

Monday with Mikey: January 9, 2017

Every morning, my iPhone gives me a little slice of Inspiration (remember the “I” in “SHINE”?) using the “Daily Quote” app.

Today’s Daily Quote is “Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the judgement that something else is more important than fear.”

Today we celebrate the life and accomplishments of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Dr. King gave his life to – and for – something he knew was more important than his own fear. One of his two most well-known oratories, known as the “Mountaintop Speech,” was given in Memphis on April 3, 1968 – the night before he was killed.

The speech’s text is available at www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkivebeentothemountaintop.htm - A note: You may find this speech unsettling, but that’s just what Dr. King intended it to be.

I believe he knew that his life was in danger every day from the moment he chose – or rather chose to answer the call - to lead the most significant non-violent social change movement in the history of the United States. After his death, other factors from both sides of “the color line” exploded our nation into a period of extreme violence – but Dr. King was a firm believer in the teachings of other non-violent leaders, including both Jesus Christ and Mohandas K. Ghandi, and this speech details the strategies and tactics he tried to lead others in practicing. Some conditions in our nation are better today than in 1968, but frankly, I think some are worse.

I believe both our nation and the whole world are embroiled in conflicts based on peoples’ insistence on focusing on the things that make us different from one another – rather than those things we have in common. Both “active acts of hatred” and “passive climates of prejudice” grieve me greatly. As people – and especially as Rotarians – we are called to serve humanity. I believe it is our mandate to reach well beyond our individual “comfort zones” (i.e. have courage) to not show prejudice toward others (actively or passively) solely on their race, gender, color, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, or any other factor that makes us *separate* from one another, and to seek to find (as I have mentioned in this column before) the “Spark of Divine Light” in everyone – that spark that *unites* us all.

Altruistic? Maybe – but if we *start* there, we at least begin by giving others the opportunity to show us their character and ethics – which should be the only base of discernment about another person. I believe that’s the opportunity we also have as we seek to find professional and community leaders to be part of our worldwide fellowship. A simple measure of whether someone should be a Rotarian is that answer to this question:

“Does this person possess the qualities of head and heart that befit her or him to represent Rotary?”

On a much more “macro” level, courage in this case refers to us “not tolerating intolerance” by walking away from, or perhaps even respectfully confronting, people who make cruel jokes or comments about others based on their heritage or DNA. Working actively to discourage hatred is the best way to open the door for Peace and Understanding in our very troubled world – and nation.

Until next week let’s all keep on **“Doing Good, Having Fun!”**

Mikey

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Rotary District 6950
Citrus, Hernando, Pasco, and Pinellas Counties
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PS – Check out the “My Rotary Show” at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0WTmfe4yXcI>!