

Robert Berry

Unseen Visions

As a black person, I can personally say that I have never been discriminated against. Regardless of my race, I have been accepted for who I am and that is something for which I will be forever grateful. Martin Luther King Jr.'s message of equality resonates with me, as it should with everyone. My family and I recently moved from Detroit city into the suburbs, where we are one of the few black families. We have been accepted like any other neighbor, just as Martin Luther King Jr. had envisioned all those years ago.

Contrary to popular belief, however, Martin Luther King Jr.'s message is not only about race. His message is that everyone should be treated equally, regardless of ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and even religious beliefs. Too many people feel that his message is just about race and look down on people with differing beliefs, opposing genders, and foreign ethnicities. Many people forget that society does not treat everyone equally, even though everyone deserves it. That is why I feel that people should take these matters into their own hands.

I went to a high school with a student body of over two thousand students and, although the student population was mostly black, there were students of many different ethnical backgrounds that attended as well. Many students from all walks of life treating each other like equals is a beautiful sight. I was glad to see this type of equality and diversity here at Macomb Community College as well. While it may feel perfect for some, the America we live in now is not the fully realized "dream" that Martin Luther King Jr. had envisioned.

Martin Luther King Jr. had other messages that many people overlook. The second message that I will address is his message on America's economic injustices. While I never grew

up in what would be considered poverty, I am the product of two parents that did. The reason why we left Detroit was because of poverty. The city is a shadow of its former self, being eaten away by the people who run it. King's stance on poverty was that the nation was too preoccupied with spending on the army, which is happening now as well, and that the economy needs restructuring for the people in poverty to even have a fighting chance.

I got to see the effects that poverty can have firsthand. Cities, like Detroit, have been rapidly deteriorating for years, yet America has been trying to hide its ugly past of discrimination based on racism, sexism, poverty, sexual orientation, and religious beliefs. When I was living in Detroit, we slowly saw changes for the worse. Funding for public services was cut which meant schools went without supplies, streets went without streetlights, and police and fire departments don't have adequate funding to do their jobs efficiently or effectively. The whole city has slowly fallen into poverty, yet the government stood idly by and watched it happen. The only national coverage Detroit gets is when one of the big three car companies gets some publicity, and even then they neglect to mention the city's struggles.

I used to attend a charter school and a public school in my youth, both of which faced similar funding problems. The teachers would organize "donations" from the students in the form of tissues, paper, soap, hand sanitizer, etc. in exchange for extra credit. Some teachers would even spend their own money on supplies for the classroom. I will reiterate, my family was by no means poor, but this harrowing, poverty stricken condition of the city was all I knew growing up. I barely knew our neighbors because our neighborhood was too dangerous for children to play freely as the police did not have the funding to keep the streets safe. Most of the houses on my street had burned down because the firefighters did not have the funding to save such a large, empty city. This is just one city's account of the effects of poverty on America.

Some people think that because America has somewhat adapted to racial equality that everything is golden, but those people are wrong. Yes, civil rights laws have been enacted, but poverty is still a major problem in America. Martin Luther King Jr. was also an advocate for people in poverty, something that many people still do not know. He was assassinated before he got to carry out his plans for changing poverty conditions in America. However, just because he is gone does not mean that his message should be forgotten. We all remember Martin Luther King Jr.'s efforts for racial freedom, so why should we forget about his support for those in poverty?

Martin Luther King Jr.'s message of racial equality, one that I embrace as equality for everyone, has had a very substantial impact on my life. I treat all those I meet with the respect and equality that they deserve, and I hope to receive the same. I am still glad to say that I have never been discriminated against for my race, though it is sad to see that it is still happening in America. Despite this, I can clearly see that not all of Martin Luther King Jr.'s vision has been realized. Our government still spends too much money on the military, while our nation is still stricken by poverty. Although, it is apparent that most people have embraced racial equality, America still has a large portion of intolerant people. I think Martin Luther King Jr. would be proud of our progress, but I also think he would still be fighting for a change in the poverty conditions that grip a surprising portion of our nation and for the equal treatment of everyone in America. I would have loved to have written an essay full of nothing but stories of love and happiness, but I am afraid that that is just not the world we live in.