

GREEN FOR ALL PRESENTS:

the Dream Reborn

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Shining a New Light

Posted by Van Jones on March 17th, 2008

On April 4, 1968, a sniper assassinated Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The preeminent civil rights leader of his time, King had come to Memphis, Tennessee, to aid striking sanitation workers. He was only 39 years old.

Forty years have passed since that fateful day. As of this month, Dr. King has been gone from us longer than he was ever here. As we pass this milestone in history, we gather in Memphis to remind ourselves and the world that - though a bullet killed the dreamer - it did not kill the dream.

Dr. King had a vision of an America as good as its promise, and a world at peace with itself. That vision lives on in the hearts of hundreds of millions - including two generations of adults and a rising generation of teen-agers, all of whom have been born since King's passing. The time has come for us to step forward. We must take full responsibility to advance the cause of justice, opportunity and peace.

It must be said that we are stepping onto history's stage at a frightening time—at a time when "the Market" is free, and the people are not.

A time of global warming and global war. A time of mass incarceration of people, and mass extinction of species. A time of "no rules" for the rich, and "no rights" for the poor. A time when our courts seem to give nothing but evictions and convictions to those on the bottom. A time of increasing profits for the few, and decreasing options for the many.

And yet, inside the United States, the tide has begun to turn. The GOP juggernaut that carried the nation to the brink of destruction has begun to run out of gas. Ordinary Americans today are longing for a leader, not a cowboy-in-chief. Some are rethinking consumerism, seeking healthier choices for their families, worrying about oil prices and even the climate crisis. And just three years after George W. Bush's re-election, the mighty political party that Karl Rove thought would rule America for generations appears to be falling apart at the seams.

Something has shifted—profoundly.

Unfortunately, all the old political figures, outdated modes of discourse and stodgy institutions are still with us. But you can feel something exciting beginning to stir—and break loose—underneath.

The future is getting restless. We are on the brink of something promising and new. And for the first time in more than a generation, those of us who value living beings over dead products have a chance to offer real leadership to the country.

Our generations must embrace the example Dr. King set - and re-imagine it, to meet new challenges.

For example: in his time, Dr. King worked for equal protection and equal opportunity. We, too, must adopt that agenda. But ours is an age of both ecological AND social peril. Therefore, we must insist that vulnerable communities get equal protection from racial discrimination - and from the floods, storms, droughts, plagues and fires that global warming is causing. (No more Katrinas!)

Ours is also an age of positive economic transformation: billions of dollars are pouring into the solar, wind, organic agriculture and other clean industries. This green economy will generate thousands of business opportunities - and millions of new jobs. We must seek to guarantee equal opportunity in this growing "green" economy. We must insist that the coming "green wave" lifts ALL boats. Those low-income communities that were locked OUT of the pollution-based economy must be locked INTO the clean and green economy. Our communities and especially our children deserve "green jobs, not jails."

Dr. King - and many others - fought, bled and died to racially integrate a pollution-based economy. Today, America is creating a new, clean and green economy. From the start, it should be designed to have a dignified place for everyone.

Dr. King linked the solutions of civil rights, peace and economic opportunity. We must link the solutions of social justice, peace and ecological sanity. Our dream must uplift the people - and the planet, too. This is the calling of our time.

We seek a world society wherein we use clean, alternative energy to fuel our machines ... healthy, organic and local food to fuel our bodies ... and hope, solidarity and love to fuel our movements for change. Our cause itself must become irresistibly beautiful, vital and sustainable. Success will come when our networks are practical enough to "organize" tens of thousands - and soulful enough to "magnetize" millions.

So let us dare to imagine: a healthy, joyous, self-confident liberation movement. A movement that celebrates more than it condemns. That solution-izes more than it problem-atizes. Imagine a movement for justice - with its arms wide open.

In these "difficult days," we have a duty to do more than curse the darkness. We must,

ourselves, shine a new light. That is what Dr. King did. And forty years later, new generations have come to Memphis - bearing lanterns of our own.

Green For All welcomes you to Memphis. Here and now, we boldly, proudly and loudly declare The Dream ... REBORN.

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