

## I Have A Dream

I have taken Martin Luther King day off, like I suspect any good American should. It's definitely a holiday from mail delivery, and the bank is closed. Walmart is open.

As an act of civil disobedience, or contrariness, I searched Walmart's directory online and found that the Walmart store in Atlanta, on Martin Luther King Drive, was open.

How do the residents in the area of that store feel about the "business as usual" attitude of America's largest retailer on the day set aside for honoring one of America's greatest heroes? I guess we'll have to wait for the live report from Channel 11, "who hold the powerful accountable". My guess is pigs will be used for interstellar flight before we see that report.

Anyway, setting aside a day to reflect on the accomplishments of America's Gandhi seems like the least we could do. For those of us who lived during the time of "Abraham, Martin and John", we can not look back without feeling blessed that Dr. King was the man he was. Without his adherence to a strong moral code of non-violence, the Civil Rights period of the 60's and early 70's could have been one of tremendous bloodshed. As it was, we had riots in some of the major cities in America, but they could have been much, much worse. Watts, Harlem, Chicago and Newark made the headlines, but thousands of American cities did not erupt. Thank Dr. King, and his followers who understood his message of non-violence.

Now that there has been a movie made about the march on Selma, and the confrontation at the Edmund Pettus bridge, a new generation can get a feel for the times. I don't know if a movie can portray the vitriol of the average American redneck, or convey the bravery it took to confront the bigots and not strike back. It took bravery for the white people to stand with their black brothers, but not the type of bravery exhibited by the blacks. For the most part, the whites would be targets for one day, and then go back home. The blacks had to return to their neighborhoods, surrounded by their oppressors. The "uppity" blacks would be targets for the night riders at any time of their choosing. To stand up to that kind of tyranny, and not return blow for blow, is incomprehensible to me. And yet, Dr. King was able to use his eloquence to convey to his followers that they could only win, by ironically, being

beaten. Talk about your "hard sells".

There were other black leaders with large groups of followers during this period besides Dr. King. For the most part, the other factions were delivering the message of "eye for an eye" or even, "strike first". Some of the groups pointed out that it might be more effective to burn white neighborhoods as opposed to the projects where the riots were usually confined. Fortunately for all, the "militant" voices were not heeded. Dr. King's message of love and understanding, and his willingness to place himself on the front lines of the struggle, won him followers all over the world. Dr. King's eloquence was profound, and invigorated black and white, young and old, to do the right thing.

Dr. King's most famous speech was his "I Have A Dream" speech delivered in 1963. Most people consider this speech as important as the Gettysburg Address. It's hard to judge an absolute winner here, but part of Dr. Kings' speech has stayed with me ever since I heard it. ***"I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."***

Isn't that what we all want, to be judged by our character and not by other social stigmas?