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Martin Luther King Jr Convocation

Peace, like rainfall comes down and touches the tiniest specs of dirt, and can soak the thickets of tree trunks. Peace is not quiet, compliant, static, linear, passive...peace is forever changing, challenging, rough, full bodied, circular. Peace, like dance, needs rhythm and balance to stay in step. Peace needs variety, like in the words of Malcolm X, "By any means necessary as long as it makes sense."

In kings memory there is not one thing I can say that makes him true or false, because it is through our own two eyes that we all remember him differently. Through our multiple brains that we think of him, our wrists as we write, our stomachs as we eat, our backs as we carry, our feet as we walk. He is multidimensional, no less and no more than us all. So for him, for us all, I speak on what his memory inspires in me:

Composed of these intricate little  
branches  
lining themselves up like steps of our existence  
musty.  
smelling.  
good to the soul.

round, circular, heavy  
weighted, colorful  
sure footed  
to be light and able to balance  
to reach  
to have wing spans, plural  
amounts and mounds in bellies filling  
so we can fly!  
to stay alive.  
a tener en nuestro paseo  
dentro, dentro  
al fondo  
reaching to the tips of toes  
reaching to the tips of fingers  
spreading to the backs of heads  
and out, and out the eyes  
seeing the seas colors and remembering old man rivers belly, sometimes waking at night  
with the sorrow of indigestion  
the stomach  
in the middle  
passages of thought, that deep blue seas  
down by the rivers  
deep

blacks  
bella por que se hacen asi los espiritus

I see myself a daughter of daughters of sons

this sapphire, this moon  
tip toeing at sky's edge  
and chasing the sun  
along it, beside it  
a long way home

Change has always been these something's that we do continuously, keeping things good, rather than one thing we do and never have to do again. Sometimes our changes can feel like one action that happens in an instance, and ometimes in order to make change we think we need to have this huge mountain to move. At times, that's how change works, at other times in order to make change we need something that's continuous not instantaneous. Sometimes change is how we remember. Change can be the instantaneous, but the saving and the consistency come from the remembering.

Dr King was shot and killed in Memphis, Tennessee on April 4<sup>th</sup>, 1968. He was in Tennessee to lead a march of sanitation workers who were protesting against low wages and poor working conditions. He was troubling the ideas, thinking critically not unlike many others, of what it meant to do civil rights work. As someone with a clear established commitment to improving race relations King was also seeking ways he could partner with all communities, with people, in order to work towards differing goals motivated by civil rights. What King in spires in me is a critical eye.

A critical eye, critical thinking, exposing not to persecute but unveiling for always necessary reevaluation. Sometimes we are told, at school, at places of work, at places of recreation and gathering, "be careful not to trouble a situation too much", "be weary of too critical of an eye." I say, if we are not thinking critically then what are we thinking about? I say, listen to yourself. The students who started petitioning and working for the establishment of, the Dominican Students association, Ujaama, Ajua Campos, Asian/Asian American House, X-House, La Casa, 200 Church, Japanese Hall, the Bayit, Chinese House , International House, Womanist House, Turath House, Woman of Color House, Sign Language House, among many others; I am sure were questioned about the necessity of their actions. I believe, and know were told in some instances their efforts were misguided, were told they were self segregating, were told – you go to Wesleyan, there are so many spaces that accept you already. Well, my parents tell me, hold the institution to its word. It says its liberal, it says its open and accepting... then accept what we are presenting as our necessities. We need what we need and we do not always know where that need comes from. What King inspires in me, is to remember to listen to my needs, to define those needs for myself.

King inspires me to never blindly follow anyone, myself included. Our feelings are our only certainty, but they are not our only guides. You will always feel a way about a situation, but there will be a multitude of happenings that will guide you. Looking critically at a situation does not mean closing one self off to other possibilities, it does not mean simply troubling for the sake of shaking things up, rather it means opening one self

up to a personal interpretation, it means troubling a situation in order to break it open, in order to look at it in a different light.

King inspires me to believe in myself, to listen to my feelings, to think critically, King inspires me to keep working, but most importantly to work to save what we have gained thus far. When we start things and accomplish them we arrive back at our beginnings again, and each time we go through our journeys we are filling our “body back packs” with the things we are saving from our past journeys. King’s memory inspires me to save all that I see as important, working with myself and working with others. Save so we have foundations to build upon.