

## **What are Today's Dreams?**

On August 28, 1963, Martin Luther King delivered one of the most notable speeches ever made in America. Notable, not so much for its content, but the fact that he was the first to muster up the courage and openly say what needed to be said.

He said that he came to our nation's capital to dramatize a shameful condition, and came there to cash a check. He explained that when the architects of our great republic wrote the words of the Declaration and the Constitution, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men, black and white men, would be guaranteed the inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. He declared that this check was now marked, "insufficient funds".

Standing on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, he pointed out that one hundred years after the Emancipation, black Americans still lived on a lonely island of poverty. He noted that they were still languishing members of our society and found themselves exiled in their own land.

He proclaimed that he still had a dream, a dream deeply rooted in the American dream. He said that America had defaulted on this promissory note insofar as citizens of color were concerned.

Fifty years have passed since he gave that speech. Certainly, we have come a long way in guaranteeing civil rights for everyone. But at the same time, our ghettos have grown and they are in decay. People who had hope in 1963, see their children and grandchildren still languishing in poverty, plagued by high rates of unemployment, substance abuse, mental health issues, and murder rates that we would not tolerate outside of the inner cities. Some claim this has been caused by the hand of government, designed to keep these folks on what Dineen Borelli calls the "government plantation."

Fifty years later, we need to ask, what is the American Dream for all Americans? Does it still exist? Fifty years later, is the government still defaulting on the

promissory note of our Founders that guarantees individual liberty, freedom and the pursuit of happiness for all citizens? Are we languishing from a broken and corrupt Federal government that seems incapable of identifying, addressing and solving the problems that plague America today? Are we being exiled in our own land by the weight of a broken economy, unsustainable national debt, and by the overreaching hand of government that seems to want to control and intrude into every conceivable aspect of our lives?

Like Dr. King, do we have the courage to declare what our dreams are today, and are we willing to stand up, speak out and address these shameful conditions in America that are preventing us from achieving these dreams?