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The Assassination of The History of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. 50 Years Later

Written by Robert Woodard

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Although slavery was abolished, you can't eliminate over 400 years of its damages to all the fellow human beings, who have suffered from it. The laws of this Nation were built on the foundation of White Supremacy. White male supremacist's laws kept education out of the hands of slaves, making it a crime to educate any slave. The late great Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated trying to educate "children of former slaves" about their civil rights.

Now 50 years later, Philadelphia Mayor Jim Kenney has made his choices for the new school board. He has assigned some of the old board members of the SRC and some new board members. However, if you are searching for an answer to a problem, you first have to realize that there is a problem. Then remove the cause of the problem and that problem should cease to exist.

Sadly, our City of Philadelphia is one of the highest rated cities in this country for poverty and prison population. This has been caused by something directly connected to a lack of getting a proper education. In other words, pushing children through school, without the necessary and proper scholastic skills. Many inner city schools have graduated students with diplomas as receipts for educational services that were never truly rendered. Many children were pushed out into a world of many "properly educated opportunistic bullies," who would take advantage of them for the rest of their lives. Our healthcare system is just one example of bullies at work and it is a major reason why we need universal healthcare.

April 4 of this year, marked the 50th anniversary of the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Hence, the question becomes, "What are we as a society doing 50 years later?" It looks like after 50 years, we are still trying to find out why are the majority of the "children of former slaves" living in America today, who only makeup 12 percent of the overall population, are making up 80 percent of those who are "impoverished" and who are in "prison." I say it's because of "educational discrimination." I realize that Mayor Kenney knows that this situation is not easy to correct. First, we have to agree that for many years, there has been an enormous imbalance in how education has been distributed to many "non-immigrants" known as the "children of former slaves" living in inner cities all around this country. Many of these students have been educated by public schools and have been pushed on without being properly educated. I believe that our mayor should have placed on his new school board someone who represents millions of these "non-immigrants," who have had to struggle to make their way, because they were pushed on without the proper scholastic skills. This type of discrimination is an injustice that has to stop in order to make the United States a more perfect Union. However, it's going to take all cultural groups working together as "one human race," who see race as singular, not as plural.

I recall Reverend. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. speaking at my Junior High School on October 26, 1967, just a few months before he was assassinated. The name of my school was Norris S. Barratt Junior High School, located at 16th and Wharton Streets. Now because of the neighborhood being gentrified, they have changed the name of the Norris S. Barratt Junior High School to the George W. Childs Elementary School, because of low enrollment. The question to the School District of Philadelphia is, "How can you allow that kind of National History to be erased as if it never happened?" Changing the name of Norris S. Barratt Junior High School, erases the History of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s historical visit and speech to the students, faculty and staff of the Norris S. Barratt Junior High School. This makes it very difficult for not only those of this city, but citizens from around the world to appreciate the words and direction for the children of the Norris S. Barratt Junior High School and other Students around the world. I have produced a Petition to put back in place the historical name of the Norris S. Barratt Junior High School.

Our city's history should never be altered or destroyed to fit those who have received higher levels of educational skills to become the "bullies" that have the "know how" to get the money to gentrify original residents out of the history of their neighborhoods. Having that kind of power over "long-term residents," makes "gentrification look like a form of discrimination." Dr. King made it clear that "discrimination anywhere is an injustice everywhere." The speech he made at Norris S. Barratt Junior High School changed my life. It made me realize that we the people of the United States of America, in order to form a more perfect Union, we have to seek out the ugliness of discrimination, so it can no longer hide its ugly head anywhere, even 50 years later.

I remember the name of the speech Dr. King delivered to the Norris S. Barratt Junior High School Students, Faculty and staff. It was entitled, "what is your life's blueprint?" That speech completely turned my life in the right direction and I was very saddened to hear of his assassination just a few months later. I can vividly remember the words he spoke before leaving the stage of the Norris S. Barratt Junior High School, "Learn baby learn, so that we can earn baby earn!" Those words let me know that learning and earning were synonymous. Hence, if you don't learn, then you can't be expected to earn the kind of money that "properly educated real estate bullies" have.

The City of Philadelphia allowed the Home Rule Charter to be changed. By changing the Home Rule Charter, the assessment value was replaced by total value, which gave them the power to raise it to whatever amount they deem as total value. This action took away the rights of "long-term residents" to be protected from being gentrified out of their neighborhood homes, history, churches and schools. Because of the lack of learning properly in Inner city public schools and being pushed on, you cannot learn enough to stay in your life long home. "Gentrification" is acting as another form of "discrimination" directly associated with how you were educated. The Home Rule Charter protected the "long-term residents" by assessment value. Now with the change of total value being put in its place, it has allowed those "properly educated real estate bullies" to completely remove "long-term residents" from their neighborhood. The only way to correct an injustice is to replace it with Justice. "Long-term residents" should be grandfathered into being protected from the "discrimination of gentrification." Fighting to correct this injustice will be a fitting salute to the late Rev. Dr. Martin Luther, Jr. 50 years later. We must start by identifying "educational discrimination." An example of this is in 2014, Strawberry Mansion High School only graduated 36 percent of their Students on time. In 2012, West Philadelphia High School only graduated 45 percent. This was because of the new Keystone Test that exposed the children's true educational levels. Presently, if the children do not pass the test, they no longer receive a diploma. Instead, they receive a certificate of attendance. This makes you wonder, just how many students were pushed on before the Keystone Test.

How we view "race" in America has a lot to do with the bigger problem. We as the "human race," have to move on to a new day. On that day, you will be taking steps into a better tomorrow. Remember, Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. had a dream 50 years ago. We as "human beings," have to become his "dream team." That way, we all as "one human race," can reach the "Mountain Top into the Promise Land" of better tomorrows. Remember, like the Philadelphia Eagles, "Team work makes champions." Take the "R.A.C.E. Test" today for a better way at www.BarbershopTalkHFD.org and become a part of the King's "Dream Team" that gets the job done to overcome all obstacles of "Injustice" and "Discrimination" everywhere.

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