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Beyond the "Dream": The Wisdom of The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Speaking to the Challenges of Our Times

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And the Subject of Discussion on NewsRap with Barry Gordon**

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"I have a dream ..."

Every year at this time, that stirring phrase—with the hopes for racial harmony that followed—is repeated time and again, in reports on the heroic life of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., whose birth we celebrate today.

However, there was much more than even that noble sentiment to the Nobel Prize-winning message of this truly great man. (And no, I do not use the word "great" lightly; for although Dr. King did have his well-publicized flaws, as have men from Ben Franklin to Bill Clinton, those are the inevitable manifestations of the weaknesses that each of us descendants from Cain is heir to: What is truly, remarkably great is the ability of mere mortals to ever express and effectively promote selfless, timeless ideals in an all-too-selfish, sinful world.)

Read here, if you will, some of the wisdom so eloquently written and spoken by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., which speaks to the heart, mind, and soul of our nation and to the very issues that confront us in our time.

We may never know another like Dr. King; we should be thankful to have ever been blessed with his inspiring presence and lasting legacy.

Dr. King on Justice

(When reading these quotes, my fellow Progressives, remember the current nomination to the Supreme Court of a champion of the Regressives, who has consistently sided with the powerful, against the interests of those less influential—in the workplace, the environment, the courtroom, and the bedroom.)

"Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice. Justice at its best is love correcting everything that stands against love."

"I am not interested in power for power's sake; but I'm interested in power that is moral, that is right, and that is good."

"Law and order exist for the purpose of establishing justice and when they fail in this purpose they become the dangerously structured dams that block the flow of social progress."

"A just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral law or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law."

"The church must be reminded that it is not the master or the servant of the state, but rather the conscience of the state. It must be the guide and the critic of the state, and never its tool. If the church does not recapture its prophetic zeal, it will become an irrelevant social club without moral or spiritual authority."

"The Negro's great stumbling block in the drive toward freedom is not the White Citizens Councilor or the Ku Klux Klanner but the white moderate who is more devoted to order than to justice."

"Success, recognition, and conformity are the bywords of the modern world where everyone seems to crave the anesthetizing security of being identified with the majority."

"The hope of a secure and livable world lies with disciplined nonconformists who are dedicated to justice, peace, and brotherhood."

"The question is not whether we will be extremist but what kind of extremist will we be. Will we be extremists for hate or will we be extremists for love? Will we be extremists for the preservation of injustice, or will we be extremists for the cause of justice?"

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

"He who passively accepts evil is as much involved in it as he who helps to perpetrate it."

"The hottest place in Hell is reserved for those who remain neutral in times of great moral conflict."

"Freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed."

"History will have to record that the greatest tragedy of this period of social transition was not the strident clamor of the bad people, but the appalling silence of the good people."

"In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends."

"Never forget that everything Hitler did in Germany was legal."

Dr. King on Brotherhood

(When reading these quotes, my fellow Progressives, remember the recent legislation by the Congress, dominated by the Regressives, cutting aid to the needy, in order to pay for tax cuts to the wealthy.)

"The first question which the priest and the Levite asked was: 'If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?' But ... the good Samaritan reversed the question: 'If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?'"

"Life's most persistent and urgent question is: What are you doing for others?"

"Philanthropy is commendable, but it must not cause the philanthropist to overlook the circumstances of economic injustice which make philanthropy necessary."

"Every man must decide whether he will walk in the light of creative altruism or in the darkness of destructive selfishness."

"We must learn to live together as brothers or perish together as fools."

"All men are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality."

"The good neighbor looks beyond the external accidents and discerns those inner qualities that make all men human and, therefore, brothers."

"The spirit of Lincoln still lives; that spirit born of the teachings of the Nazarene, who promised mercy to the merciful, who lifted the lowly, strengthened the weak, ate with publicans, and made the captives free. In the light of this divine example, the doctrines of demagogues shiver in their chaff."

"The curse of poverty has no justification in our age. It is socially as cruel and blind as the practice of cannibalism at the dawn of civilization, when men ate each other because they had not yet learned to take food from the soil or to consume the abundant animal life around them. The time has come for us to civilize ourselves by the total, direct, and immediate abolition of poverty."

"A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual doom."

Dr. King on Peace

(When reading these quotes, my fellow Progressives, remember the war being unnecessarily waged based on the misleading half-truths and outright lies told by this Regressive administration, slaughtering the masses to enhance the wealth and power of the few.)

"Man was born into barbarism when killing his fellow man was a normal condition of existence. He became endowed with a conscience. And he has now reached the day when violence toward another human being must become as abhorrent as eating another's flesh."

"Nonviolence is the answer to the crucial political and moral questions of our time; the need for mankind to overcome oppression and violence without resorting to oppression and violence. Mankind must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression, and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love."

"Nonviolence means avoiding not only external physical violence but also internal violence of spirit. You not only refuse to shoot a man, but you refuse to hate him."

"Like an unchecked cancer, hate corrodes the personality and eats away its vital unity. Hate

destroys a man's sense of values and his objectivity. It causes him to describe the beautiful as ugly and the ugly as beautiful, and to confuse the true with the false and the false with the true."

"Have we not come to such an impasse in the modern world that we must love our enemies—or else? The chain reaction of evil—hate begetting hate, wars producing more wars—must be broken, or else we shall be plunged into the dark abyss of annihilation."

Dr. King on Progress

(When reading these quotes, my fellow Progressives, remember that the challenges facing our cause—the eternal struggle for justice, brotherhood, and peace—are formidable but not insurmountable.)

"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."

"Nothing in all the world is more dangerous than sincere ignorance and conscientious stupidity."

"Rarely do we find men who willingly engage in hard, solid thinking. There is an almost universal quest for easy answers and half-baked solutions. Nothing pains some people more than having to think."

"Human progress is neither automatic nor inevitable. ... Every step toward the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering, and struggle:

the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals."

"Change does not roll in on the wheels of inevitability, but comes through continuous struggle. And so we must straighten our backs and work for our freedom. A man can't ride you unless your back is bent."

"Never succumb to the temptation of bitterness."

"And I've looked over, and I've seen the promised land. I may not get there with you, but I want you to know tonight that we as a people will get to the promised land. So I'm happy tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man."

"I still believe that one day mankind will bow before the altars of God and be crowned triumphant over war and bloodshed, and nonviolent redemptive goodwill will proclaim the rule of the land."

"And when this happens, when we allow freedom to ring, when we let it ring from every tenement 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!'"

(Sources: [MLK Online](#), [InfoPlease](#), [BrainyQuote](#), [University of Florida](#) [no endorsement or disendorsement implied], [QuotationsPage.com](#))