

What I Would Ask Martin Luther King

- ✘ *What would Martin Luther King think? What would Martin Luther King say? What would Martin Luther King do?*

Those are the kinds of questions we often hear tossed around by media personalities anytime our country recognizes an important anniversary pertaining to the iconic civil rights leader.

It was 50 years ago this week when Dr. King delivered his famous “I Have a Dream” speech. Even someone like me, who was born after the civil rights movement of the 1960’s, understands how incredibly profound and important the words from that speech were and still are to the moral fabric of our nation.

We look back at our country’s dark racial history, we see how much societal progress has been made over the decades, and we recognize that Martin Luther King spearheaded much of that progress with his unquestioned bravery and his bold leadership.

So when we see that level of bravery and leadership sorely lacking in our country today, it’s natural for us to look to one of the historical greats, and try and channel how they would view and address the deep, sobering challenges that we currently face.

For example, President Obama said the other day he believes Martin Luther King would support Obamacare.

“I think he understood that health care, health security is not a privilege, it’s something that in a country as wealthy as ours, everybody should have access to,” he told a radio interviewer.

Martin Luther King's own niece, Dr. Alveda King, disagrees. She told the conservative publication *Newsmax* that her uncle would have never supported a law that provided contraception and abortion services to American women.

"I don't believe my uncle would be wanting his little girls when they were little – or his granddaughter– now to be given free birth control," she said.

Which one of them is right? No one knows for sure.

Elias Groll from *ForeignPolicy.com* wrote a column the other day titled, "Would Martin Luther King Have Supported a Syrian Intervention?"

Novelist Ariel Dorfman, in a recent column posted on numerous news sites, pondered what Martin Luther King would think of our U.S. surveillance programs in a post 9/11 world.

"What words would he have used to denounce the way the government surveillance he was under is now commonplace and pervasive, potentially targeting anyone in the United States who happens to own a phone or use email?" Dorfman asked.

Robert M. Franklin even wrote a piece on CNN.com, wondering how Martin Luther King would have used social media outlets like Twitter and Facebook to spread his messages.

Though none of us know the answers to such questions, I'm not sure that it would matter all that much if we did. For as much respect and admiration as I have for Martin Luther King and his contributions to this country, he's not the historical figure I would choose to turn to for guidance on topics like the the national debt, foreign policy, domestic surveillance, and Internet technology.

No, the questions that I would ask him, if I could, would be about racial equality in the year 2013. They would be about whether or not he sees an America whose leaders and citizens

are driven toward that dream of a colorblind society that he gave his life for.

I would ask him what he thought about careless accusations of racism routinely being thrown around in this country for the purpose of silencing dissenting viewpoints.

I would ask him what he thought about a media culture that would protect a U.S. president against criticism of his character by proclaiming that such criticism is really motivated by the color of his skin.

I would ask him what he thought of those who insist that non-whites are somehow less capable, or less competent, than white people of simply presenting an identification card at a voting booth.

I would ask him what he thought about those who chose not to invite the only sitting African American in the U.S. Senate to the 50th Anniversary of his "I Have a Dream" speech, merely because that senator happens to be a Republican. Was Senator Tim Scott somehow less relevant to the historic ceremony than actor Jamie Foxx?

I would ask him if racism should be presumed in people's hearts, with the preponderance of proof laid on them to explain why they're *not* racists.

I would ask him what he thought of a national media that holds our black president to much different standards of success, failure, and scrutiny than they did his white predecessors.

I would ask him what he thought of the term "White Hispanic" being concocted and applied to an individual, for no other reason than to advance a media racial narrative that wouldn't have otherwise been relevant.

I would ask him what he thought about Al Sharpton, and if it ever brings a tear to his eye that Sharpton has become the

modern day face of the civil rights movement.

I would ask him what he thought about speakers at his wife's funeral using the occasion to insult a U.S. president who was in attendance to pay his respects.

I would ask him if he believed that mundane uses of terms like "Chicago", "food stamps", "monkeying", "golf", "shuck and jive", and "lazy" are *really* racial code words or *dog whistles*.

I would ask him if a rodeo clown donning a mask of President Obama is an act of racism, and if the same answer is true of Americans who peacefully protest because they simply believe they're *taxed enough already*.

I would ask him what he thought about his wife speaking out against illegal immigration in 1991, and how he would feel knowing that taking such a stance today is enough to warrant being labeled a racist.

I would ask him what he thinks about those among the liberal ideology who portray distinguished, black conservatives like Clarence Thomas, Condoleeza Rice, and Thomas Sowell as racial sell-outs and *Uncle Toms*. 

I would ask him what he thought about those who use the term "white person" as an insult, and as a way of marginalizing an individual's opinion.

But if I could only ask Martin Luther King one question, I think it would be this:

"You led this country through an era of real, honest to God, ugly, violent racism – racism that many in my generation can't possibly comprehend. You faced it and greatly diminished it not with racial demagoguery, but with a beautiful message of equality, unity, and love. Does it bother you that despite all of the amazing racial progress that has been made in this

country over the decades, in large part because of you, there are so many proclaimed admirers and followers of yours in this country that have absolutely no understanding of what your dream was *actually* about?"

Update: *Roll Call is now reporting that despite earlier reports, including a statement released directly from Senator Tim Scott's office, Scott was indeed invited to the MLK 50th anniversary event, and someone in his office declined the invitation.*