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A Reminder from the Past

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A Reminder from the Past

Abstract

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"Nearly forty-six years ago to the day, Martin Luther King Jr. accepted the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts in trying to eradicate African American discrimination by using non-violence. Dr. King accepted this prize whilst racial injustice was still prominent in the United States. He did this with the hope that someday people would find a way to live along side each other in peace. "If this [peace] is to be achieved, man must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love." Although there have been many strides against discrimination and hatred, both remain prominent not only in the United States, but around the world exponentially."



Elise Roy

A Reminder from the Past

Nearly forty-six years ago to the day, Martin Luther King Jr. accepted the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts in trying to eradicate African American discrimination by using non-violence. Dr. King accepted this prize whilst racial injustice was still prominent in the United States. He did this with the hope that someday people would find a way to live along side each other in peace. "If this [peace] is to be achieved, man must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love." Although there have been many strides against discrimination and hatred, both remain prominent not only in the United States, but around the world exponentially.

Martin Luther King Jr. knew the extremes of the Holocaust during World War II. What he did not know, was that genocide would occur again half a century later. In 1994, Rwandan Hutus planned a massacre against the tribal Tutsis. What is often forgotten is that many of these people that were brutally murdered were their neighbors, friends, doctors, teachers, and unfortunately, family. People

raped and killed solely on the reason that they were told to do so. This is what happens when morality and peace are completely disregarded. People lost all sense of civility and went on killing rampages for the single reason that they were told to hate. Additionally, people of the world turned their heads away instead of stopping this brutal massacre. At a time when human decency was yearned for, the world did not go to their rescue.

The United States is once again at a problematic time with ethnicities and religion. Following the effects of the terrorist attacks from September 11, 2001, many Americans have once again made a divide between their own citizens, rather similar to Rwanda. It is not through anger and retaliation that the nation will heal from such a tragedy, but from peaceful efforts made to stop from ever happening again. Many Middle Easterners feel the depth of the discrimination many African Americans once felt. What is to be reminded is that it was not all Middle Easterners who committed these crimes; nor were they all Muslims. The world needs to know that stereotyping and placing blame on people who are undeserving of it is morally wrong. Many people need to be reminded of the efforts and strategies Dr. King used in his struggle against violence.

Even more recent, it has been a topic in the news of students bullying those who have chosen to be part of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgendered community. These students who are bullying are being influenced by the media and replicate what they see in their own actions. Many students may not know the effects their words and actions may have on others. However, many more of the victims of bullying are choosing to harm themselves because they feel they are not allowed to express who they are and feel unwelcome. At such a developmental stage, it is critical that all students are to be shown love and given the acceptance they very much desire instead of being harassed and made fun of.

A reason why so many of these horrible actions have been dismissed is because society has been taught to “dehumanize” the victims. If one hears or listens to constant rhetoric and propaganda

regarding people who are different or “outside the norm” then one tends to believe that these victims are mere things, less than animals. The victims become indiscriminate objects that are not subject to the same feelings deserved by human beings. Calling people names, instead of identifying who they really are, minimizes their worth and devalues them. The “bystanders”, people who allow the bullying or discrimination to occur, have also become de-sensitized and thus “go along” with the crimes. Gone is the character trait of empathy or any understanding of a person’s situation.

Because so many people have lost this sense of understanding, the need for peace and acts of non-violence are needed now more than ever. Martin Luther King, Jr’s ideals, presented decades ago, need to remind people that violence and hatred are not the way to go about one’s life. In order for the following generations to have a peaceful and loving lifestyle, Dr. King’s methods must be reintroduced. It must be taught that there is more to life than hatred and brutality; that there are ways to go about things to express opinions that do not deal with criticizing others or destroying lives. As Dr. King ended his acceptance speech, “the beauty of genuine brotherhood and peace is more precious than diamonds or silver or gold.” Society must remember that life is valuable and fragile; each bringing new characteristics and meaning that are priceless.

Here below is Dr. King’s Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech

Martin Luther King - Nobel Prize Speech

Martin Luther King's Acceptance Speech, on the occasion of the award of the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo, December 10, 1964

Your Majesty, Your Royal Highness, Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I accept the [Nobel Prize for Peace](#) at a moment when 22 million Negroes of the United States of America are engaged in a creative battle to end the long night of racial injustice. I accept this award on behalf of a civil rights movement which is moving with determination and a majestic scorn for risk and danger to establish a reign of freedom and a rule of justice. I am mindful that only yesterday in Birmingham, Alabama, our children, crying out for brotherhood, were answered with fire hoses, snarling dogs and even death. I am mindful that only yesterday in Philadelphia, Mississippi, young people seeking to secure the right to vote were brutalized and murdered. And only yesterday more than 40 houses of worship in the State of Mississippi alone were bombed or burned because they offered a sanctuary to those who would not accept segregation. I am mindful that debilitating and grinding poverty afflicts my people and chains them to the lowest rung of the economic ladder. Therefore, I must ask why this prize is awarded to a movement which is beleaguered and committed to unrelenting struggle; to a movement which has not won the very peace and brotherhood which is the essence of the [Nobel Prize](#).

After contemplation, I conclude that this award which I receive on behalf of that movement is a profound recognition that nonviolence is the answer to the crucial political and moral question of our time -- the need for man to overcome oppression and violence without resorting to violence and oppression. Civilization and violence are antithetical concepts. Negroes of the United States, following the people of India, have demonstrated that nonviolence is not sterile passivity, but a powerful moral force which makes for social transformation. Sooner or later all the people of the world will have to discover a way to live together in [peace](#), and thereby transform this pending cosmic elegy into a creative psalm of brotherhood. If this is to be achieved, man must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love.

The tortuous road which has led from Montgomery, Alabama, to Oslo bears witness to this truth. This is a road over which millions of Negroes are travelling to find a new sense of dignity. This same road has opened for all Americans a new era of progress and hope. It has led to a new Civil Rights Bill, and it will, I am convinced, be widened and lengthened into a super highway of justice as Negro and white men in increasing numbers create alliances to overcome their common problems.

I accept this award today with an abiding faith in America and an audacious faith in the future of mankind. I refuse to accept despair as the final response to the ambiguities of history. I refuse to accept the idea that the "isness" of man's present nature makes him morally incapable of reaching up for the eternal "oughtness" that forever confronts him. I refuse to accept the idea that man is mere flotsam and jetsam in the river of life unable to influence the unfolding events which surround him. I refuse to accept the view that mankind is so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become a reality.

I refuse to accept the cynical notion that nation after nation must spiral down a militaristic stairway into the hell of thermonuclear destruction. I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word in reality. This is why right temporarily defeated is stronger than evil triumphant. I believe that even amid today's motor bursts and whining bullets, there is still hope for a brighter tomorrow. I believe that wounded justice, lying prostrate on the blood-flowing streets of our nations, can be lifted from this dust of shame to reign supreme among the children of men. I have the audacity to believe that peoples everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity, equality and freedom for their spirits. I believe that what self-centered men have torn down men other-centered can build up. 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 good will proclaimed the rule of the land. "And the lion and the lamb shall lie down together and every man shall sit under his own vine and fig tree and none shall be afraid." I still believe that *We Shall overcome!*

This faith can give us courage to face the uncertainties of the future. It will give our tired feet new strength as we continue our forward stride toward the city of freedom. When our days become dreary with low-hovering clouds and our nights become darker than a thousand midnights, we will know that we are living in the creative turmoil of a genuine civilization struggling to be born.

Today I come to Oslo as a trustee, inspired and with renewed dedication to humanity. I accept this prize on behalf of all men who love peace and brotherhood. I say I come as a trustee, for in the depths of my heart I am aware that this prize is much more than an honor to me personally. Every time I take a flight, I am always mindful of the many people who make a successful journey possible - the known pilots and the unknown ground crew. So you honor the dedicated pilots of our struggle who have sat at the controls as the freedom movement soared into orbit. You honor, once again, Chief Lutuli of South Africa, whose struggles with and for his people, are still met with the most brutal expression of man's inhumanity to man. You honor the ground crew without whose labor and sacrifices the jet flights to freedom could never have left the earth. Most of these people will never make the headline and their names will not appear in *Who's Who*. Yet when years have rolled past and when the blazing light of truth is focused on this marvelous age in which we live - men and women will know and children will be taught that we have a finer land, a better people, a more noble civilization - because these humble children of [God](#) were willing to suffer for righteousness sake.

I think Alfred Nobel would know what I mean when I say that I accept this award in the spirit of a curator of some precious heirloom which he holds in trust for its true owners - all those to whom beauty is truth and truth beauty - and in whose eyes the beauty of genuine brotherhood and peace is more precious than diamonds or silver or gold.