


If you don't regularly receive my reports, request a free subscription at [steve\\_bakke@comcast.net](mailto:steve_bakke@comcast.net) !  
Follow me on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/@BakkeSteve> and receive links to my posts and more!  
Visit my website at <http://www.myslantonthings.com> !

 **CLASHES WITH  
MARTIN LUTHER  
KING'S LEGACY –  
BUT NOT WHAT  
YOU MAY THINK!**

By Steve Bakke  
February 5, 2018



For me it started with Martin Luther King's "Dream" speech in 1963 when he proclaimed: *"I look to a day when people will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character."*

I'm white – "Norwegianly" Caucasian, you might say. Nevertheless, I'm presuming to comment about an iconic black civil rights leader from decades past. In my opinion, Martin Luther King's most public and productive years roughly coincided with my time as a student at Luther College.

The dignity of King's methods compelled me to respect him and listen. My attempts to deemphasize race grew from his "Dream" speech. Sadly, my most successful attempts to look beyond race have come full circle and are now deemed by some of my detractors to be a neo-racist micro-aggression. More on that later.

King's successful leadership came from his ability to communicate his social justice goals with all races during the racially tumultuous '60s. He didn't convince all white people to agree with him, but most understood and respected his methods – and there developed a measure of popular sympathy for his message. King talked to all of us, and because of that, I'm claiming his tacit permission to add my comments to what's now swirling around his name and legacy.

The lasting impressions King gave me made his legacy one of my favorite subjects to contemplate and comment on. Bringing me back to it this time was an article by Errin Haines Whack, the AP's Race and Ethnicity writer. It appeared in the Courier on January 14, 2018. The commentary, "Trump clashes with King legacy" took the President to the "woodshed" for comments he's made that Whack believes clash with King's legacy. I don't have to repeat those comments here.

Whether those comments were racist, or examples of Trump's foolish, clumsy, and inarticulate locker-room talk isn't decided. But I'm not presenting this to argue about whether Trump is a racist. That's not important for this discussion. My intention is to discuss

some progressive attitudes that have evolved until they now actually clash with Martin Luther King's legacy.

That evolution started with a justified and well-intentioned push for tolerance and justice. This continued over time and eventually society discovered that the result of extreme tolerance is.....ultimately.....intolerance and limits on speech. We've come to call that "political correctness." And identity politics was the natural next step.

King dreamed of a day when racial differences would be deemphasized. But, in contrast to his apparent intentions, racial and other differences are now being encouraged. That's what "identity politics" is all about. We are assigned racial, religious, social, or other identities. This emphasis on differences, and maintaining those differences, is especially evident on college campuses – segregated living, study areas, and courses.

What was once an ideal of "E Pluribus Unum," the concept of "out of many, one," has become official separation rather than working to eliminate disparities. Enforced separation, King understood, worked against his social justice goals.

Contrary to King's ideal, deemphasizing race is now an unacceptable "microaggression." Is this new phenomenon a natural evolution of King's Dream? Hardly. It's just the latest clash and setback on the way to his ultimate dream of unity. Whether his dream can survive this setback isn't yet determined.

*"I know, somehow, that only when it is dark enough can you see the stars."* Those were King's encouraging words in his wonderful "Mountaintop" speech. It was the spring of 1968, my senior year in college, when he gave that hopeful proclamation. He was murdered the next day. Martin Luther King Jr. was only 39.