

Martin Luther King's dream of brotherhood calls us to create a new world

by Elisa Graf

Half a century has passed since the life of Martin Luther King, Jr. was cut short by a bullet, at the young age of 39. Now, as we recall his death on 4 April 1968, the echoes of his dream of universal brotherhood still resound, in stark contrast to a world that appears more divided than ever, begging the question: what have we learned and what has changed since that fateful day?

The Reverend Dr Martin Luther King, Jr. is often remembered as the most visible spokesperson and leader for American civil rights, passionately defending the human rights of black Americans and effectively battling to end to racial segregation. Under his leadership the civil rights movement burgeoned into a powerful force for change and influenced the development of many movements for social progress to come. But Dr King's crusade for social and economic justice was also a global cause; he became a world figure championing human rights movements on many continents, promoting an end to war and expressing the need for what he called, "a worldwide fellowship that lifts neighborly concern beyond one's tribe, race, class and nation, ... a call for an all-embracing and unconditional love for all men, ... as an absolute necessity for the survival of man." To achieve this, he promoted Gandhi's view of non-violent peaceful protest as the only effective agent of real change, emphasizing that "man must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression and retaliation", with love as its foundation. For his work combating racial inequality through non-violent resistance, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964.

King also recognized the distinct relationship between what he called the three evils: racism, poverty and war. He referred to them as the violence of the flesh and the violence of the spirit, saying that "any religion that professes to be concerned about the souls of men and is not concerned about the slums that damn them, the economic conditions that strangle them and the social conditions that cripple them is a spiritually moribund religion awaiting burial."

He envisioned the creation of a new society which he called the 'Beloved Community', based on justice, equal opportunity,

and love of one's fellow human beings. In the Beloved Community, he said, poverty, hunger and homelessness would not be tolerated because international standards of human decency would not allow it. Racism and all forms of discrimination, bigotry and prejudice would be replaced by an all-inclusive spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood – a moral inclusiveness both economic and social.

In a recent article for Project Syndicate, economist Joseph Stiglitz outlines a new report that investigates what has changed since King's life, recently published as a book, *Healing Our Divided Society: Investing in America Fifty Years After the Kerner Report*. The product of a commission set up by President Lyndon B. Johnson, the

Kerner report investigated the causes of the devastating national race riots of 1967, proposing measures to address them. The report's conclusions, explains Stiglitz, "described a country in which African-Americans faced systematic discrimination, suffered from inadequate education and housing, and lacked access to economic opportunities." The root cause of the riots was found to be "the racial attitude and behavior of white Americans toward black Americans. ... Race prejudice has shaped our history decisively; it now threatens to affect our future."

Stiglitz notes that the central message of the new report reflects the deep insights of Martin Luther King, Jr. and indicates that "achieving economic justice for African-Americans cannot be separated from achieving economic opportunities for all Americans." He adds: "The economic divide in the US has grown much wider, with devastating effects on those without a col-

(continued on page 18)



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of the path and mapping out the road to the new Polis.

Becoming aware that we are the Emergence is therefore a very important step for our group in the process of the “reception” of the return of the Hierarchy.

Finally, we can say that living the Emergence as a political act, an educational act, and an act of will, gives us the right as a group to choose again.

The opportunity to choose, lost for so long, is being given to us again today as a human group. Today, by an act of will, which can be applied in the political field, we can make a conscious decision to work with and for the Light. The Return of the Hierarchy

of Masters of Wisdom is the opportunity that allows us as a human group to oppose evil and overcome it by an act of will. It also allows us to claim the connection with the soul and the spirit as a natural requirement that must be expressed in the political structure, at both the collective and individual level.

So, one can say at every level from the individual to the collective: “Yes, soul and spirit exist. Yes, I can be in touch with these levels. Yes, I affirm it. Yes, I have the right to affirm it.” And in stating this as an ontological affirmation, I affirm it as a political right, devoid of any dogma; and so, I create the New Civilization.

The work that awaits us in the coming years is therefore enormous. It is a question of making this goal an object of discussion so that it can be achieved. It is a question of defining the steps that will guide us towards this goal: redefining the political and religious fields, reorienting them in the right direction at the service of human evolution, and affirming knowledge of the Self as a natural requirement for structuring the political field.

¹ Article ‘The Son of Man’, from *A Master Speaks, Volume One*

² See *Share International*, November 2017: ‘Reflecting on past and future work’.

Martin Luther King

continued from page 7

lege education, a group that includes almost three-quarters of African-Americans.”

Discrimination, says Stiglitz, is still rampant today, and oft hidden, as quoted in the report: “Almost a half-century after the enactment of anti-discrimination laws, racism, greed, and market power still work together to the disadvantage of African-Americans.” He explains that African-Americans are targets for exploitation by the American financial sector, leading to ever more dire social consequences, like homelessness and increasing economic inequality. Even with banks like Wells Fargo paying huge fines for their abuse of African-American and Latino borrowers, no one is really ever held accountable for the systemic abuses. The book also discusses one of the most disturbing aspects of America’s racial inequality: inequality in securing access to justice, reinforced by a system of mass incarceration, which largely targets African-Americans.

While such findings seem bleak, Stiglitz also notes that some problematic areas originally identified in the Kerner Report have improved, for example, participation in politics and government by black Americans – of which he says Barack Obama’s election is a symbol. He notes some issues also remain unchanged, for example, education and employment disparities, while some have worsened, namely wealth and income inequality.

Stiglitz says that there are also several reasons for hope: “First, our understanding of discrimination is far better. Today, we understand that the market is rife with imperfections – including imperfections of information and competition – that provide ample opportunity for discrimination and exploitation.” He also suggests that the US is paying a high price for inequality, and an especially high price for its racial inequality, saying, “A society marked by such divisions will not be a beacon to the world, and its economy will not flourish. The real strength of the US is not its military power but its soft power, which has been badly eroded not just by Trump, but also by persistent racial discrimination. Everyone will lose if it is not addressed.”

The most promising development, Stiglitz says, is “the outpouring of activism, especially from young people, who realize that it is high time that the US lives up to its ideals, so nobly expressed in its Declaration of Independence, that all men are created equal.” He concludes that an alternative world is possible, while the past fifty years of struggle have shown how difficult it is to achieve that vision. To make further progress, counsels Stiglitz, “will require determination, sustained by the faith expressed in the immortal words of the spiritual that became the hymn of the civil rights movement: ‘We shall overcome’.”

References:

www.project-syndicate.org; time.com; nobelpize.org; thekingcenter.org; ppu.org.uk

Environmental justice

continued from page 15

Housing shortages, affordability issues, rent increases and competition for scarce resources will put the economically disadvantaged – the poor, the elderly, families with children, and sick people – at a greater disadvantage. That’s what we found over eight decades of government response to disasters. In last year’s disasters – Hurricane Harvey in Houston, Hurricane Irma in Florida, and Hurricane Maria in the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico – we see that same pattern continuing, writ large.

SI: *What does the future look like for the environmental justice movement?*

RB: The environmental justice movement is alive and well. The backbone of the movement is that it is intergenerational. Part of the larger environmental movement is the environmental justice movement, which has a great ability to attract young people and students. To me, that will be the future of this country when we talk about environmentalism and changing demographics, and infusing justice and equity into all of our movements, whether environmental, economic, voting, or issues around the criminal justice system. Our environmental justice framework has been able to translate and cross over into a large number of movements, not only in this country but throughout a large part of the world.

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