

Laconia Human Relations Committee: Remembering Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

It was 59 years ago that Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke before more than 250,000 people on the Washington Mall. It was a time of violent expression about civil rights. It was a time when much of the power structure in this country was determined to prevent voting rights and equal access to jobs, schools, restaurants, parks, and housing.

It was a time when the Civil Rights Movement itself was struggling over tactics: violence or non-violent activism. Much progress has been made in some ways, but we are still questioning if there is justice and equity for all.

New Hampshire officially celebrates the life and work of Dr. King on Monday, Jan. 17. The national theme this year is Celebrate Equity and Inclusion. The Laconia Human Relations Committee for many years fostered community and support for the resettlement of refugees and immigrants. As we celebrate the work of Dr. King, our vision continues: "to cultivate a community-wide climate that does not tolerate prejudice of any kind which undermines the dignity of any person."

Dr. King came down squarely on the side of non-violence and offered a vision of hope and resilience even as others advocated violence. Tragically, he was assassinated at the age of 39 in 1968 in Memphis, Tennessee while advocating for the Poor People's campaign.

Today we are confronted by these same issues and are living through crises and threats of violence. Some have risen up with grievances to try to take control of our government through violence and intimidation. In a democratic society, grievances are not resolved through violence but rather through negotiation.

We need to remember the words of Dr. King, "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that." In the spirit of Dr. King, we ask you to join us in our work to become a center of light and embody his ideals: "Let us not wallow in the valley of despair. Our lives begin to end, the day we become silent about things that matter... We are responsible not only for what we say, but what we do not say!"

We thank the many who have joined us in speaking out for justice for all. As Dr. King said, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

And so, even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, we still have a dream deeply rooted in our nation that democracy means justice and equity for all!

Let us join together so 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."

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