

Betraying the Legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King

Martin Luther King Day precedes the historic inauguration of America's first African American President

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This article was published on Martin Luther King Day in January 2009, a few days prior to Barack Obama's first term inauguration. As the title suggest, Obama betrayed the Legacy of Dr. King from the very outset of his first term as president of the United States.

Martin Luther King Day in 2009 precedes the dawn of the historic inauguration of America's first African American President. This inauguration is lauded as the realization of Dr. King's dream, a defining moment in the cultural paradigm, a tectonic shift in race relations and a beacon of real change for the plight of the poor and oppressed. Infusing the dreams and ethos of Dr. King in to the presidential persona demands a confluence of ideals and actions to truly deserve the association. To betray the dream, to profit from the sacrifice is to insult the legacy. To be worthy of the torch demands integrity.

"Somehow this madness must cease. We must stop now. I speak as a child of God and brother to the suffering poor of Vietnam. I speak for those whose land is being laid waste, whose homes are being destroyed, whose culture is being subverted. I speak for the poor in America who are paying the double price of smashed hopes at home and death and corruption in Vietnam. I speak as a citizen of the world, for the world as it stands aghast at the path we have taken. I speak as an American to the leaders of my own nation. The great initiative in this war is ours. The initiative to stop it must be ours."

This speech by Dr. Martin Luther King in 1967 is as poignant today as it was back then. The names change but the nightmare remains the same. Today's Iraq and Afghanistan replace yesterday's Vietnam. Today's increased level of poverty and imprisonment of a hugely disproportionate number of African Americans in the prison system, the slaughter of millions more of the world's poor and Dr. King's subsequent murder at the hands of his own government bear witness to exactly which initiative was taken.

President-Elect Barack Obama, in his speeches, expresses his desire to inculcate the ideals of Dr. King in to his decision making and his attitude to his fellow human beings. He "chokes up" repeating the words of this Man of Peace, but he'll "hold it together" on Inauguration day. He'll make America, in Dr. King's words "a land no longer torn asunder with racial hatred and ethnic strife, a land that measured itself by how it treats the least of these, a land in which strength is defined not simply by the capacity to wage war but by the determination to forge peace - a land in which all of God's children might come together in a spirit of brotherhood."

He stands silent as his country aids in the genocide of the Palestinians. He will forge peace by sending 30,000 American troops to Afghanistan to intensify the massacre that has left nearly 800,000 of his brothers and sisters dead. He stands silent on the more than 700,000 of his brothers and sisters who have been murdered in Iraq. He threatens War against Iran, Syria and already destroyed Lebanon. He remains silent on the murder of his brother Oscar Grant III by police officer Johannes Mehserle in California. He perpetuates what Dr. King called "a nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift".

"Many of the ugly pages of American history have been obscured and forgotten....America owes a debt of justice which it has only begun to pay. If it loses the will to finish or slackens in its determination, history will recall its crimes and the country that would be great will lack the most indispensable element of greatness-justice" Martin Luther King, 1967.

The President-Elect refuses to bring George Bush, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Henry Kissinger and the rest of the War criminals to justice as he looks forward from the mountain top and points the way to spiritual death.

Would Dr. King, if he actually held public office, have voted for invading Iraq, invading Afghanistan, sending arms and money to Israel and remained silent as his poverty stricken brothers and sisters were slaughtered?

The words of Martin Luther King have been hijacked by those would would use his message to further their narcissistic goals. His peaceful supplication has been betrayed by lies and a sickening adulation of meaningless oratory. His greatest statements of love and humanity have been relegated to sound bites for mass consumption by a deceived public who have put their faith in a man who represents all that Dr. King was fighting peacefully against.

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