIES OF SLAVERY COMMITTED BY PLANTATION OWNERS. HE KNEW THAT SLAVERY GREW MORE PROFITABLE AND WIDESPREAD AS MILLIONS OF SLAVES WERE NOT ONLY DISENFRANCHISED BUT ALSO SYSTEMATICALLY TORTURED FOR THE SAKE OF AMERICAN CAPITALISM. HE KNEW THAT AMERICAN SLAVERY WAS BRUTAL. FROM CAPTURE, TO THE MIDDLE PASSAGE, TO SLAVE AUCTIONS, TO SLAVE VILLAGES, THEN FORCED IMMIGRATION MARCHES, HUNDREDS OF MILES TO FARMS IN OTHER TERRITORIES. WOMEN WERE RAPED, MEN WERE BEATEN, HANGED OR MUTILATED AT WILL.

PROFESSOR EDWARD BAPTIST IN HIS BOOK, THE HALF HAS NEVER BEEN TOLD: SLAVERY AND THE MAKING OF AMERICAN CAPITALISM, DOCUMENTS THAT COTTON—PICKED BY SLAVES-- ACCOUNTED FOR \$100 MILLION DOLLARS IN THE 1836 US ECONOMY OF \$1.5 BILLION DOLLARS. WHAT MAY NOT BE SO WELL-KNOWN IS THAT THE **BENEFICIARIES OF SLAVE LABOR** EXTENDED FAR BEHOND THE SLAVE STATES WHERE COTTON AND, IN EARLIER YEARS, SUGAR WERE HARVESTED AND SHIPPED TO NORTHERN STATES AND TO WESTERN EUROPE. THE BENEFICIARIES INCLUDED MANY NORTHERN SHIP BUILDERS, FINANCIERS OF LOANS TO FARMERS, INSURANCE COMPANIES, THREAD MANUFACTURES AND, IN BRITAIN, WEAVERS OF CLOTH WHO ACCUMULATED WEALTH ON THE BACKS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN SLAVES. CAPITALISM WAS ON THE RISE, BECAUSE SLAVES INCREASINGLY SUFFERED.

DR. KING'S MOST NOTABLE LIFE'S WORK WOULD BE INITIATED DURING THE **THIRTEEN YEARS** BETWEEN THE 1955 MONTGOMERY BUS BOYCOTT AND THE 1968 GARBAGE WORKERS MARCH IN MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE, WHERE HE WAS ASSASSINATED ON APRIL 4, 1968. HIS SPEECHES ABOUT THIS HAVE BEEN STUDIED, RECITED, ADMIRER, IMITATED AND ALMOST WORSHIPPED FOR THE PAST 50 YEARS.

EVEN KNOWING THAT HE WOULD RECEIVE PERSONAL THREATS, INCLUDING BOMB THREATS, **DR. KING INSISTED ON NON-VIOLENT RESISTANCE** TO PROTEST SEGREGATION. WHEN ASKED BY LOCAL ACTIVISTS TO BECOME THE VOICE FOR THOSE WHO WOULD BOYCOTT CITY BUSES IN MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA, THE 26-YEAR-OLD PASTOR, WHO WAS NEW IN MONGTMERY SAID YES. HE ENCOURAGED PEOPLE TO WALK, CARPOOL AND DO WHATEVER THEY COULD TO WITHHOLD PAYING BUS FEES WHERE THEY WERE TREATED INHUMANELY. THEY PROTESTED FOR 13 MONTHS AND FINALLY GOT CONCESSIONS FROM THE TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITIES TO SIT IN ANY SEAT ON THE BUS.

THAT STORY IS THE CENTRAL FOCUS OF STRIDE TOWARD FREEDOM: THE MONTGOMERY STORY IN 1958.

## HOW DID MICHAEL KING BECOME DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.?

### WHO INSPIRED DR. KING?

#### DR. KING WAS INSPIRED BY HIS FATHER, DADDY KING

IN PART, BECAUSE HIS FATHER WAS AN INSPIRING MINISTER. IN PART, BECAUSE HE WITNESSED HIS FATHER TAKING ON PEOPLE WHO DISRESPECTED HIM ON THE BASIS OF HIS RACE. IN PART, BECAUSE HIS FATHER WAS A COMMUNITY LEADER AND PRESIDENT OF LOCAL NAACP.

REV. KING, SR. TRAVELED TO WITTENBERG, GERMANY, STUDIED ABOUT THE CHURCH REFORMER, MARTIN LUTHER, THERE. DADDY KING WAS SO IMPRESSED WITH THE LEGEND OF **MARTIN LUTHER** THAT HE CHANGED HIS OWN NAME FROM MICHAEL KING TO **MARTIN LUTHER KING IN 1934**. HE ALSO RE-NAMED HIS SON MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. THE YOUNG MARTIN KING WAS INSPIRED BY OTHER MINISTERS, INTRODUCED TO HIM BY HIS FATHER.

DR. KING WAS ALSO INSPIRED BY HIS MOREHOUSE COLLEGE PRESIDENT, **DR. BENJAMIN E. MAYS**. YOUNG MARTIN ENTERED MOREHOUSE COLLEGE IN 1944, AND HE GRADUATED FROM THERE IN 1948, AT AGE 19. DR. MAYS WAS AN ADVISOR TO MARTIN AS HE MATRICULATED THERE. MANY YEARS LATER, DR. MAYS GAVE THE BENEDICTION AT THE 1963 MARCH ON WASHINGTON. HE ALSO GAVE THE EULOGY AT DR. KING'S FUNERAL IN 1968. DR. MAYS HAD PLANNED TO SUBMIT MARTIN'S NAME TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF MOREHOUSE COLLEGE FOR DR. KING TO SUCCEED HIM AS PRESIDENT. BUT DR. KING WANTED TO BE MORE INDEPENDENT, AND HE DECLINED THE OFFER. DR. MAYS SERVED AS PRESIDENT OF MOREHOUSE COLLEGE FROM 1940-1967. HE, TOO, WAS A BAPTIST MINISTER.

DR. KING HAD AN OCCASION AS A STUDENT AT MOREHOUSE COLLEGE, AND AGAIN AS A GRADUATE STUDENT AT CROZIER SEMINARY, TO STUDY HENRY THOREAU'S ESSAY ON "CIVIL DIS-OBEDIENCE." HE ALSO ATTENDED A SERMON BY DR. MORDECAI JOHNSON, THEN PRESIDENT OF HOWARD UNIVERSITY IN WASHINGTON, D.C. DURING HIS SERMON, DR. JOHNSON EXTOILED THE VIRTUES OF A REFORMER IN INDIA NAMED MOHANDAS K. GANDHI, WHO LED INDIA TO INDEPENDENCE FROM GREAT BRITAIN IN 1947.

DR. KING WAS INSPIRED BY MAHATMA GANDHI'S ADHERENCE TO **NON-VIOLENT-RESISTANCE**—SUCH AS BOYCOTTS, AND PROTESTS—TO OPPOSE THE HEAVILY ARMED BRITISH SOLDIERS WHO OFTEN FIRED THEIR WEAPONS UPON, BEAT AND JAILED GANDHI'S FOLLOWERS AS WELL AS HIMSELF. GANDHI WAS ASSASSINATED BY A HINDU NATIONALIST IN 1948. HE WAS 78 WHEN HE WAS KILLED.

DR. KING, MRS. CORETTA SCOTT KING AND A HISTORIAN FRIEND VISITED INDIA FOR ABOUT A MONTH IN 1959, MET WITH GANDHI'S RELATIVES, PRIME MINISTER JAWAHARLAL NEHRU AND HIS STAFF. RECALL THAT MAHATMA GANDHI HAD ALREADY BEEN ASSASSINATED BY A DERANGED HINDU IN 1948.

### **WHAT WERE THE MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF DR. KING?**

WHEN ASKED WHAT ELSE DID DR. KING ACCOMPLISH BEYOND ENDING SEGREGATION IN THE BUS TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM IN MONTGOMERY? ONE OF THE ANSWERS OFTEN OVER-LOOKED IS THAT DR. KING WAS AN INSPIRING AUTHOR.

WHILE SEVERAL OF KING'S DISTRACTORS PREFERRED TO ABANDON CHRISTIAN LOVE AND NON-VIOLENT PROTESTS AS A STRATEGY FOR CHANGE, DR. KING REMAINED STEADFAST. HIS WORK SO IMPRESSED PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY AND PRESIDENT LYNDON JOHNSON THAT THEY FOUGHT FOR AND SUCCEEDED IN PASSING MAJOR CIVIL RIGHTS

LEGISLATION WHICH IMPLEMENTED SO MANY OF THE RIGHTS DR. KING FOUGHT FOR.

THE LIST OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS ALSO INCLUDES:

1964 CIVIL RIGHTS ACT

1965 VOTING RIGHTS ACT

1965 ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION ACT (Title I Program)

1964 ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY ACT

OTHER WAR ON POVERTY PROGRAMS UNDER PRESIDENT JOHNSON.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO RECALL A FEW PROVISIONS OF THESE REVOLUTIONARY LAWS INSPIRED BY THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT, LED BY DR. KING:

#### BASIC PROVISIONS OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964

- ABOLISHMENT OF UNFAIR APPLICATIONS FOR VOTERS OF COLOR
- PROHIBITION OF DISCRIMINATION IN PUBLICLY OWNED BUSINESSES LIKE HOTELS, RESTAURANTS, AND THEATERS.
- PUBLIC FACILITIES SHOULD BE OPEN TO ALL: NO PERSON DENIED
- DESEGREGATION OF SCHOOLS: ATTORNEY GENERAL TO FILE SUITS AGAINST SCHOOLS THAT MAINTAINED SEGREGATION POLICIES
- DISALLOWMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDS TO ORGANIZATIONS PRACTICING DISCRIMINATION

- PROHIBITION OF DISCRIMINATION IN THE WORKFORCE BASED ON RACE, GENDER OR RELIGIOUS ORIENTATION.
- CREATION OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION TO ENFORCE LAWS REGARDING FAIR HIRING PRACTICES AND EQUAL PAY.

### BASIC PROVISION OF THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT OF 1965

**ELIMINATIONS OF BARRIERS AT STATE AND LOCAL LEVELS THAT PREVENTED AFRICAN AMERICANS FROM EXERCISING THEIR RIGHT TO VOTE AS GUARANTEED UNDER THE 15<sup>TH</sup> AMENDMENT TO THE U.S. CONSTITUTION IN 1870.**

- TELLING BLACKS, THEY HAD THE WRONG DATE, TIME, OR POLLING PLACE
- CHARGING A POLL TAX IN ORDER TO VOTE
- FORCING BLACKS TO TAKE A LITERACY TESTS, LIKE RECITE THE ENTIRE CONSTITUTION, OR EXPLAINING THE MOST COMPLEX PROVISION OF STATE LAWS

PRESIDENT JOHNSON SIGNED THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT INTO LAW ON AUGUST 6, 1965 WITH DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. AND OTHER CIVIL RIGHTS LEADERS PRESENT AT THE CEREMONY.

### BASIC PROVISIONS OF THE ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION ACT OF 1965

TITLE I: FUNDING FOR SCHOOLS WITH HIGH PERCENTAGE OF LOW-INCOME FAMILIES TO CLOSE GAPS IN READING, WRITING, AND MATHEMATICS. PARENT INVOLVEMENT

TITLE II: SUPPORT SCHOOL LIBRARIES AND TEXTBOOK ACQUISITION

TITLE III: SUPPLEMENTAL CENTERS TO BOLSTER ATTENDANCE

TITLE IV: EDUCATIONAL TRAINING AND RESEARCH

TITLE V: STATE DEPARTMENTS OF EDUCATION

ESTABLISHED THE OFFICE OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY TO ADMINISTER LOCAL APPLICATIONS FOR FUNDS TARGETED AGAINST POVERTY. IT CREATED:

- COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAMS
- JOB CORPS
- HEADSTART
- VOLUNTEERS IN SERVICE TO AMERICA (VISTA)

**WHAT ISSUES WOULD DR. KING ADDRESS IF HE WERE ALIVE TODAY?**

I BELIEVE THAT DR. KING WOULD RAISE HIS VOICE ABOUT:

- MASS INCARCERATION OF AFRICAN AMERICANS & HISPANICS
- EDUCATION
- INTOLERANCE OF OTHER TRIBES, RACE, RELIGION, LGBTQ STATUS
- IMMIGRATION
- HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS
- HEALTH CARE
- GUN VIOLENCE
- OTHER

**INCARCERATION RATES FOR BLACKS AND LATINOS**

HISPANICS: 16% POP NATIONALLY, 19% INCARCERATED

40% POP CALIFORNIA, 44 % INCARCERATED

AFRICAN AM: 13% POP NATIONALLY 40 % INCARCERATED

6% POP CALIFORNIA 28 % INCARCERATED

WHITE:                   64% POP NATIONALLY 39 % INCARCERATED  
                              37% POP CALIFORNIA 21 % INCARCERATED

Dr. KING WOULD CALL ON US TO RECOGNIZE THE UNDERLYING CAUSES OF THESE PATTERNS OF INCARCERATION, AND CHALLENGE US TO ELIMINATE THOSE CAUSES. HE WOULD **NOT** FIND IT COINCIDENTIAL THAT THE SAME BOYS WITH HIGH SUSPENSION RATES IN SCHOOLS ARE THOSE WHO EXPERIENCE HIGH INCARCERATION RATES IN JAILS AND PRISONS. NOR WOULD HE FIND IT COINCIDENTIAL THAT INCARCERATED MEN HAVE LOW LEVELS OF ACADEMIC OR EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS. SOME OF THEM RESORT TO CRIME BECAUSE THEY CANNOT SUCCESSFULLY COMPETE FOR AVAILABLE JOBS. MANY OF THEM RETURN TO PRISON, ONCE RELEASED, BECAUSE THEY WERE NOT REHABILITATED BEFORE RE-ENTRY INTO SOCIETY. AGAIN, DR. KING WOULD TAKE NOTE OF SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITY COLLEGE AND STATE UNIVERSITY RE-ENTRY PROGRAMS FOR PRISONER AND PAROLEES AND URGE PUBLIC POLICY MAKERS FOR THE CORRECTIONS AND REHABILITATION DEPARTMENT TO REPLICATE THESE PROGRAMS.

FOR AN INFORMED OPINION ABOUT THIS IMBALANCE IN PRISON POPULATIONS, READ **THE SECOND JIM CROW** BY ATTORNEY MICHELLE ALEXANDER

MLK JR. QUOTE INSCRIBED ON THE WALL AT THE MEMORIAL

**THE ARC OF THE MORAL UNIVERSE IS LONG, BUT IT BENDS TOWARDS JUSTICE**

WHAT WOULD DR. KING'S FOCUS BE REGARDING EDUCATION?

DR. KING WAS ALWAYS AWARE OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF QUALITY EDUCATION AT ALL LEVELS AS THE GATEWAY INTO A PRODUCTIVE, ECONOMICALLY PROGRESSIVE LIFE. AS HE GREW UP IN THE 1940s AND



1950s, ENDING SEGREGATION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES WAS A MAJOR FOCUS. UNDERLYING THAT FOCUS WAS AN ISSUE OF ACCESS TO BETTER RESOURCED SCHOOLS. NOW, THE ISSUE IS MORE ONE OF EQUITY, ONCE STUDENTS BECOME ENROLLED IN THOSE SCHOOLS THAT WERE INACCESSIBLE BEFORE. ONE MANIFESTATION OF LACK OF EQUITY IS THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP BETWEEN LOW-INCOME, MINORITY STUDENTS AND THOSE FROM MORE AFFLUENT FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES. THE GENERAL TREND IN STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT ACROSS CALIFORNIA IS THAT THERE IS AN ACHIEVEMENT GAP BETWEEN AFRICAN AMERICANS AND HISPANIC STUDENTS, ON THE ONE HAND, AND WHITE AND ASIAN STUDENTS ON THE OTHER.

**MAMA’S QUOTE “WHAT YOU DO SPEAKS SO LOUDLY, I CAN’T HEAR WHAT YOU SAY.”**

**SO, WHAT WILL I DO TO DEMONSTRATE THE EFFECT OF DR. KING’S LEGACY ON MY LIFE? WORK TO BRIDGE THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP.**

THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT **THERE IS GOOD NEWS** REGARDING THE ACHIEVEMENT OF HISPANIC AND AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS. THERE ARE SCHOOLS SCATTERED AROUND THE STATE, WHERE AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS AND HISPANIC STUDENTS ARE ACHIEVING IN WAYS THAT DEFY THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP TREND. THE OCCURRENCE IS RARE, BUT IT HAPPENS FREQUENTLY ENOUGH THAT WE SHOULD PAY MORE ATTENTION TO WHAT IS MAKING THAT HAPPEN.

SO I WROTE THIS BOOK, BRIDGING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP 1<sup>ST</sup> EDITION PUBLISHED IN 2012, WHICH IDENTIFIES AND DESCRIBES SCHOOLS THAT WERE EITHER MOSTLY HISPANIC (17), MOSTLY AFRICAN AMERICAN (3), HAD AT LEAST 50% OF STUDENTS ON FRPM AND WHO SCORED BETTER THAN 800 ON THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE INDEX (API)—WHICH WAS THE GOAL AT THAT TIME FOR ALL SCHOOLS. THIS WAS IN 2012.

THE BOOK DESCRIBES WHAT SCHOOL LEADERS DO, WHAT TEACHERS DO AND WHAT PARENTS OF HIGH PERFORMING STUDENTS WERE DOING AT HOME TO HELP WITH THEIR STUDENTS' EDUCATION.

I RECENTLY TOOK A LOOK AT HOW SOME OF THESE SCHOOLS PERFORMED ON THE CAASPP IN 2019 AND FOUND NINE OF THEM PERFORMED AT LEAST AS HIGH AS THE STATEWIDE AVERAGE FOR ALL STUDENTS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS (ELA) OR IN MATHEMATICS. IN FACT, **SEVERAL OF THESE SCHOOLS THAT SERVE MOSTLY HISPANIC STUDENTS PERFORMED HIGHER THAN THE STATEWIDE AVERAGE FOR ALL STUDENTS** IN THOSE SUBJECTS IN 2019.

IN 2018, THE BOOK, BRIDGING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP 2<sup>nd</sup> EDITION, IDENTIFIES AND DESCRIBES **SCHOOLS THAT SERVE MOSTLY AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS**, HAD AT LEAST 50% STUDENTS ON FRPM, AND WHOSE PERCENT PROFICIENT IN ELA AND/OR MATHEMATICS WAS AT LEAST AS HIGH AS THE STATEWIDE AVERAGE FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS. NOTABLY, **SOME OF THESE SCHOOLS SCORED HIGHER THAN THE STATEWIDE AVERAGE FOR ALL STUDENTS IN 2018.**

PARENTS WHOSE STUDENTS WERE PERFORMING WELL IN THESE SCHOOLS SHARED THEIR PRACTICES WHICH ARE SUMMARIZED IN ENGLISH AND IN SPANISH.

FINALLY, A SUMMARY OF PROMISING PRACTICES DRAWN FROM BOTH EDITIONS OF THE BOOK, BRIDGING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP: WHAT SUCCESSFUL EDUCATORS AND PARENTS DO, IS PRESENTED. THESE PUBLICATIONS ARE AVAILABLE FOR POLICY MAKERS AND PRACTITIONERS WHO WILL RESUME THE WORK OF DR. KING TO TAKE BOLD ACTIONS IN THEIR DISTRICTS, SCHOOLS, CLASSROOMS REPLICATING SUCCESSFUL PRACTICES FROM THEIR COLLEAGUES.

**DOES THE MARTIN LUTHER KING STORY INSPIRE YOU TO CHOOSE AN ISSUE WITHIN YOUR SPHERE OF INFLUENCE, AND TAKE DIRECT ACTION TO ADDRESS NEEDS OF THOSE THAT DR. KING HIMSELF WOULD HELP?**

WHEN YOUR JOURNEY NEARS ITS END, WILL YOU HAVE THE SATISFACTION OF KNOWING THAT YOU TOO 'HAVE BEEN TO THE MOUNTAIN TOP AND SEEN PROMISES OF A BETTER DAY' RESULTING FROM YOUR OWN WORK?

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