

**Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
Holiday Observance and Sunrise Celebration
ALA Midwinter 2020: Philadelphia, PA**

Call to Action

Loida Garcia-Febo, ALA Immediate Past President

“But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream.”

Powerful passage from the scripture that Dr. King included in “I have a Dream.”

I stand with you.

We shall stand with one another.

All ye that labor and are heavy laden, tired, from the brutal feet of oppression.

I am multiracial. I stand on the shoulders of my Taino abuela – My grandmother indigenous from Puerto Rico, my Greek and Spaniard immigrant ancestors, and my Afro-Caribbean great-grandmother whose family were slaves. Her name was Marcela, she raised my father. She married a Spaniard who passed away leaving her raising melanated children in the mountains where she was the only black person at that time. She endured so much, raising her children and my father in the mountains very alone. Living off the land. My father loved her like his mother. She was a woman of faith who taught him social justice principles and he passed them on to me.

From them, I learned the value of advocating in a concerted action, working together with same value-minded people.

What unite us, persons of color, folks from diverse backgrounds, abilities and identities, is bigger than what divides us.

Dr. King taught us that united we are powerful. The only way we can move our country to the place WE deserve is, by working united, fighting the power that continues threatening us by directing our efforts to change policies and laws at our

professional homes and in our communities, cities, states and federal level. It is time. We need to build infrastructure to strengthen our communities. We can do this by advocating together with civil society, reaching out to stakeholders at global levels as I've done at the United Nations. At national level speaking at Congress, at city levels bringing your voice and actions to City Halls. Run for elected office in your professional home! Run for community Board member, city councilor. Run for Mayor! Speak at your community Board. Protest.

At our professional home: ALA has had its most diverse Board for a couple of years now. Yet, there are times when we must fight the structures of oppression everywhere so they don't creep all the way around trying to knock our efforts down.

At our cities and country: Things seem to have gone back in time to when Dr. King was among us.

Still, with the love experienced by Dr. King which I can say is the type of love wrapped in action and social justice that my great grandmother passed on to her generations, I want to say to you: don't be dismayed. Remain firm and united. Stand up. Everywhere. Speak up. Disrupt. Agitate. And more importantly, join forces with others to take action.

To our white allies, I encourage you to consistently join us in destroying the structures of oppression supporting/opening/creating spaces for people of color to feel safe to talk, to share, to Be. Work with us to change policies.

Let's us all seek our brothers and sisters. As Reverend King taught us, we are all equally created. We need people supporting equality to be in leadership, here in our civil society groups and out there in public offices.

Together, we, ought to tear down the structures that oppress us by changing policies, procedures and laws. We can only do that if we are working together.