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Federal Glover: Years later we still draw from King's legacy

By Federal Glover
For the Contra Costa Times

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Last weekend, East County communities organized celebrations to honor one of America's modern heroes, the Rev. Martin Luther King.

Years after the death of Dr. King, we are still drawing from his legacy. We are still learning, we still seek wisdom, we are still seeking guidance, and we are still drawing inspiration from the words of Martin Luther King Jr.

We know we have made some great advances in civil rights, in education and in race relations, but we also know that the dream he spoke of hasn't been attained yet. We know we have a ways to go.

We have only to look at the events in Tucson to see evidence of the hatred that permeates our society.

We only have to know that almost a third of our kids don't graduate from high school to know that something is inherently wrong.

We only have to read about our young people dying and dealing drugs in the streets to know that something is amiss.

We only have to read the postings on the Internet to know that the computer screen has replaced the

hood that used to hide the identity of bigots.

We have a problem.

"The trouble isn't so much that our scientific genius lags behind, but our moral genius lags behind," said King. "The great problem facing modern man is that, that the means by which we live have outdistance the spiritual ends for which we live. So we find ourselves caught in a messed-up world. "... And that is the basis of our

problem."

We still remember and speak of his dream because it is our dream. It is America's dream.

Dr. King is no longer with us, but we are still here. It is up to us to go beyond his dream -- our dream -- and continue our journey to the mountaintop.

If you really want to honor the man, if you really want to honor his legacy, memories are not enough.

It is up to us -- all of us -- to work to carry out the dream ... to turn that dream into reality.

We can do that by paying attention in the classroom. Young people, listen to your teachers.

Listen not only your classroom teachers but also the teachers of life, your pastors, your mentors, a role model or your parents.

We can do that by being respectful to each other, even if we disagree with each other.

We can do that by speaking out when we see wrong. In this era when so much hate and ignorance is repeated a thousand times on the Internet and on the radio, for so many people lies become truth, truth becomes muddled.

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That means you have to make an effort to know what's going on in the world and in your community so you can discern what's truthful and what is meant to mislead and confuse.

That means you have to be involved in making your community better, making your school better and making your neighborhood better.

And ultimately, that means you have to make time for your family.

For you parents, we can do that by helping the teacher teach your children. Don't make excuses for your kids. Read to them, help them with their homework, talk with them, know who their friends are, know where they are at. You know, this new technology is a wonderful thing. With a GPS device in most cell phones, parents can keep track of their children's whereabouts.

Most of all, parents, love your children, nurture them and encourage them. You can also learn from their innocence by not being so cynical and distrustful.

We can do that by reaching out to those in need. Not all of us are rich monetarily, but we are rich in the values taught to us in the Good Book: to feed the hungry, clothe the naked and shelter the homeless.

We can do that by remaining vigilant against those who would rend our society apart by pitting us against each other.

"One of the great liabilities of history is that all too many people fail to remain awake through great periods of social change," warns King. "Every society has its protectors of status quo and its fraternities of the indifferent who are notorious for sleeping through revolutions. Today, our very survival depends on our ability to stay awake, to

adjust to new ideas, to remain vigilant and to face the challenge of change."

Glover is the county supervisor for District 5.
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