

Continuing King's legacy

Thomas C. Fox | Jan. 18, 2010



Fifty-four years ago Martin Luther King Jr., reluctant leader of a great new movement in America's segregated South, was at his Birmingham, Ala., home. Author Nick Kotz, in *Judgment Days*, tells this King story:

About midnight he picked up the ringing telephone to hear a menacing voice: "Nigger, we are tired of you and your mess now. If you aren't out of this town in three days, we're going to blow your brains out and blow up your house."

Trembling with fear, King sat at the kitchen table holding a cup of coffee and imagining horrifying images of his infant daughter being killed by racists. In desperation he prayed out loud, "Lord, I'm down here trying to do what's right ... But Lord, I must confess that I'm weak now. I'm faltering. I'm losing my courage."

At that moment, King later wrote, "I could hear an inner voice saying to me: 'Martin Luther, stand up for righteousness. Stand up for justice. Stand up for truth. And, lo, I will be with you even until the end of the world.'"

For the remainder of his short life -- he died at the age of 39 -- King would face such vicious threats. And yet, he continued to stand up for righteousness, justice and truth. He was a brave man.

Few of us will ever be called to such greatness. We have, thanks to King and the movement he led, much less to overcome.

But as we remember his legacy Jan. 18, on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, we know there will be times when we will be weak in the face of adversity and injustice; that we will falter on our path; that we will lack courage.

King's prayer and the resulting epiphany began to free this country from the sin of racism. We owe it to him, and to ourselves, to continue what he began.

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