

# The Commercialization of Martin Luther King Jr.

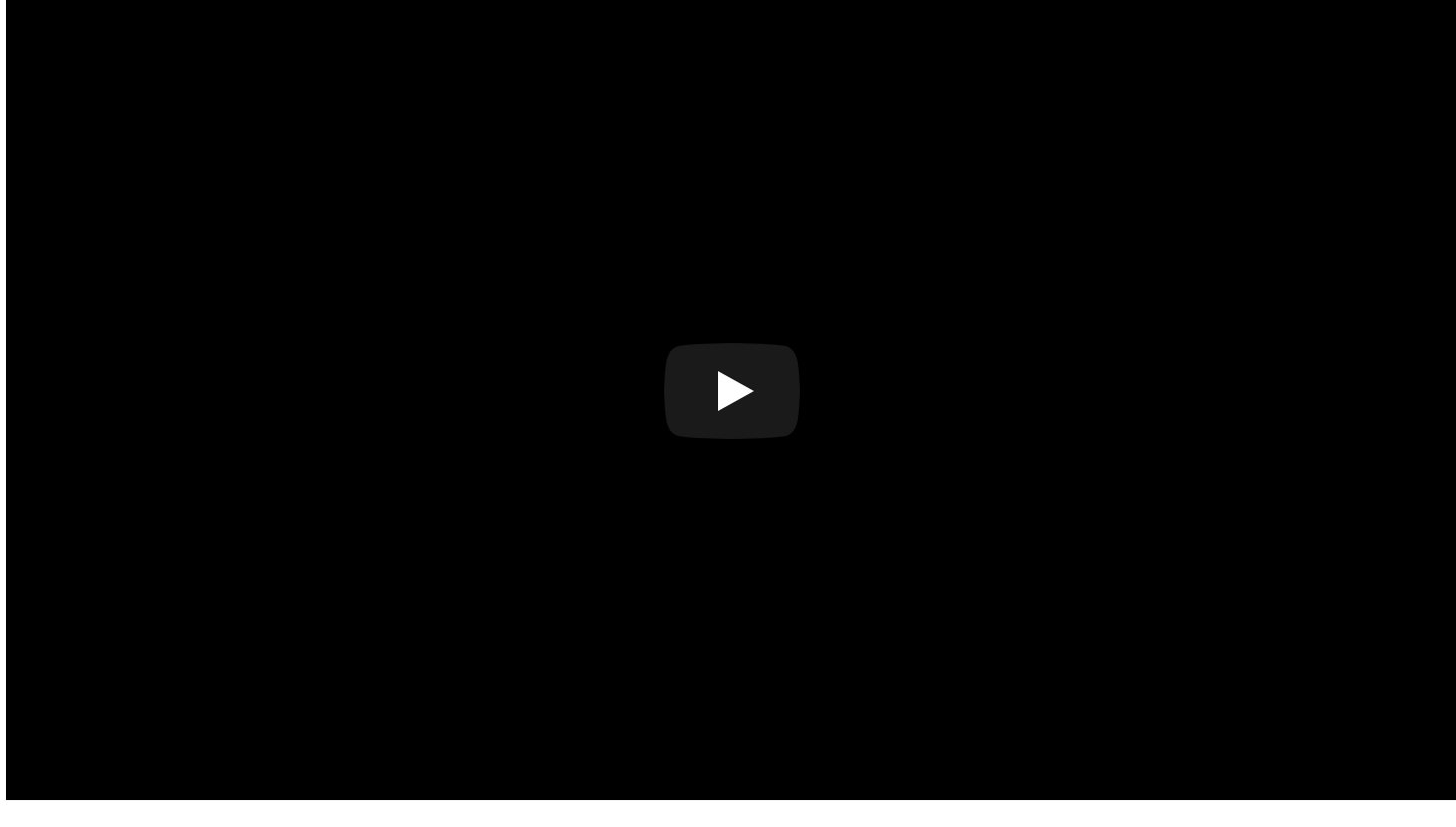
As there are rosy pictures painted of the image of Martin Luther King Jr., it's important to remember the truth.

Murjani Rawls  
9 min ago



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On February 4th, 2018 during Super Bowl LII, Dodge Ram ran a commercial named "Built To Serve." In this ad, Dodge used an excerpt from King's 'Drum Major Instinct' sermon. When he spoke it, it was supposed to invoke how important community is and how powerful acts of service can be towards it. Not necessarily one that pushes an image of buying a shiny, powerful truck. The ad gave small-town images of barbershops, the military, and firefighters doing their job complete with moody music and the front bumper of a Dodge Ram.



Oddly enough, the church that the Ram is helping transport in the commercial and that small-town barbershop are places that Martin Luther King Jr. wouldn't have been allowed in. As we celebrate another MLK day, one that wasn't entirely recognized by all 50 states until the year 2000, there will be figures and companies that choose to cherry-pick the quotes that they like.

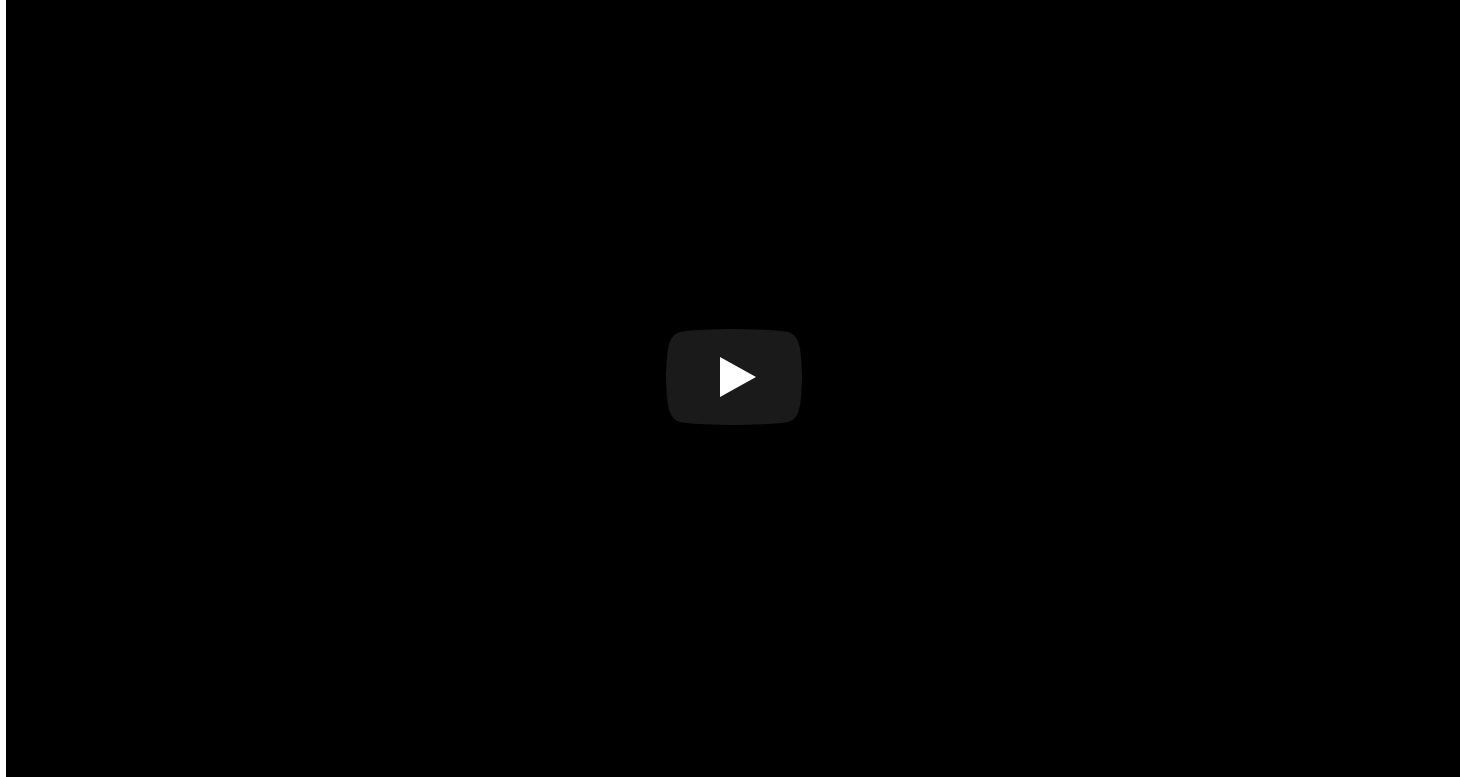
You know, the hits: "Darkness **cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that.** Hate **cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.**" Parts of his famous 'I Have A Dream' speech where he wished that "my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of **their skin, but by the content of their character.**" Hmm...it's safe to say in a world where white supremacists and hate groups took to storm the Capitol right after a historic senate vote in Georgia where Black voter turnout was at an **all-time high**, he would be disappointed, to say the least. It's as if every single holiday, we gloss over the ugly parts. That MLK's message is used to disarm or shame minorities who want social justice and equal opportunities.

**Two-thirds of Americans** in 1966 had an unfavorable approval rating of Martin Luther King Jr. During his **march in Marquette Park**, white counter-protesters threw bottles and firecrackers at him. He was **arrested and jailed 29 times** in his life, often for inflated charges. He was **under surveillance by the FBI**. So as you ready your quotes for today to strike a unity chord, remember that it's been only in recent memory that Martin Luther King Jr. has been so beloved. Read his '**Letter From A Birmingham Jail**,' where he declared that it's our moral responsibility to direct our actions against unjust laws.

**"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."** I wonder if the figures, representatives, and Senators who further the lie that the election was stolen, worked to invalidate votes in urban counties, and have all of a sudden called for unity have read that entire letter. Or in his **Beyond Vietnam speech** where he stated that "young black men "crippled by our society" were being sent "eight thousand miles away to guarantee liberties in Southeast Asia which they have not found in southwest Georgia and East Harlem."

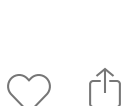
'A **time comes when silence is betrayal.**' So, why are people compelled to speak about civil rights and pull famous quotes for peace for one winter Monday a year? Why would an entity such as the NFL quote MLK and actively shun a player like Colin Kaepernick for exhibiting his right to protest? It's the same reason why people choose to whitewash and glitterize the blood, sweat, and tears of the Civil Rights movement. To ignore the fact that Martin Luther King Jr became weary in his quest for unity because America's love affair with white supremacy is so pervasive.

Martin Luther King Jr was an **advocate for Native American rights**, headed the **Poor People's Campaign**, was against the Vietnam War, and anti-capitalist. It is funny seeing that Dodge Ram ad and how his words can be grossly taken out of context. Watch the same ad again below, but with MLK's words that condemned consumerism - in the exact same speech!



Even after all the wisdom that Martin Luther King Jr. gave us throughout his lifetime, he was assassinated on April 4th, 1968 by James Earl Ray at the Lorraine Hotel in Memphis, Tennessee. The day before, his flight was delayed **because of a bomb threat**. In his **last speech**, he said, "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."

Unfortunately, he didn't get to see it, and honestly, we haven't. If anything, these past four years have shown us how far we've either regressed and how far we still have to go. If you choose to share his words without really diving into the crux of his legacy, then you are as far away from realizing the totality of his dream like he sadly was. The 'I Have A Dream' speech that was spoken at the Lincoln Memorial **had 250,000 people attend** and just last week, thousands attending a 'Stop The Steal' rally based on election lies. Then promptly stormed the Capitol looking to do harm to elected officials, displaying racist insignia, and where five people died. Take a look at those quotes you have saved in your drafts, then look at those two contrasting pictures. The recent one is in color and proof of a dream not realized.



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