

When we think of Dr. King, we tend to focus on the events he was a part of - some of us learned of them in history class; some of us are old enough to have lived through them. We will be reminded of these events many times over the weekend and on Martin Luther King Day.

Dr. King won the Nobel Prize. He was awarded more than 50 honorary degrees from universities in America and around the world. More than 730 US cities have named streets after him.

There was the groundbreaking March on Washington; the electrifying "I have a dream" speech that followed; and the tragic assassination that shook the nation, and threatened to halt the civil rights movement

As we are reminded of these events and accomplishments, it's important to also remember the ideals behind those events.

By 1968, Dr. King had already survived multiple attempts on his life, knowing that he was a target.

He had spoken about his eventual funeral in his last sermon at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia. Dr. King's widow, Coretta Scott King, asked that the sermon be part of his memorial service. In the sermon, he asked that no mention of awards and honors be made at his funeral, instead, he wanted to be remembered as someone who: fed the hungry, clothed the naked, and loved and served humanity.

These are timely words for the people of Washington State, and the people of America. Many people find themselves out of work. Some people find themselves out of a home. Everyone is affected by what may be the greatest recession of our lifetime, and yet, there is reason for hope.

We still live in the greatest country on earth. We still live amongst the most virtuous and giving people on earth. And on Tuesday, the day after Martin Luther King Day, we will all watch as America inaugurates its first African-American president.

The dream of a color blind, egalitarian society that Dr. King worked for and spoke of is still a dream, but we are closer than ever to realizing it.

We will emerge from this recession we find ourselves in, and we will be stronger for it.

In these hard times it is essential that we keep the ideals that Dr. King lived by close to our hearts: that we try to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and love and serve humanity.

In these hard times, remembering Dr. King's events are not enough; we must also strive to live by the ideals he embodied.

Thank you.

