

Real Life Safety Heroes



The man the U.S. celebrates on Monday is best known as an advocate for the civil rights of African Americans. But Martin Luther King, Jr. wasn't speaking simply for people of colour. At the essence of Dr. King was a commitment to the disadvantaged and oppressed of all races, religions, and economic classes.

A vivid example of Dr. King's dedication to the principles of equality and treatment in all contexts was his support for organized labour. Black people "are almost entirely a working people," Dr. King told the delegates of the 1961 annual AFL-CIO convention. "Our needs are identical with labor's needs—decent wages, fair working conditions, livable housing, old age security, health and welfare measures, conditions in which families can grow, have education for their children, and respect in the community."

Throughout his life, Dr. King reached out to workers and visibly took their side in labour disputes. In a sense, this support cost him his life. Dr. King was assassinated in Memphis on April 4, 1968. He was in the city to support 1,300 striking sanitation workers. The dispute was bitter and the situation dangerous. Disdaining all warnings, Dr. King went to Memphis and on, April 3, delivered one of his most famous speeches to a rally of strikers, their family members, and supporters. Dr. King concluded what is today known as the "I've Been to the Mountaintop" address with these eerily prophetic words:

Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the promised land!

And so I'm happy, tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man! Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord!

Happy Martin Luther King Day to everyone here and south of the border!