

Gallup pays tribute to Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

Written by By Dee Velasco For the Sun
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Civil rights leader remembered for his stance on unity

"History is cluttered with the wreckage of nations and individuals that pursued this self-defeating path of hate. We still have a choice today: nonviolent coexistence or violent coannihilation. We must move past indecision to action." "The Inner Truth" Riverside Church, NYC, April 4, 1967-Reverend Martin Luther King Jr.

These words were once again spoken in remembrance of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday observance in Gallup Jan. 21. Despite the frigid, gusty winds, eager participants took part in the celebration of King's legacy.

This observance marks the 90th birthday of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., and the 33rd anniversary of the national holiday in King's honor.

The theme, "Community Togetherness in Unity," emphasized as well as acted on King's teachings and principles of nonviolence, respect for human dignity, rights and racial equality.

Gallup's tribute to King's legacy consisted of a prayer circle, which started at the Gallup Cultural Center, 201 E. Highway 66, in addition to a march of unity. The program continued with refreshments and award presentations at Larry Brian Mitchell Recreation Center.

Rose Marie Cecchini, co-collaborator of the event, said the whole dream of King's was for humans to coexist as a whole, multiracial vibrant community.

"To live it out in our own personal lives and in our relationships ... (it) can survive in the community of Gallup," Cecchini said.

Assembling upstairs in the Cultural Center, an inter-faith prayer circle was led by

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representatives of various faith traditions of Gallup, offering a prayer for peace.

Rev. Fredrick Davis of Gallup's Saint Paul's Mission Baptist Church read an excerpt from King's presentation, "The Inner Truth."

This was Davis's second year attending the event, and as a black man in America, he came to express his views that people of color need to stand strong for the dream that King had in that everyone is created equal.

"... The more we can plight out the racism that is going on in the world today," he said. "Especially with the president we have now, who spews racism and hate, as a means to separate, we have to speak louder against racism and hate. Meeting like this and having the opportunity to speak at it is always a pleasure."

Davis was the keynote speaker this year and was asked to read and say a prayer.

"We can live to coexist together, we can live together in peace and harmony, but we all must come together to stand against hate and racial injustice," he said.

As the last of prayers were said the march of unity began. Heading east along Historic Highway 66, the group of participants carried banners and signs commemorating the holiday.

The march continued over the Miyamura Pass along Maloney Avenue, ending at Larry Brian Mitchell Recreation Center.

"Our vibrant multicultural, multiracial nation will be united in justice, peace, and reconciliation," Cecchini said, "King's life example really challenges us today not only just to remember but to celebrate and to live out the boundaries of equality."

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Meanwhile, Davis, along with his family, said that if more people would stand in unity against oppression, the stronger we will become.

“We have to come together and come together strong to fulfill King’s legacy,” he said, “It can be done, and together we can do it.”

Lucy Mack, of Gallup, who has been participating in the annual event for the past six years, says it’s a pleasure to be a part of it of again.

“I came to hear the talk,” she said.

Donations of nonperishable food items were also accepted to replenish the Gallup Community Pantry. Boy Scout Troop 347 of Gallup was also on hand to show their support.

Rudy Thomas, of California, said it was blessed sight to see people of different walks of life come together for such an auspicious event.

“I was simply amazed at the sight of different races and people of color that came together for this event,” he said. “Dr. King’s stand on racism back then is more relevant for today with all the nonsense going on, and it’s good to see this happen here. I just wish more people could get past the hate and open their hearts up to what Dr. King was truly saying.”

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