

## **The King's Vision: What It Takes to Build a Beloved Community**

Civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr had a vision, not a distant utopia, for a community that accepted differences and eradicated violence, which created a tangible reality where love, as a driving force, binds the community together (The King Center). As Bell Hooks once said, "Beloved community is formed not by the eradication of difference but by its affirmation, by each of us claiming the identities and cultural legacies that shape who we are and how we live in the world." In other words, a beloved community is an achievable reality rooted in nonviolence in which love transcends, above all, transforming people and society through evoking empathy, compassion, commitment to justice, equality, and understanding. However, the route to glory has hurdles we must be willing to resist and overcome as a demonstration of our commitment to a unified and caring society. Furthermore, we can use grassroots movements, educational initiatives, and technology to combat societal obstacles like systematic biases and generational prejudices.

Martin Luther King Jr believed in the Triple Evils of poverty, racism, and militarism as the core barriers that hinder the development of the beloved community (The King Center). These barriers persist today, manifesting in challenges such as systematic biases and generational prejudices. For example, workplace policies that discriminate against African hairstyles exemplify enduring racial biases within institutions that hinder free expression and fully embracing their roots and identities. The Legal Defense Fund even claims "hair discrimination as racism by another name." Furthermore, policies condemning African hairstyles aimed to preserve white spaces and rationalize the removal of black people despite the natural needs and historical significance embedded in black hairstyles (Legal Defense Fund). With its unique

textures, black hair holds historical significance rooted in self-expression and culture. Cornrows, specifically, were used as a discrete form of communication and to depict escape routes (Ajao). Therefore, enforcing policies targeting specific hair types censors the history of black suffrage. In essence, discriminatory regulations on cultural hairstyles illustrate Martin Luther King Jr's definition of racism-- a prejudiced, arrogant assertion that one race is superior to others, perpetuating separation and tyrannical sentiment (The King Center).

Moreover, Cullman County, Alabama, founded in 1873, expresses poverty and violence, where black people risked their well-being after sunset (Miles). This violence, a manifestation of Martin Luther King Jr.'s Triple Evils, dehumanizes and diminishes people by forcing individuals to accept inequality through evils and violence, placing them in a dark and degrading place (The King Center). By recognizing the systematic oppression Colony endured, we illustrate a commitment to eradicate the evil that drives us further away from a beloved society. In addition, the historical racism that tainted Cullman County is to blame for the present challenges faced by Colony, the county in which 5% of the total population is black. The lack of sewage systems highlights past biases. The community's need to actively seek funds for necessities illustrates the past neglect and mirrors Martin Luther King Jr. 's depiction of poverty (Miles). He goes on to state that poverty makes up for the disregard for the basic needs of the marginalized (The King Center). Therefore, the challenges faced by the Colony subdivision exemplify the historical racism urging our responsibility to uplift and protect marginalized communities.

However, Martin Luther King Jr. understood that retaliating against the Triple Evils required employing love. He believed that "Nonviolence is a love-centered way of thinking, speaking, acting, and engaging that leads to personal, cultural, and societal transformation" and

"the outcome of nonviolence is the creation of the Beloved Community" (The King Center). We can employ nonviolence through grassroots movements, educational initiatives, and technology to combat the evil and hatred that others carry. For example, the Legal Defense Fund has actively advocated and litigated for the end of race-based hair discrimination by pushing forward The Crown Act. The Crown Act aims to strengthen workers' and students' rights by prohibiting policies enforcing hair discrimination. The LDF has helped implement The Crown Act in 24 states, exemplifying how advocacy can lead to legal measures that protect self-expression, identity, and historical significance. In this way, legal interventions illustrate how educational initiatives and technology significantly leverage a beloved community. According to Dr. King's fundamental philosophy of nonviolence principle 3, nonviolence seeks to defeat injustice or evil, not people (The King Center). It recognizes that those who carry hate and evil are victims of evil, and, therefore, nonviolence enforcers seek to eradicate the evil within and not attack the individual. In this case, educating people about diverse hair types, protective hairstyles, the historical significance, and the Crown Act illustrates the dismantling of misconceptions that lead to hate and evil. In effect, combating injustice without dehumanizing others demonstrates nonviolent resistance.

Furthermore, examining grassroots movements, the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement seeks to highlight stark differences in how Black and White people are treated in today's society. BLM strives to stress the prejudices and biases found in institutions, laws, and policies that perpetuate the unfair treatment of Black Americans (Britannica). Originating from the community through protests and awareness campaigns, most often regarding police brutality and racism. Essentially, the BLM movement calls for society to recognize Black people as equals

(Britannica). BLM embodies Martin Luther King's Jr. nonviolence principles through dedication and resistance. Local communities and the Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation (BLMGNF) illustrate a way of life for courageous people, combating and resisting evil to develop a loving and accepting community. The BLMGNF also shows the mass unwavering devotion towards equality in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom (Britannica), highlighting the dedication to achieve a loving and accepting beloved community.

In conclusion, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s vision of an all-inclusive community bonded through sisterhood and brotherhood illustrates an aspirational dream awaiting realization. Through movements like Black Lives Matter and the Crown Act, the journey in pursuing justice and equality continues, fostering hope that the obstacles along this journey may be overcome on the path to the beloved community envisioned by King.

#### Works Cited

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