

Martin Luther King and His Teaching

INTRODUCTION

Martin Luther King Jr. was an American Baptist pastor who is well-known as a Nobel Peace laureate and one of the key leaders in the American civil rights lobby group. King's efforts became crucial for development of the rights of America's minority groups, especially blacks. This paper aims at presenting Martin Luther King's ideas and evaluating their value for the development of the U.S. society.

DISCUSSION

Martin Luther King was born in 1929 in Atlanta, Georgia in the family of a Baptist preacher and a school teacher. King studied theology and earned his doctorate degree in 1955. Having finished his education, King decided to become a preacher. However, having got this position, he proved to be more than an ordinary minister of religion. King directed his efforts at protesting injustices and discrimination and eliminating racial segregation. Among these protests, there were the famous Montgomery bus protest in 1955 and the protest act at the war in Vietnam. King also delivered several remarkable speeches which are topical today and stay a source of inspiration for many people. One of these speeches is the *I Have a Dream* speech where he talked about the America that he dreamt of. However, this speech that he delivered in 1967 even made some of his ardent supporter's desert when they say King had a tough stance on the government.

King stood for equal rights for all people and aspired to revolution of values in the American society. Some of his values were not popular with many people, especially those in authorities. In his 1967 speech, he criticized the government that abandoned its

development goals to pursue worthless strategies like inflaming the war in Vietnam. King characterized America as a country that was spreading violence in the world. He condemned the way the government was using funds for the actual destruction of other countries “in the name of democracy”. He supported his ideas with religious statements, which, however, made him an enemy to many including his fellow clergymen.

King believed that the revolution of values should be conducted not on the national level only, but on the level of a single individual. He argued that people’s excessive love to themselves is the source of all miseries that the world suffers from. Unfortunately, this statement stays topical for the contemporary society, as people often disregard the interests of the others and of the whole society craving for satisfying their own needs. King exhorted that the true kindness is more than giving alms to the poor: he called people to revise their view of world in order to get filled with understanding, love and compassion.

King was very concerned about sufferings that many people experienced; however, he denounced the U.S. government for its eagerness to fight against suffering overseas: not only did these actions bring new miseries to the people whom the government tried to “help”, but also left the American people suffer as well. The famous preacher did not want the USA actions be the cause of suffering of other people whom he considered the Americans’ brothers. The issue of brotherhood ran all through King’s speeches: he considered all people to be brothers and respect each other. This would become possible if people learned to value each other’s lives, rights and interests.

It would be quite interesting to discuss whether the revolution of values could take place today in the modern USA. To answer this question, it is important to estimate

the current processes that occur in our society. Analogically to King's era, the U.S. government takes efforts to improve the life of people who live in different countries; these efforts get contradictory evaluations on both national and international levels. The war actions in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait and recent rumors about attacks on Iran and Sudan make one think about how careful a government should be when intervening the life of another state. The estimation of the results of the government's efforts shows that the fight against suffering results in the new suffering: the number of orphans rose in these countries owing to the number of parents killed in the military actions. According to King, the revolution of values should not have such a violent face.

It is impossible to deny the fact that today the U.S. society has taken a big step towards accomplishment of Martin Luther King's dream. The problem of discrimination is recognized and struggled against on different levels of our society. The victory of Barack Obama is the evidence of the American nation's progress towards the real revolution of values. However, the current extent of city violence, aggression in medias, the income gap and other social problems show that people still have much to change in their souls. King taught that the true revolution of values will take place only when people choose love instead of hatred and peace instead of war (King 1963). Today the key notions that prevail in the society are "career achievements", "income level", "consumption", etc.; however, in order to build a really flourishing society, people need to think about spiritual values as much as about material ones.

CONCLUSION

Martin Luther King dreamt about the revolution of values that should take place in the U.S. society. He fought for his dreams and did not need any weapon in this struggle. Today the American society has taken a step towards living according to King's teaching. However, there are still many issues to work on: people need to change their view of life and open their hearts for the others. The society that is based on love, understanding and compassion will have the opportunity to make each of its members prosperous, secure and happy.

Works Cited

King, Martin Luther. *Letter From a Birmingham Jail*. 16 Apr 1963. 19 June 2011.

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