

Name: Prince Rusweka

Grade: 11

School: William H. Hall High School

1st Congressional District

A Dreamer's Take On Martin Luther King's Legacy

Yolanda King was only twelve years old when she learned that her father, Martin Luther King Jr., was shot. The eldest daughter of the Civil Rights leader quickly rushed to her mother, Coretta King, to ask if she should hate her father's killer. King told her daughter not to, as her father would not want her to. Years later, she would acknowledge that she did not hate her father's killer. Dr. King's virtues and beliefs empowered his daughter to forgive the man who killed her father. Those virtues and beliefs would pioneer the activism for peaceful civil protest, resistance, racial equality, and equity progressed onto oppressed people and their children.

On December 10th, 1964, nearly a year after his "I Have A Dream" speech—calling for equality, freedom, and peaceful protest promised in the Declaration of Independence—during the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom and the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Dr. King was deemed the youngest Nobel Peace Prize laureate at thirty-five years. Towards the end of his speech, King accepts the award in the spirit of a curator that elucidates peace as a precious heirloom where he proclaims that "the beauty of genuine brotherhood and peace is more precious than diamonds or silver or gold". Rooting from his Christian Pacifist beliefs, peace and non-violence were principles that he held at the beginning of his career. Dr. King's consistent quest for peace would trace his overall outline that would be used in his sermons and speeches—a principle that would echo with his children, legacy, and millions of people decades after his death.

Millions of dreamers were not able to reach their maximum potential. Millions of dreamers had lost their lives on account of unspeakable acts of violence. Millions of dreamers whose natural talents would never see the page of a book or a second on television or radio. Millions of dreamers would not be able to pioneer and assist their movements. Millions of dreamers could not witness the crusades that would kickstart the journeys for their rights.

Decades after King's assassination, his nonviolent beliefs prevail in movements across the globe. South African racial justice leader, Albert Luthuli, implemented King's work as an inspiration for the Black Consciousness Movement during apartheid; he would also be bestowed with the Nobel Peace Prize for his nonviolent methods combatting apartheid. In his Nobel Peace presentation, he would also expound his objectives of nonviolence and human fraternity— values prevalent in King's Nobel Peace Prize speech.

Today, I am a dreamer. Millions heard, watched, and tuned in to Dr. King's dream during his epochal sermons and speeches. As a dreamer, I can uphold the life values to become an anchored citizen. As a dreamer, I hope to spread peace amongst family and peers. As a dreamer, I hope that I can attain the same peace that allowed Yolanda to forgive her father's killer.