



## **Civil Rights Eroding in the time of the Covid19 Pandemic**

**“The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.”**

**—Martin Luther King, Jr.**

### **Civil Rights**

**The rights of citizens to political and social freedom and equality.**

**Objective: To draw parallels with the Covid 19 Pandemic and how it has exposed threats to our Nation's Civil Rights while forcing the Nation to reckon with the inequalities in the Black and Brown Communities.**

Excerpts from the Civil Rights Speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial on August 28th, 1963.

We have also come to his hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism.

**What urgency is now upon the American people as the Covid 19 Pandemic rages across the nation? What are some inequalities that have been exposed?**

Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy. Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time...to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood. Now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God's children.

## **How can we start to form authentic brotherhood in our communities to make justice a reality for all members?**

It would be fatal for the nation to overlook the urgency of the moment. This sweltering summer of the Negro's legitimate discontent will not pass until there is an invigorating autumn of freedom and equality. 1963 is not an end, but a beginning. Those who hope that the Negro needed to blow off steam and will now be content will have a rude awakening if the nation returns to business as usual.

We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. Again and again, we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force. The Negro community must not lead us to a distrust of all white people, for many of our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence are here today, have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny. We cannot turn back.

## **When we hear community members say let's go back to business as usual what are they not understanding or seeing?**

There are those who are asking the devotees of civil rights, when will you be satisfied? We can never be satisfied as long as the Negro is the victim of the unspeakable horrors of police brutality. We can never be satisfied as long as our bodies, heavy with the fatigue of travel, cannot gain lodging in the motels of the highways and the hotels of the cities.

## **What are the dangers in BIPOC communities in the past two years that have been brought to the attention of the nation since Covid 19 Pandemic was first announced?**

We cannot be satisfied as long as a Negro in Mississippi cannot vote and a Negro in New York believes he has nothing for which to vote.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 is a landmark piece of federal legislation in the United States that prohibits racial discrimination in voting.

## **What has happened to this piece of legislation since before the Covid 19 Pandemic?**

So even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. I have a dream today.

### **What are your dreams for America? Can you name some?**

This is our hope. This is the faith that I go back to the South with. With this faith, we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.

And if America is to be a great nation, this must become true. And so let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire. Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York. Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania. Let freedom ring from the snowcapped Rockies of Colorado. Let freedom ring from the curvaceous slopes of California. But not only that, let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia. Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee. Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill of Mississippi. From every mountainside, let freedom ring.

### **How do you envision freedom for your family, neighborhood, community? What would it look like in Berkshire County?**

And when this happens, and when we allow freedom to ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual: Free at last. Free at last. Thank God almighty, we are free at last.

['I Have A Dream' Speech, In Its Entirety : NPR](#)

[Martin Luther King, Jr, Civil Rights Movement : Youth For Human Rights Champion](#)

Activity: Create Your “I Have A Dream” Cloud

You have

1 Cloud

Shredded tissue paper or Cotton Balls

Curling Ribbon

Think of your Civil Rights Message you want to display. Write your message. Glue the sides of your cloud together, leave a space so that you can stuff your cloud with tissue paper or cotton balls. Once you have stuffed your cloud glue in that area so that it is completely closed. Put the curling ribbon through the hole at the top of your cloud and find a place to hang it to display your message.

This material was compiled by Stephanie Wright, M.Ed. & Gwendolyn VanSant of BRIDGE for MLK Day of Service co-sponsored with Berkshire South Community Center for the surrounding community members participating in the Day of Service.. Please do not duplicate or use for any other purpose without expressed permission & collaboration from BRIDGE January 2022 [www.multiculturalbridge.org](http://www.multiculturalbridge.org)