

The King Holiday

Today is a holiday honoring the birthday of Martin Luther King Jr., an individual who had a profound impact on American life and culture. Most Americans think there has been significant progress in achieving his dream of racial equality, although blacks are more skeptical, according to a poll by the Associated Press.



Racial integration has swept across much of U.S. life, and blacks have gained economic ground since the height of the civil-rights movement. The government established this date as a federal holiday in honor of the slain civil-rights leader.

Three-quarters of those surveyed say there has been significant progress on achieving King's dream, but only 66 percent of blacks felt that way. "We've made great progress over the last 50 years," said late Julian Bond, a civil rights leader who died this past August. "Progress has always been stop-and-start, and sometimes backup. We're in a holding pattern right now."

In many places, people will help with projects aimed to improve the community. That would be a fitting memorial to King.

King was committed to the American Dream, his belief in equal opportunity and, above all, his hope that, one day, white and black children might be judged by "the content of their character ... (and not) by the color of their skin." He believed in social justice, had strong political convictions and a profound religious faith.

At age 35, King became the youngest man to have received the Nobel Peace Prize. When notified of his selection, he announced that he would turn over the prize money of \$54,123 to further the civil rights movement.

Today would be a good time for all of us to rededicate ourselves to the ideals of truth and justice for all, or as the Bible suggests, to "do unto others as you would have them do unto you." That, in essence, was the summation of King's life and work.

--Beecher Hunter