

(Untitled Essay)

As African-Americans had learned all too well by the 1950's, the Emancipation Proclamation had not truly set them free, for, even though they were constitutionally guaranteed freedom, many white people still held them down. They started to fight back, as many Black Pride groups such as the Black Panthers did, but their retaliation often resulted in their becoming what they were fighting against, resulting in the loss of meaning in their message and loss of white support. They needed a leader to guide them, and Martin Luther King Jr. was the voice that emerged, a voice that became one of the greatest voices of peace and equality through history. King took the Judeo-Christian expression of "turning the other cheek" to an extreme, because he argued that if any group oppressed was to turn to violence there would only be more pain. He argued that to achieve equality, violence was not the answer, because, as Reverend King put it, "Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars... Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that."

His message was one of passive resistance, and he said that no matter how much resistance you face, you should never stand down or strike back. His philosophy was revolutionary: if asked to stop trying to achieve equality, don't, and if forced to stop, never strike back. He said that the oppressed should let cruel people attack them, but regardless of what the oppressors do, one must not let anyone, at all, change you or silence your message of equality. It is true that without this preacher the civil rights movement would have never been won, and that the civil rights movement, owing to this man's courage, changed the face of America forever. He did not, however, remove hate from the world, and his message of peace and equality has not been carried to completion: Martin Luther King Jr. would be rolling in his grave if he saw the

unfortunate importance of race in everyday society. King would have hated to see that half the issues are focused on giving African-Americans special treatment, while the other half of the issues are focused on holding back African-Americans.

King would have hated affirmative action. He would have approved of aiding poor African-Americans, but he would want them to be aided because they are poor, not because they are African-American. He would have hated the racist attitudes of many of the police, but even more he would have hated the lack of trust that the black community has in all police officers. He would have hated how castigated people are for letting loose an even slight anti-black comment, while it is socially acceptable for an African-American to say whatever he feels like in opposition in whites. He would have loved how a black man is running for president, but would have hated that people talk about and vote for the color of skin and not the content of his character. He would have hated how hardly anyone, not even un-stereotypical African-Americans, has tried to make others think of blacks not as a community, but as just other people. Martin Luther King Jr. wanted people to be united at the table of brotherhood, but until thoughts of people can stop being black-or-white and start being the shades of a common people, that will not happen.