

## FLOOR STATEMENT

**Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday**

**Prepared for**

**The Honorable Jennifer L. McClellan, *Chairwoman***  
**The Honorable Mamie E. Locke, *Vice Chairwoman***



**Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Commission**

**January 18, 2016**

- Without love, benevolence becomes egotism.
- 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.
- Hatred paralyzes life; love releases it. Hatred confuses life; love harmonizes it. Hatred darkens life; love illumines it.
- Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.
- If man hasn't discovered something that he will die for, he isn't fit to live.
- Life's most persistent and urgent question is: What are you doing for others?
- It may be true that the law cannot make a man love me. But it can keep him from lynching me, and I think that's pretty important.
- Everybody can be great because everybody can serve.
- He who passively accepts evil is as much involved in it as he who helps to perpetrate it.
- The urgency of the hour calls for leaders of wise judgment and sound integrity—leaders not in love with money, but in love with justice; leaders not in love with publicity, but in love with humanity; leaders who can subject their particular egos to the greatness of the cause . . .
- It seems to me that education has a two-fold function to perform in the life of man and in society: the one is utility and the other is culture . . . The function of education, therefore, is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. But education which stops with efficiency may prove the greatest menace to society. The most dangerous criminal may be the man gifted with reason, but with no morals.
- One should seek to do his life's work as if God Almighty called him at this particular moment in history to do it. And he must do it with a sense of cosmic responsibility, no matter how small it happens to be. He must do a little job in a big way. He must do an ordinary job in an extraordinary way. "If you can't be a pine on the top of a hill, be a scrub in the valley, but be the best little scrub on the side of the hill. Be a bush if you can't be a tree. If you can't be a highway, just be a trail. If you can't be the sun, be a star. For it isn't by size that you win or you fail. Be the best of whatever you are.

These are but a few of the quotes of Dr. King, and they attest to the profundity of his intellect, wisdom, and greatness.

Mr. Speaker/President, I rise today, as Chairwoman/Vice Chairwoman of Virginia's Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Commission, to pay tribute to the "drum major" for justice, on the national commemoration of the 87th anniversary of his birth. Dr. King was born on January 15, 1929, in Atlanta, Georgia. On April 4, 1968, an assassin's bullet ended his life, but not his dream for America.

We pause today with persons around the nation and throughout the world to remember the life and legacy of one of history's greatest leaders, visionaries and orators, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Dr. King has been called a "drum major for justice, peace, and righteousness," and many people remember him as the anonymous young Southern Baptist preacher who suddenly emerged on the scene as the leader of the Montgomery Bus Boycott in December 1955 and the 1966 Chicago protests for equal housing. He has been credited with marshaling, galvanizing, and unifying African Americans and other justice-loving persons across the nation to change the social order and the status quo through nonviolent protests, commonly known as the Civil Rights Movement.

It is unfortunate that too many people know Dr. King only as a great civil rights leader, due in part to the media's shaping of personalities and events. He was much, much more than a great civil rights leader. Our Commission works to introduce Virginians to Dr. King in the totality of his being as a noted scholar, prolific writer, peacemaker, humanitarian, a lover of history, an advocate for education, the consummate pulpiteer, theologian, philosopher, father, husband, and servant who decided early to give his life to "something eternal and absolute." These are the qualities and characteristics of Dr. Martin Luther King which the Commission strives to educate the public through our work.

The national theme of The King Center this year, "Remember! Celebrate! Act! King's Legacy of Freedom for Our World," reminds us that Dr. King's legacy resonates throughout the nation and internationally. Honoring Dr. King last year, President Barack Obama stated: "A champion for justice, the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., helped awaken our Nation's long-slumbering conscience and inspired a generation. Through a cacophony of division and hatred, his voice rang out, challenging America to make freedom a reality for all of God's children and prophesying a day when the discord of our Union would be transformed into a symphony of brotherhood. His clarion call echoed the promise of our founding -- that each of us are created equal -- and every day he worked to give meaning to this timeless creed."

Although we have not yet achieved his "Beloved Community," where peace, justice, equality, love, and the respect for the dignity of all persons prevail, I believe Dr. King would be proud that we are closer than we were during his lifetime. I believe that he would also exhort us to go the distance to annihilate discrimination, extend the promises of the Constitution to all Americans, and accept the challenge to actualize his vision of the "Beloved Community" for our brothers and sisters around the world.

Finally, it is appropriate that we remember today the circumstances and social conditions in our nation that propelled Dr. King--this "drum major for justice, love, peace, and equality"--into the social consciousness. It is important that we remember our past so that we do not repeat it. It is important that we remember the significance of Dr. King's life to the freedoms that we all enjoy. Quoting Dr. King, "The time is always right to do what is right." King was not a "political panderer." My colleagues, as we conduct the people's business, let it be said of us that we, too, did what was right.

Therefore, on behalf of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Commission, we invite you to join us as we recommit ourselves to leadership through service to the people of this great Commonwealth, and strive for public policies that reflect his dream of justice, love, peace, and equality. Let us accept Dr. King's challenge to be "great" by serving one another, being supportive of each other, and sincerely working together to make Virginia a "Commonwealth of Opportunity," and these United States, the land of the "Beloved Community," where people are judged by "the content of their character and not by the color of their skin."

Mr. Speaker, I move that when the House of Delegates adjourns today, that we do so in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

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Mr. President, I move that when the Senate adjourns today, that we do so in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

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