



## **Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King: *On Character Development***

**By Rev. Dr. Charles E. Mock  
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Dr. Martin L. King, Jr. provided essential and pivotal leadership in a human/civil rights movement. He and his justice activists longed for the day "people would not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character."

Today the content of one's character is a major issue for a particular segment of Black America. Character is an issue in Black Lives Movement.

Black Lives Matter is a slogan that cuts two ways. It cuts into a racist, false narrative of the superiority of some whites against non-whites. On the other hand, it cuts into a violence-prone mentality on the part of some minorities who have forfeited any regard for the sacredness of a person's life--black or white.

Since Dr. King's death, all these years later, character development has become a significant issue that impedes one's opportunity to reach a particular destination.

The most at-risk individuals have moral and ethical issues that sabotage their capacity and opportunities to become living wage earners and wealthy business owners.

Sacrificial Black people, robbed of opportunities to advance in life, gave blood, sweat, and tears so those behind them would have opportunities for which they fought against in the midst of various obstacles. Character issues are now squandering those opportunities.

King opened doors based on the assumption we Black people would do our part: open ourselves to the character development needed to go through doors opened by suffering, blood, imprisonment, and death.

One might make an excuse for why one can't get a job. For example, "The Man," "Racism," "Upbringing," "Child Abuse," "Poverty," "A Curse.", "Nothing but Bad Luck", etc. Such excuses are not stronger than why one can get a job--anyhow!

God has an underground railroad of visible and invisible Connectors, connecting "wanna-be-Successful" individuals to "determined-to-be" Conductors."

Those who have arrived at successful stations in life are challenged to serve as Conductors and Connectors instead of Criticizers, and Condemners!

As our nation yields more and more to strength-weakening tribalism, media-assisted political fear, economic uncertainty and false narratives of scarcity, we need each other more than ever. International arms races afar, coupled with internal strife, have proven an effective strategy in bringing to its knees the world's greatest empires of the past.

Reclaiming the importance of character development should be higher in our nation's Things to Do List.

Dr. King reminded us in many of his writings that national character is composed of individuals and institutions that act on the belief that "right makes for might"--right morals, ethics, values and principles of operation.

Having gone through the extremely contentious, mind-blowing and unprecedented election season for rights to the Oval Office, our national character continues to be at-risk. We are at-risk of being taken over by a pragmatic morality rooted in greatness based on record-breaking Dow Jones highs. We are at-risk of being taken over by a fever pitch race to the top, or an ideology of **Privatism**: one that throws the notion of a Commonwealth under the proverbial bus and the Executive Branch into a business sector--a new version of Let's Make a Deal!

No individual is close to moral or ethical perfection. Neither is any institution close to the unification of justice, fairness or equal opportunity. However, individual and institutional greatness are founded on and achieved by an intentional determination toward the kind of character development that increases these possibilities.

Where shall we go from here? Will we go our separate ways with crossed fingers, hoping for the best? Or, go on serving as Criticizers and Condemners of passengers that act ugly and deviant? Or, go forward--serving as Conductors and Connectors?

Forty-nine years later, Dr. King is still reminding us of our two choices--chaos or community!

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