

MLK Day 2026 Reflection

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This time last year, I was in Memphis, USA, with leaders from many faith traditions, as one of the speakers at an interfaith service entitled: "For Such a Time as This: A Moral Call to Action in America's Defining Moment." We were there to speak truth to power on the day of the president's inauguration.

The day before the service, my colleague Tammy Rabon-Noyce and I went to visit the Civil Rights Museum. The powerful exhibitions told many stories, such as the lunch counter sit-ins, where African Americans would sit in the seats reserved for white customers only, place an order, and refuse to leave when they weren't served. And Rosa Parks, and the Montgomery Bus Boycott. There was also the original TV footage of the march from Selma to Montgomery, where civil rights protesters tried to cross the bridge over the Alabama River and were met with vicious, state-approved violence. This TV footage, which is just like the viral videos of today, brought the reality of what was happening right into people's homes across the nation and across the world.

Three qualities were evident to me learning more about Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the civil rights movement: resistance, resilience, and faith. Individuals, small groups, and then hundreds and thousands of people resisted the injustice and the oppression that pervaded their everyday lives—in shops, cafes, on buses, and going to school or wanting to exercise their right to vote. People worked together to dismantle white supremacy. They resisted power and oppression by doing ordinary things in an extraordinary way, and they kept doing it. They kept resisting, often at great personal cost, until change happened.

What was so powerful to me was just how many times people were willing to resist. It takes such resilience to keep going like that; to try and cross that bridge two more times, knowing what had happened after the first attempt; to go on another march, and another, and another. To walk to and from work—which was in itself exhausting—every day for 13 months, come rain or shine, instead of taking the bus. To resist violence, arrest, injury, and even death. To keep resisting when the power against you seems overwhelming and your efforts seem futile. These are stories of great resilience on an individual and on a community level.

So why did folk keep going? For many people, it was a deep and abiding faith that the God that they and we worship is a God of justice and peace. And what does God require of you? To act justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God. They trusted in God that they would one day see a better time, and they were prepared to work and pray to make it happen.

Resistance, resilience, and faith. Today, we mark the life and ministry of a man admired around the world. We also honor thousands of people who joined with him to change that world—our world. The ministry of Dr. Martin Luther King is within living memory. There are people within MCC who have their own memories of that time, who were present in Washington for that march, and all who have

heard and learned the stories of their family members and community who were part of that movement.

The struggle against white supremacy, racism, and oppression around the world has not gone away. We still need to do that work within ourselves and within MCC. Resistance, resilience, and faith are still very much needed, and I see those qualities being shown by MCCers around the world every day. As many of you know, Martin Luther King Day is a public holiday in the USA. However, as well as taking the time to be with family and friends, many people also choose to perform acts of service to honor Doctor King: volunteering, organizing an event to build community, or taking time to serve those at the margins.

I know that many of you will be making a difference today. I hope that around the world, we will also pause and give thanks for all those who have worked for justice. It may feel as though the struggle will never end. However, Doctor King reminds us that a lie cannot live forever. The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice.

God bless.