

## Why we can't wait

Written by Timothy Houston  
Monday, 14 January 2013 15:29

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Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was born January 15, 1929. This month, all over the country and the world events and activities will be held to commemorate his contributions and achievements with are many and noteworthy. He was a leader, preacher, activist, and writer. I believe one of his greatest works was written in 1963 from his jail cell in Birmingham Alabama. Without the aid of any reference material, Dr. King wrote the 20 page letter on the margin of the newspapers and other scrap pieces of paper. He words in the letter were so thought-provoking and powerful that they still resonate today.

Dr. King wrote the letter in a response to a statement made by eight white Alabama clergymen. These men questioned King's tactic. They believed that social injustices existed but argued that the battle against racial segregation should be fought solely in the courts, not in the streets. They criticized him calling him an "outsider" who causes trouble in the streets of Birmingham. To this charge, Dr. King eloquently responded using his knowledge as a preacher and an activist as the platform for his response.

The theme of the letter was simple and straight forward, we can't wait. Dr. King believed that "this 'Wait' has almost always meant 'Never. King declared that they had waited for these God-given rights long enough and that "justice too long delayed is justice denied." He wrote, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly... Anyone who lives inside the United States can never be considered an outsider..."

From his dimly lit jail cell, Dr. King passionately addressed the accusation that the civil rights movement was "extreme", first disputing the label but then accepting it. His discussion of extremism implicitly responds to numerous <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moderate> objections to the civil rights movement, such as President Eisenhower's claim that he could not meet with civil rights leaders because doing so would require him to meet with the [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ku\\_Klux\\_Klan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ku_Klux_Klan)

"Ku Klux Klan" Ku Klux Klan. This moderate approach would accomplish nothing. He argues that Jesus and other heroes were extremists and writes: "So the question is not whether we will be extremists, but what kind of extremists we will be. Will we be extremists for hate or for love?"

Dr. King ended his letter with a message of hope. This message is needed now more than ever. With racial profiling on the rise and the unemployment gap between blacks and whites at the highest levels in modern times, we can not wait! We have been given our charge. Dr. King ended his letter with the following, "Let us all hope that the dark clouds of racial prejudice will soon pass away and the deep fog of misunderstanding will be lifted from our fear-drenched communities, and in some not too distant tomorrow the radiant stars of love and brotherhood will shine over our great nation with all their scintillating beauty."

Happy Birthday Dr. King!

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