

[PIANO MUSIC]

ANNOUNCER: Two months before his death, Dr. King delivered a sermon to his own Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, telling how he viewed his own life and work. The tape you will now hear was used as a eulogy at Dr. King's funeral in Atlanta on April 9, 1968.

KING: Every now and then, I guess we all think realistically about that day when we will be victimized with what is life's final common denominator. That's something we call death. We all think about it.

And every now and then, I think about my own death. And I think about my own funeral. And I don't think of it in a morbid sense.

Every now and then, I ask myself what is it that I would want said. And I leave the word to you this morning. If any of you are around when I have to meet my day, I don't want a long funeral.

And if you get somebody to deliver the eulogy, tell him not to talk too long. Every now and then, I wonder what I want him to say. Tell him not to mention that I have a Nobel Peace Prize-- that isn't important. Tell him not to mention that I have 300 or 400 other awards-- that's not important. And tell him not to mention where I went to school.

I'd like somebody to mention that day that Martin Luther King Jr. tried to give his life serving others. I'd like for somebody to say that day that Martin Luther King Jr. tried to love somebody. I want you to say that day that I tried to be right on the wrong question. I want you to be able to say that day that I did try to feed the hungry.

And I want you to be able to say that day that I did try in my life to clothe those who were naked. I want you to say on that day that I did try in my life to visit those who were in prison. I want you to say that I tried to love and serve humanity.

Yes, if you want to say that I was a drum major, say that I was a drum major for justice. Say that I was a drum major for peace. I was a drum major for righteousness. And all of the other shallow things will not matter.

I won't have any money to leave behind. I won't have the fine and luxurious things of life to leave behind. But I just want to leave a committed life behind. And that's all I want to say. If I can help somebody as I pass along, if I can cheer somebody with a well song, if I can show somebody he's traveling wrong, then my living will not be in vain.

If I can do my duty as a Christian ought, if I can bring salvation to a world once wrought, if I can spread the message as the Master taught, then my living will not be in vain. Yes, Jesus, I want to be on your right or your left side, not for any selfish reason. I want to be on your right or your left side, not in times of some political kingdom or ambition. But I just want to be there in love and in justice and in truth and in commitment to others, so that we can make of this old world a new world.

PASTOR: Let us join in a word of prayer. Almighty God, The God of our fathers. The God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob. The God of Martin Luther King, and our God too. The God of righteousness. The God of justice. The God of love.

We come in your presence at this time, at this very special time, to invoke your presence, your all pervading presence as we gather here to remember the life of one who served thee and his fellow man. Who served men and women, boys and girls, everywhere. We've come, Our Father, to thank you for sending him this way for a short time.

We have come, oh God, to thank you for his life. To thank you for the words which he spoke. To thank you for the kind of life that he lived. For the kind of example that he set.

Help us, oh God, and give us the strength that we might have the courage and the understanding and wisdom to continue the fight for freedom. To continue the fight for justice. To continue the fight for righteousness everywhere.

We read in your holy word that righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people. Help us, oh God, to be aware of the many injustices around us. The many injustices throughout this country, throughout the world, and give us the courage to move forward, to move onward.

Even when we are afraid, help us to go on anyway. We thank you, God, for this gathering. For all who have had the courage to come to remember one who had great courage.

And even when there are those who would not take time to remember, may we go on anyway in your name, to serve thee. To serve thy people everywhere. Help us to find and to know ourselves, even as we remember the life of Dr. King on this day.

Pray, our Father, that we might look inward at our own selves and know who we are in the midst of these crucial times. That we might continue to fight for justice. We might continue to fight for love. We might continue the fight for righteousness everywhere. And be willing to give our lives too.

Help us to have a cause for which we might live, a cause for which we might die. And we know that if we have such a cause, our Father, that things today will be better and that we will leave behind better circumstances. A Better life for those who are yet to come.

When we will no longer gather here to remember such a life, when we will no longer come together in a place such as this, we pray, our Father, that you might receive us to thy kingdom where we shall be with thee forevermore. In thy son, Jesus, name we pray. Amen.

[PIANO MUSIC]

SOLOIST 1: [SINGING] Save me, Lord. Save me, Lord. I want to be your child. I want to be your child. Save me, Lord. Use me, Lord. Use me, Lord. I want to be your child. I want to be your child. Use me, Lord.

CHOIR: [SINGING]: Save me, Lord. Save me, Lord. I want to be your child. I want to be your child. Save me, Lord. Save me, Lord. Save me, Lord.

I want to be your child. I want to be your child. Save me, Lord. Save me till my hands look new. Save me till my feet do too. Hold me, hold me all the while. Hold me, hold me as your child. Save me, Lord. Doo doo doo doo doo doo doo.

Save me, Lord. I want to be your child. Save me till my hands look new. Save me till my feet do too. Hold me, hold me all the while. Hold me, hold me as your child. Save me, Lord. Doo doo doo doo doo doo doo. Save me, Lord.

I want to be your child. Save me till my hands look new. Save me till my feet do too. Hold me, hold me all the while. Hold me, hold me as your child. Save me, Lord. Doo doo doo doo doo doo. Save me, Lord. I want to be your, I want to be your, I want to be your child.

[APPLAUSE]

[PIANO MUSIC]

SPEAKER: One true mark of a really great person is not the amount of awards that this person gets while he's alive, and the recognition and the honor and whatnot. But more, the kind of things that he leaves behind, as we see today. As a matter of fact, I think Dr. King said something about that himself.

I think one of the most important things that Dr. King left us was a challenge for us to keep up the kind of work that he was doing. Some of it, in the way that he was doing it, and some of it as it related to our own daily lives. Each of us in our own way.

I hope we've learned something from this. It seems as though we hear these things when we have memorial services, but it's very easy to forget. But as Dr. King said, not Dr. King, it was somebody else who wrote a song. I forgot. There's no hiding place from the savior's throne.

[PIANO MUSIC]

SOLOIST 2: [SINGING] People get ready for the train a comin'. Don't need no ticket you just get on board. All you need is faith to hear the diesels hummin'. Don't need no baggage, you just thank the Lord.

SOLOIST 1: [SINGING] People get ready for the train to Jordan. Picking up passengers from coast to coast. Faith is the key, opens the doors for boarding. Don't need no ticket you just get on board.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

[MUSIC - "PEOPLE GET READY"]

[MUSIC - "WE SHALL OVERCOME"]

[APPLAUSE]

PRESENTER: With warmth and sincerity, I welcome you to the 2nd annual observance of the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. An occasion that would hopefully inspire you to continue Dr. King's struggle for love, equality, justice, and brotherhood. The speaker of the occasion is Mr. Walter J. Leonard, who's Assistant to the President at Harvard University.

Prior to his appointment as Assistant of the President, he was Director and Assistant Dean to the Office of Financial Aid and Admissions at Harvard Law School. He graduated from Howard University School of Law. Prior to attending Howard, he attended Savannah State in Savannah, Georgia, Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia, and the Graduate School of Business Administration at Atlanta University.

He is recipient of several awards. He has received a Distinguished Service Award given by the student forum of the Howard Club of New York. He has received the Student Service Award given by the Student Bar Association at Howard University in 1967, and also an Outstanding Service Award from 1967-68 from Phi Alpha Delta law fraternity.

He has been a businessman, as well as a lecturer. He has lectured at Howard University, the University of Virginia, the University of California at Davis Law School, and Boston College School of Law.

He has published over 15 publications. He is an active member in over 15 boards and committees. He has always been constantly involved in community and civic activities.

I present to you Mr. Walter J. Leonard, bringing us, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, A Friend Remembered.

[APPLAUSE]

LEONARD: Thank you. Thank you very much. I suspect that if we are to appreciate the life and the legacy of Martin King, we should try to project ourselves backward for about 20 years. 1955.

Indeed, we should look at the first day of December in 1955. Dwight David Eisenhower was President of the United States. Soldier, hero, former President of Columbia University, and now President of the United States. Richard Milhous Nixon was Vice President of the United States, and the presiding officer over the United States Senate.

Earl Warren, the former Governor of California was Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. And had just led the court one year earlier to a unanimous decision in *Brown versus Board of Education*. In which, the court said, that segregated education, segregated schools, indeed a deprivation of resources with respect to black children, was unconstitutional.

John Fitzgerald Kennedy and Lyndon Baines Johnson were members of the United States Senate. J. Edgar Hoover was the autocratic, self-proclaimed leader and ruler of the FBI. Spiro T. Agnew had not yet emerged through the bowels of Baltimore County politics.

John Patterson was the Governor of Alabama. Billy Graham and Norman Vincent Peale were the spiritual advisers to middle America. And George Corley Wallace was an Alabama state judge. Bull Connor was the Sheriff. And Ronald Reagan was a Late Show cowboy.

December 1, 1955, the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, just across the square from the Capitol Building in Montgomery, Alabama, had recently called a new pastor. A doctoral student at Boston University. A young preacher born in Atlanta, Georgia. His name was Martin Luther King, Jr.

On that same day, December 1, 1955, Rosa Parks, a black seamstress, tired from a long day, took the first vacant seat on the downtown Cleveland Avenue bus in Montgomery, Alabama. And practically every Southern state on that day, segregation existed by sanction of law.

And in every Northern state, it existed by acquiescence and support of the federal government. A divided and unequal system made up the educational, economic, political, and social landscape of the Old South.

Schools were segregated by legal mandate and by agreement in the North. Restaurants were off limits to black people. Hotels and motels had no vacancies when a black face appeared. Theaters, housing, waiting rooms, lavatories, drinking fountains, public accommodations, even lines where people stood to buy dog tags, was segregated in the Old South.

You know why I keep saying the Old South, because that was Baltimore and below. The New South is Baltimore and above. The Old South had Birmingham, Atlanta, Jackson, Mississippi, Selma. The New South has Detroit, Chicago, Boston, Massachusetts.

Rosa Parks' refusal to get up and give her seat to a white man sparked that later, but ever present, flame of self-worth in black people. It accelerated their demand to end the humiliation and the deprivation and intimidation.

Martin Luther King described the movement in these words. "50,000 black people who took to heart the principles of nonviolence, who learned to fight for their rights with a weapon of love, and who in the process, acquired a new estimate of their own worth." It was a story of black leaders of many faiths and divided allegiances who came together in a bond of a cause they knew was right. And of black followers, many of them beyond middle age, who walked to work and home again as much as 12 miles a day for over a year.

All because they refused to submit to the discourtesies and humiliations of segregated buses. He went on to say that the majority of the black people who took part in that year-long boycott of Montgomery's buses were poor and untutored. But they understood the essence of the Montgomery movement.

Indeed, he said, one elderly woman summed it up for the rest, when asked whether after walking for several long weeks, she was tired. She answered, son, my feet is tired. But my soul is at rest. Such was the milieu. Such was the condition into which a modern King stepped.

Between 1619 and 1955, the United States had worked hard at drafting one of history's most sordid pages. A nation which dared to call itself the beacon light of hope for the oppressed of the world. Which had declared all men equal. Which had built an empire on the backs of slaves. Which had promised freedom and equal protection to all.

That same nation had declared that black men had no rights. That white men were bound to respect. Thus, in 1955, in Montgomery, Alabama, the national and international ministry of Martin Luther King, Jr. began.

It was to last nearly 13 dangerous, exciting, necessary, tense and turbulent years. It was to permeate and span most of the experience of the second reconstruction. And it would cause the world to witness the intense racial hatred of the Old South and a pseudo-liberal sickness of an equally destructive hypocrisy of the North.

And what sort of man was this who would go forth into this modern Babylon, and raise his voice against the forces of evil? What man of men was Martin King, Jr? To those who knew him and who saw him often, he was a compassionate, honest, warm, and wise individual.

But we were too close. We were too involved to appreciate the magnitude of his greatness. The domesticity of our concerns did not permit us to grasp the international worth and the international impact of his ministry.

Yes, we watched him and we heard him. He used his gift of speech to its fullest. To him, words were to be employed like arrows. Like sledgehammers. Or like soothing balm.

With words, he could give hope to the poor, friendship to the lonely, and help the lost to find their way. He had a profound sense of history. He had a deep appreciation for history. His thoughts were panoramic, and his vision spanned the whole of human kind-dom.

Indeed, he had a strength that was born of humility. A sense of purpose, self-definition and internal balance. He was a man of his times, but bigger than his times. And, yes, he was born of a despised, exploited, oppressed, but proud people.

Now let us, just for a few minutes, follow him through some of the decisional mid-passages of his ministry. Let's look at the exacting tolls he paid on the byways of his life. Let's listen to him call a nation, and its people, to live out the American promise and the credo of their religious heritage. Let's hear him speak with a sharpness and stirring plea, sometimes in anger, but always begging this country and urging it to put aside the dogma of racists and segregationists.

Indeed, I remember a meeting in 1959, shortly after he returned to Atlanta. And he reiterated his strong belief in nonviolence.

I can hear him saying now, "I'm convinced that the method of nonviolent resistance is the most potent weapon available to oppressed people in their struggle for freedom and dignity. Therefore, I have advised all along that we follow the path of nonviolence. Because if we ever succumb to the temptation of using violence, our struggle will then disintegrate. And unborn generations will be the recipients of the long and desolate night of bitterness."

It was important to note, however, that Martin King did not view nonviolence as some sort of passive and ineffective supplication. But instead, he saw it as a positive force, moving in the confrontation with the status quo, and refusing to be beaten by the status quo. He said often that if one passively cooperated with an evil and unjust system, then such cooperation would make the oppressed as evil as the oppressor.

And he quickly added, "I don't want to give the impression that nonviolence will work miracles overnight. Men are not easily moved from their mental ruts or purged of their prejudice and irrational feelings. When the under privileged demand freedom, the privileged first react with bitterness and resistance. Even when we demand those freedoms in terms that are nonviolent, the privileged will react with violence and irrationality.

The nonviolent approach does not immediately change the heart of the oppressor. It first does something to the hearts and the souls of those who are committed to it. It gives them a new self-respect. It calls up resources of strength and courage that they, themselves, did not know they had."

Finally, he said, "It reaches the opponent, and so stirs his conscience that reconciliation becomes a reality."

Now many of us who followed Martin King found it difficult, in the days of the late 50s and early 60s, to remain committed to the pledge of nonviolence. Indeed, I can recall a session in the lower level of [INAUDIBLE] Cafe on Hunter Street in Atlanta, when yours truly said to Dr. King, laughingly but serious, "Dr. King, we have been slapped on two cheeks and kicked on the other two, and we ain't got no more to turn."

Dr. King laughed heartily, and realizing the growing discontent among his own troops, in that modulated and haunting voice, he said, "Violence must never come from any of us. If we become victimized with violent acts or intents, the pending daybreak of progress will be transformed into a gloomy midnight of retrogression."

One could say of Dr. King what he said of DuBois, "Above all, he did not content himself with hurling invectives for emotional release and then retiring into smug passive satisfaction. History had taught him that it is not enough for people to be angry. The supreme task is to organize and unite people so that their anger becomes a transforming force."

You could find him out there in the fight. He journeyed from one end of the United States to the other, leaving his footprints on the swell and sweep of a nation in conflict with itself. Like the apostle Paul, like Isaiah and John the Baptist. He generated a pulsating and searching quickness in the hearts and minds of those who would listen to it.

He spoke to this country about its most crippling disease. The danger of racism. In bold and brave and challenging words he told a country, it is time for all of us to tell each other the truth about who and what brought the Negro to the condition of deprivation against which he struggles today.

In human relations, a truth is hard to come by. Because most groups are deceived about themselves. Rationalization and the incessant search for scapegoats are the psychological cataracts that blind us to our individual sins.

But the day has passed of bland euphemisms, because he who lives with untruths lives in spiritual slavery. And to those who now raise the intellectual smokescreen of preferential treatment and meritocracy and the reverse discrimination. And who would suggest that the black man's plight is of his own fault and making.

Dr. King said, "It is neither true nor honest to say that the Negro status is what it is because he's innately inferior or because he is basically lazy, or because he's listless, or because he has not sought to better his condition." He told a convention that such thinking was a myth.

And he said there's no sense in going around trying to cite some comparisons with other races. There is no parallel. No other people were brought to this nation and brought to these shores, deprived of liberty to be enslaved. Every other one came here looking for freedom and opportunity. The black man was brought here to be enslaved.

Consequently, black man must have a national commitment. Just as he built this nation, the nation must repay him. And no part of the country can discuss this matter with clean hands.

Unfortunately, this nation has not been able to adjust to the black man's struggle as it moved beyond the elimination of overt cruelty and arresting of the lash of brutality. When Martin King and other black leaders sounded the call for an eradication of poverty, a cessation of exploitation by the corner grocer, and the downtown merchants, when they demanded entry into the doors of opportunity.

Like MIT, like Harvard, like Yale, like the University of Michigan, like the University of Minnesota, the University of Chicago. When they demanded entry into those institutions, when they sought a seat in the halls of power. The United States Congress, the city halls, the state assemblies.

When they argued for a redefinition and a realignment of the class and power relationships in this country, most white Americans, feeling that they had done enough, retreated from the struggle, ran to the suburbs and hid. And many of them joined the oppressor and now stand as gatekeepers against black entry.

Now, don't know if you wanted to hear all of this today, but we're talking about Martin King. We're talking about what Martin was all about.

Some people who registered outrage against the indecent social treatment of black people couldn't find any emotional outlet when we start talking about economic, educational, and political equality. Indeed, some people have even characterized our insistence on equality as ingratitude. And some say that we engage in some sort of unfair competition, because we believe that we can be presidents of these institutions.

Indeed, King recognized these facts. And in one of his books he said, "The real cost lies ahead. The stiffening white resistance is a recognition of that fact. The discount education given Negroes will in the future have to be purchased at full price if equality of education is to be realized.

Jobs are harder and costlier than voting rolls. The eradication of slums housing millions is complex far beyond integrating buses and lunch counters."

He reminded and warned us that laws are passed in a crisis mood, after Birmingham and Selma. But no substantial fervor survives the formal signing of the legislation. Indeed, the recording of the law itself is treated as the reality of reform.

"The practical cost of change for the nation up to this point," he said, "has been cheap. The limited reforms have been obtained at bargain rates. There are no expenses and no taxes required for Negroes to share lunch counters, libraries, parks, hotels, and other facilities with whites. Even the psychological adjustment has been very easy for them.

But the reason for white America's evasion and schizophrenia," Dr. King said, "lies in a congenital deformity. It's racism which crippled a nation at its inception. No one surveying the moral landscape of this nation can overlook the hideous and pathetic wreckage of commitment, twisted and turned into a thousand shapes under the stresses of prejudice and irrationality."

And he recognizes that, "this does not mean that all white Americans are racist", he said. "Far from it. Many white people have, through a deep moral compulsion, fought long and hard for racial justice."

Indeed, some have given their lives. "However, for the good of America", he says, "it is necessary to refute the idea that the dominant ideology in our country, even today, is freedom and equality, while racism is just an occasional departure from the norm on the part of a few bigoted extremists."

There's no wonder why J. Edgar Hoover wanted him dead. King spoke bluntly to those who would spew racist ethos.

He said, "Racism is based on the dogma that the hope of civilization depends on eliminating some races and keeping others pure. Its ultimate logic," he said, "is genocide. Hitler and his mad and ruthless attempt to exterminate the Jews carried a logic of racism to its ultimate and tragic conclusion."

While America has not literally sought to eliminate the black man in the final sense, it has, through a system of segregation, substituted a subtle reduction of life by means of deprivation. Instead of genocide, they have been genocidal with regard to black people."

I don't know how many people have really read the words of Martin King. The King era saw the demise of Jim Crow. It saw the colored and the white signs go down. But when we were fighting Jim Crow down South, what we didn't know was that Jim Crow's cousin, J. Crow Esquire had moved North.

You see, J. Crow, Esquire came up here and went to school. And J. Crow, Esquire wouldn't call me bad names. But, instead, J. Crow, Esquire decided to resurrect some theories, some pernicious and erroneous theories which suggest black inferiority.

J. Crow, Esquire speaks with the face of Janus. That's two-facedness, you know. He couches racism in soft tones of sociology and psychology. In fact, he's written a new dictionary.

J. Crow, Esquire tells us about phrases like [INAUDIBLE] and [INAUDIBLE]. Like reverse discrimination, cultural deprivation, family instability. Low testers, they call us. Poverty prone, special admits, academic insufficiency, quotas, double standards, dilution of quality, anti-intellectuals, inherent incapacity, dual admissions policies, slow learners, slum children, urban mentality, educationally disadvantaged. And then they get to the catch all and say unqualified.

In fact, they have even moved us from communities and neighborhoods and put us in ghettos. I never knew what the hell a ghetto was until I began to read some of this stuff. I always thought I lived in a neighborhood. We were neighbors.

I always thought I lived in a community. And then somebody told me that I lived in a ghetto. And then I looked up the history of the word ghetto. I would tell you that the orthography, etymology, syntax, and prosody of that word didn't have a thing to do with black folk.

[APPLAUSE]

Now my friends, one of the most agonizing periods of Dr. King's life was what to do about the Vietnam War. He saw his nation, the land of his birth, engaged in probably what was its second most diabolical act. The first was slavery.

He saw this nation destroying a country thousands of miles away. He saw this nation in lock step with international racism and economic exploitation. And he asked the American people, how can a nation so blessed and so endowed with physical and spiritual resources grow so callous and so cold toward human life?

We used to hear on the television every night, what is the body count of the Viet Cong. We never heard them spoken of as people. How many of the enemy did they kill?

In the mid 1960s, the United States government was spending over \$30 billion a year to destroy a nation of people who had never done a darn thing to the United States. Indeed, \$30 billion a year was as much as all of the black people in this country earned.

One person said that, "It's startling to realize that black income could be doubled overnight if the budget for Vietnam was diverted into black hands." But then realizing the racism in this country, he said, "However, such a proposal would outrage the sensibilities of white America. They would prefer to spend \$30 billion to kill than to spend \$30 billion to help people live." My God.

Martin King sat in a hotel in Washington DC. He was just about to address an audience at the National Cathedral. He had just, that Sunday before, said to his church that he had to oppose the war in Vietnam.

And he said, "My history tells me that about 26 viable civilizations have emerged and existed, and now they own a junk heap of history's pages. And how did it get that way? By disintegration.

They began by ignoring the rights of their people. They began by external involvement. They began by feeling that they could be the policemen of the world." He said, "And the average age of each of those civilizations was 2,000 years. And we are now 1,966 years old. How can I, a preacher and Nobel Peace Prize laureate, a lover of life, not be against that which kills?" How could a country call on King to be nonviolent against the bigots in this country, but then curse him when he asked it to stop bombing innocent people?