

## Martin Luther King, Jr. and equality

How are you impacting others? The whole world knows the work of Martin Luther King, Jr., his selflessness, and his call for "creative altruism." Dr. King's commitment to community and service, which he hoped would lead to equality, is legendary.

Dr. King's legacy is not just that of his actions, but of his influence on ours. Martin Luther King served as a conduit for justice in the way he recognized the lust for equality that exuded from his congregation. But, like a true leader, he not only enacted people's wantings, but also thought of solutions to the crises at hand.

How do Dr. King's beliefs affect us now? Many communities benefit from Dr. King's vision that everyone is equal and, as he intoned in his 1963 "I Have A Dream" speech, that people "should not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character." An example of Dr. King's vision of equality is that only four decades ago my city of Cleveland Heights had segregated housing and now I live in a fully integrated neighborhood.

Although Dr. King did many great things, it is important we emulate his vision of equality even in small ways. In a sermon, Dr. King asked, "What are you doing for others?" In my own way I am trying to answer Dr. King's call to action. I am currently in the midst of some projects to bring literacy to the functionally illiterate.

My pediatrician founded an organization called Daily Dose of Reading (DDR) ([www.dailydoseofreading.org](http://www.dailydoseofreading.org)) to bring books and literacy programming to pediatricians' offices so that reading becomes a children's health issue. I think this is a worthy idea because Cleveland was recently ranked the poorest major American city. Books at a doctor's office can help encourage literacy in young people, which is a first step in lifting Clevelanders out of poverty.

I helped DDR organize a city-wide Read-a-thon, I collected hundreds of used books to donate to patients' waiting rooms, and I will read during some story hours. At my bar mitzvah I asked my friends to donate money to DDR instead of giving me a present. I was able to raise over \$500.

One of the commandments in Deuteronomy says, "If you see a fellow's ox or sheep gone astray, do not ignore it...one shall not remain indifferent." This commandment, when applied to literacy, tells us that those who read at a low level are missing the tools of education that rightfully belong to them, and therefore the means to thrive in society. We must be not remain indifferent to illiteracy, but encourage reading before someone "goes astray."

I feel that my efforts continue Dr. King's commitment to "creative altruism," community, and service, because everyone deserves equal access to literacy. I hope my efforts in some small way ensure that Clevelanders can sit down at Dr. King's visionary "table of brotherhood" -- with a book.