



Martin Luther King Jr. Day; An Important Day for Reflection on the Struggle to Achieve Equal Rights in America.

Martin Luther King Jr. Day serves as an annual reminder of what happened in this country so we don't forget. It is a day for all people who live in the U.S., whether White, Black, Asian, Latino or any other background, to reflect on what this day means. In November 2020 I took a trip to Memphis and spent an afternoon at the Civil Rights Museum, which was built onto the backside, and incorporates, the Lorraine Motel, where Martin Luther King, Jr. was shot. It is an incredibly well-curated museum, with no details lost, leading you through the struggle and the movement of equal rights for Black Americans, right up to the spot where MLK was assassinated, creating a powerful and cumulative impact that shakes you to your core. I recommend that EVERYONE go to this place, to learn what really happened and how all those involved in the struggle were true American heroes.

The Black Lives Matter movement has been instrumental in waking many people up, but there are many who still don't want to see what has happened, and what continues to happen in this country. This country was built on the backs of slaves, and the descendants of the same have had to struggle for equal treatment under the law ever since, something that should have always existed. MLK's death was a tragedy, and almost

54 years later this country still struggles, and it is palpable. I experienced it growing up in Spanish Harlem in New York, where my black friends and classmates were put in police lineups when they didn't come close to resembling the sketches/profiles of purported felons, where later on in life, they had to change their names on resumes to get interviews, and where they had to, and still have to, work five times harder to get to the same place as the white contemporaries.

As an immigration lawyer, I represent another group of people who are also not given equal treatment, immigrants. What immigrants have in common is that they are "the other", no matter what color their skin is, or what country they are from. It is the last remaining group in the US to be able to assert equal protection under the laws of the U.S., and so the struggle evolves and continues. In honor of some of our REAL American heroes, like MLK Jr., my hero Frederick Douglass, and immigrants like Julio Cesar Chavez, I have dedicated my life to helping those who don't have the same voice as those in power, and I will continue to do so.

Let's all take this hugely important American holiday to reflect on what America really is, how we can help treat people equally, no matter what they look like or where they came from, and make this a country that finally, after centuries actually does what the Declaration says was "self-evident", namely treating all people equally, giving everyone an equal chance, so that they can exercise their "...Certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness..."

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