

A Letter to Dr. King

Dear Dr. King,

I began writing this letter to you on your birthday. Though the gift of life was stripped from you, I wanted to offer you a gift that proves your legacy lives on. A gift that proves your dream has taken strides to becoming reality.

So much has taken place since you've been gone. The streets you once marched on tell new stories. Cracks in the pavement mark change made with every step. Rain washes away the tears that fell, the blood that was spilt, and even the gas that left a stinging pain in the eyes of many a peaceful protester like yourself. Each burn, beating, and bruise reminded them that the manifestation of dreams does not come cheap. Though Heaven's cries wash the residuals from the streets, the cracks in the pavement remain. They serve to remind us that though the pain proves difficult to forget, the change that resulted from that pain is powerful, too.

The day to day interactions I often fail to consider would mark as milestones in your eyes. I watch girls of various races drink from the same water fountain after a basketball game. I see little boys of all shades playing outside together in the snow. The 44th President of the United States was an African American man, and his wife was an African American woman. I sit in the very front of my lecture with a sea of white, brown, and yellow behind me as President of the class in a school where, like many, racism once reared its ugly head.

Dr. King, this was *your* dream, and I have seen it come to life. Not just in Maryland or Michigan, but across the world. This dream that you had for the entire nation has spread far and wide. You raised your hand fervently in the fight for equality and little did you know that your fingertips would touch places you had never been. These are your cracks in the pavement, Dr. King. This is your reminder that change came from the pain. And though so much has changed, far too much has stayed the same.

You had dreamed that your four children would live in a nation where they would not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character. Though children of all races play amongst one another, 12-year-old black boys are gunned down in the streets. Immigrant children are locked in cages, separated from their parents at the border. The content of their character has no value here.

Churches that were once a place sanctified for dreams have become homes to nightmares. Horrors stemming from hatred such as the bombing of the 16th street Baptist Church in 1963 have been paralleled in racially motivated mass shootings such as that of the Charleston church in 2015.

Dr. King, the fight is far from over. Inequality is still present in various ways. Women do not have the same opportunities as men do for pay, whilst minorities do not have the same opportunities as that of white men for work and housing. Mass incarceration has taken its home in the black community. Gun violence and police brutality continue to speak boldly. They are shouting, Dr. King, but we are shouting louder. We are shouting Black Lives Matter, shouting Mike, Tamir, Trayvon, Sandra and Eric! We are shouting that all men are created equal; we are shouting with every brother and sister in Christ who will join us. Black, White, Brown, Yellow, whatever color – we stretch our hands out to God, even when it is hard to feel Him. We allow

tears to fall from our faces into each crack our pain has left in the pavement. We feel the change underneath our feet, and we know that we grow closer with each passing day. Free at last, *free at last!* We are shouting free at last. We shout it, even before the freedom comes, for we still believe that who the Son sets free is free indeed.

Kyara Samuels