MARTIN LUTHER KING QUOTES Final - 2012

There are two types of laws: just and unjust. One has not only a legal but a moral responsibility to obey just laws. Conversely, one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws. One who breaks an unjust law and who willingly accepts the penalty of imprisonment in order to arouse the conscience of the community over its injustice is expressing the highest respect for law.

When the Constitution was written, it declared that the Negro was 60 percent of a person. Today, another formula seems to declare that he is 50 percent of a person. Of the good things in life, the Negro has approximately one-half those of whites. Thus, Negroes have half the income of whites, and half of all Negroes live in substandard housing. Of the negative experiences of life, the Negro has a double share: there are twice as many unemployed among Negroes, and the rate of infant mortality is double that of whites.

I am not saying we have a pure black against white conflict: Negroes are not the only poor in the nation: there are nearly twice as many white poor as Negro, and, therefore, the struggle against poverty is not involved solely with color or racial discrimination.

The problem is economic injustice—the great gulf between inordinate wealth and abject poverty. In America, one-tenth of one percent of the population controls 50 percent of the wealth. Do you know that most of the poor people in our country are working every day? Those at the lowest economic level—the poor white, the Negro, the aged—stagnate or become even poorer in relation to the larger society.

Human progress is neither automatic nor inevitable. Every step toward the goal of justice requires the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals.

"Let us ...continue our triumphant march to the realization of the American dream. Let us march on segregated housing until Negroes and whites live side by side in decent, safe, and sanitary housing.

"Let us march on poverty until no American parent has to skip a meal so that his children may eat...until no one walks the streets of our cities and towns in search of jobs that do not exist.

The only normalcy that we will settle for is that which recognizes the dignity and worth of all of God's children, the normalcy of brotherhood, of true peace, and justice.

"History will have to record that the greatest tragedy of the period of social transition was not the strident clamor of the bad people, but the appalling silence of the good people.