

to: Karen Hansen  
re: MLK day  
date: 2/2/98

Karen, this is a bit after the fact (however it is still Black History Month) but I wanted to share it with you. Last month, before the snow slowed us down, you asked that folks let you know of MLK remembrances and ceremonies occurring at their buildings. That notice prompted these tho'ts:

Martin Luther King Day evokes some special memories for me. August 1963 I boarded a bus with 46 other young people, black and white, from a Youth conference in North Carolina, and began a journey of special moments. We had spent two days preparing for 'The March'. One day was in workshops and seminars learning how to respond non-violently to possible physical and/or verbal assaults which we might encounter as we chose to stand on our beliefs for equality of jobs and freedoms. We sat in discussion of Dr. King's Letters from the Birmingham Jail. Our seminar leaders were veterans of the sit-ins in the south. They had had cigarettes stamped out on the backs of their necks and hot coffee dumped down their fronts as they chose to sit with their African-American friends requesting equal service in restaurants and coffee shops. The second day was spent in silence, communicating without words, meditating, reflecting, taking to heart Dr. King's message and hopes. And so the journey began.

As we entered Washington, DC in the early hours of the morning, we stopped for breakfast at Howard Johnson's. After all forty-seven of us had been seated, the hostess let us know that she could serve only the 'whites'! As the whole of us exited the restaurant (no breakfast had), it gave poignant reminder as to our mission: the March for Equality. The day progressed: debarking at the Washington Monument, receiving our placards and directives, taking in the crowd, drinking in the spirit and the energy of the occasion, pinching myself to see if it was all really real and finally, MARCHING.. Walking hand in hand, filling the street abreast and singing "We Shall Overcome", we took our place in history.

The array of guest performers and celebrities at the microphone in front of the Lincoln Memorial that day was impressive but paled in comparison to the reverberating sound of Martin Luther King's voice as he spoke: "I have a dream....." As I reflect back on that day, I still get gooseflesh. Sitting with my feet in the Reflection Pool (because of the crowd we couldn't get any closer that two-thirds of the way down the Pool), I witnessed history, smelled the heat, felt the excitement, surveyed the diversity of the crowd. First time ever 200,000 persons gathered on common ground. What an opportunity. How awesome. Such a journey!

And the legacy lesson? Chose something....cause, ideal, **your** dream,....larger than yourself and commit. Commit to it's accomplishment, fulfillment. March! March ahead! March forward! Believe!

