

Second Place Essay Contest Winner

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Theme: Given Dr. King's model of love overcoming fear and violence, how can we strengthen our communities?

This is the dawning of the age of visuals. We no longer have to wonder or even try to imagine what things are or how they work or how they look. We are able to stroke a few keys and suddenly we are there. We see. We read. We know. We may even "live stream" and venture in places we could only dream about before. This reality deems it necessary for us to make love just as visible.

The world is truly hungry for this visible, living bread of love, kindness, understanding, truth, and self-worth. The hunger is so great for something real and something of hope that we thrive on "reality shows". The real "reality show is right next door! Nothing will take away this hunger but the feeding of love with the spoon of kindness and understanding sipped from the ladle of truth and self-worth. These "comfort foods" are for the soothing of the soul and for the healing of the nation. The healing of the nation starts in our own communities.

How may love be visible in our communities? Old fashioned good works served on the platter of goodwill. What are good works? Deeds whose only requirement is action.

In the stead of one more program or one more "I have a dream" oration let us offer a day of service. Maybe we could mentor a young student on oratories and help to develop a speech instead of just quoting one. Maybe the young single mother next door could benefit from help with small chores or that elderly neighbor could be comfortable in their own home longer if we helped rake leaves in the fall or shoveled snow in the winter without expecting to be paid. How about the grandmother who doesn't see so well anymore but would really love it if we ran a few errands or offered to read that favorite

Bible passage? Could we give up the cell phone long enough to greet someone or even smile? Could we expand our vocabulary enough that our conversations may be decent to be overheard? Could we treat the sales per with an ounce of respect or show the people in line behind us a pound of courtesy? Could we treat babies as such and nurture them and stop yelling at them as though they are adults who should know better? Could we pull our pants up as well as our tops so we won't be an open display to the world? How? Love finds a way! When that way be found walk in it. Love finds a way. God is LOVE!

These are but a few ways that love will help build our sense of COMMUNITY. Once the sense of community is restored then BELONGING returns! When belonging is restored then PRIDE returns! Once pride is returned then the sense of DEFENSE is returned! Once the sense of defense is restored then that sense of defense will recognize a common enemy. When fear and violence are our enemies instead of our friends the strong sense of defense of OUR community will drive them out! The strength of the community will then be the over comer and the Strong Tower of Defense built by love. This tower can be built by each of us even one brick at a time. Bring your brick! Love finds a way!

It has been said that success is to find a need and fill it. Let's find the needs in our own communities and fill them so that we will have good success. Let's show that we not only have read or quoted the great words of Dr. King but we live by them and follow his awe-inspiring lead.

The best legacy to Dr. King from us is for us to find our own voice, our path, our own speech our own dream and then with the help of God we can declare "I dreamed a dream also"!!!

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