

9th Grade – Grand Prize

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Words from our inspirational leaders in the past have been recorded for future generations. These words include the following statement by Martin Luther King Jr. who said, “The hope of a secure and livable world lies with disciplined non-conformists who are dedicated to justice, peace, and brotherhood.” This simple yet complex line has held great influence in my actions as an African American youth.

Personally, this quote has touched me from many different angles. To live in a “secure and livable world” seems almost unimaginable to some, but King’s words have helped me realize I need to sustain that hope. A secure and livable world may have meant something different in the past than it does today. Many people rob African Americans of their lives, rights, and their happiness. There are still people who try to make the world difficult to live in by differentiating because of racial prejudice. A world without all that malevolence is what a secure and livable world means to me.

According to the Webster Dictionary a nonconformist is “one who does not conform to, or refuses to be bound by, accepted beliefs, customs, or practices.” When thinking deeply about what this quote meant to me personally, I especially took into consideration Dr. King’s use of the term “disciplined conformist.” To me that was referring to more of a self-discipline. Those two words are an example of one of Dr. King’s most emphasized teachings. “Nonviolence is a powerful and just weapon, which cuts without wounding and ennobles the man who wields it. It is a sword that heals.” These words encouraged his supporters to establish a disciplined mindset as fighters for justice, peace, and brotherhood.

Martin Luther King Jr. was a Baptist minister. The organization that he helped to start and lead was the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). Seeing as to how he was a believer in God and desired to follow in Jesus’ footsteps, I can be assured that he was a reader of the Bible. Based on his concept of a nonviolent approach he must have been aware of the scripture James 3:17 that states, “But the wisdom from above is first of all chaste, then peaceable, reasonable, ready to obey, full of mercy and good fruits, not making partial distinctions....” He knew as a minister that by being a disciplined nonconformist and by not making partial distinctions he was as some people say, “increasing the peace.” This principle helps me realize that though I may be faced with unjust behavior I must discipline myself to fight this injustice in a peaceable, civil manner. I must control myself when I am not treated as others, when I am not allowed to participate in certain activities, or even when I’m simply ridiculed.

Behind every great man there is a great woman. When contemplating on who truly exemplified the words of Dr. King I didn’t have to search very far for the answer; only one person genuinely personifies the words Dr. King spoke. Coretta Scott King built The Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change as a living memorial to her husband’s life and dream. She worked very hard to maintain international peace and brotherhood all around the world. She was a disciplined nonconformist just like her husband and worked diligently to obtain justice for all. In order for life to be meaningful you have to wake up with an innate purpose or drive. Like the leader I discussed, I too will have moments filled with passion for a fight that continues: the fight to have “a secure and livable world.”