

WINNER, 13-18

ASHRITHA KATAMNENI

EDEN PRAIRIE ONLINE

Ashritha Katamneni

Eden Prairie Online School | 8th Grade

Martin Luther King Jr. Words in Action Contest

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Justice Does Not Just Happen...

Martin Luther King Jr. was a civil rights activist and pacifist who peacefully advocated for racial justice. Dr. King hoped that one day, "all of God's children" would be united. He had a dream that we would live in a nation where people, instead of being judged by the color of their skin, would be judged "by the content of their character". He demanded an end to the indignity of segregation using nonviolence. Out of the many profound quotes that Dr. King said, one that particularly stands out to me is, "If you can't fly, then run, if you can't run, then walk, if you can't walk, then crawl, but whatever you do, you have to keep moving forward."

My understanding of this quote is that Dr. King is trying to tell us that we all might be at different phases of our lives, but no matter our circumstances, we have to do our part in progressing towards racial justice. However, our violent and unjust actions are just pulling us backward on the path towards a country that keeps up the promises made for freedom, equality, and justice for all. Having hopes for a better future, where everyone is treated equally, is not enough. We have to move towards change. We have to make our efforts, no matter how big or small.

The youth of today can make a difference. At only twenty-six years old, Martin Luther King Jr. became one of the leaders of the Montgomery bus boycott, the most famous bus boycott in history. He led by example and had many aspirations for us to live up to.

Over the past decade, we can see that awareness has risen, but little has been done to implement our big thoughts and ideas. Like the quote says, if we aren't able to walk, then we should find a way to crawl. If we can't make big changes, we should find ways to make little changes. If we can't physically make changes in the world, we can spread attention. We can talk about problems we face and come up with ways to overcome the hurdles. We can discuss with our peers and discover ways to help. We have to find ways to do our part.

Martin Luther King Jr. also said, "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." That being said, we need to be resilient in times of trouble and despair. But being resilient does not mean forgetting what has happened and mindlessly moving on. It means to learn from our mistakes and act accordingly, making thoughtful decisions.

We watch as many injustices take place in our daily lives, such as the brutal death of George Floyd, or representations of past discrimination people faced; such as the Delmar Divide or other scenes of segregation. For instance, the death of George Floyd negatively impacted many people deeply. After the event took place, we had conversations with our families and communities, thinking about how the police officer's fierce actions created so much distress to many people. On the other hand, if the officer acted thoughtfully and was less violent, the situation could have gone very differently.

Though we can't change what has already happened, no matter how much we wish we could, history can be changed. All the things that haven't happened yet, all of the events of the future, are history in the making. History waiting to be made.

There are many ways we can help bring attention to racial discrimination and injustice. We can look into and learn more about people inspiring change in this world. Youth can join clubs and communities supporting racial equality. Small things, like teaching a younger sibling or little kid about always being inclusive and fair, can also be notable ways to help do our part.

To illustrate embracing equity, we can use a well-known visual: M&M's. While the candy comes in many different colors, it is still tasty chocolate on the inside. Similarly, though we are all different and unique in our own ways, we are all God's special children on the inside.

It is up to us to take action, make an impact, and do our best, in an effort to make our world a better place, where everyone is valued and respected. To make our nation a place where people can be anything they want, no matter their gender, ethnicity, or race. To keep up the pledge that all men are created equal, with certain unalienable rights, including life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Which Martin Luther King, Jr. quote are you referencing for your submission?

"Make a career of humanity. Commit yourself to the noble struggle for equal rights. You will make a better person of yourself, a greater nation of your country, and a finer world to live in" 1959, DC