

Martin Luther King, Jr., Day, 2008

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By Senator Brownback

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On Monday January 21, 2008, the nation will take time to remember a remarkable and magnificent, yet humble, man, Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Through great personal sacrifice, Dr. King pushed a nation once separated by race to serve as a world-wide model of freedom and democracy. As we remember Dr. King, we must continue to live out his legacy of unselfish love and devotion. Dr. King's legacy resounds throughout humanity's consciousness: "Everybody can be great. Because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve....You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love."

Dr. King challenged our society and demanded that America live up to the principles upon which the nation was founded: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. These principles are rooted in the Biblical principle that we are all God's children regardless of race, creed or color. It was through his wisdom and leadership that Dr. King sought to remove the shackles from African Americans, and in so doing, help to liberate all of America.

Dr. King also acted on the belief that we must have compassion for all of our brothers and sisters, regardless of where they reside. Dr. King once said, "An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity."

It is appropriate for us to not only to remember Dr. King as an extraordinary leader in the civil rights movement, but also to implement and expand his legacy to all humanity – whether aiding a community devastated by natural disaster in the United States, seeking to end the suffering of those facing religious persecution in Burma and China, or addressing the atrocious humanitarian crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

I am encouraged by non-profit organizations and by individuals who strive to alleviate suffering domestically and internationally. Organizations such as Prison Fellowship Ministries, which focuses on the incarcerated and their families in America; the Commission on International Religious Freedom, who work to end religious persecution internationally; and Bono's ONE Campaign, which focuses on providing international humanitarian aid, are just a few examples that inspire us to spread Dr. King's legacy of sacrificial love and devotion to humanity.

On Monday, the nation will honor Dr. King, a great humanitarian who challenged us to "decide whether [we] will walk in the light of creative altruism or the darkness of destructive selfishness. This is the judgment. Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'what are you doing for others?'"

In 2008, let us answer Dr. King's question by working together to serve humanity.