

C l i f t o n L. T a u l b e r t  
A Global Conversation-The Foundation-It's All About Community  
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Thank You: Two Powerful Words  
CLT

The place was beautiful. Snow was everywhere and I didn't have to shovel any of it. I was in Deerfield, Massachusetts at the historic Deerfield Academy where I had been invited to deliver the MLK Day Speech. Needless to say I was excited and challenged. After arriving and getting settled, I immediately pulled out my laptop and looked over my presentation, just to make sure that everything was just right. But something was wrong. I wasn't quite sure how to start my talk. I wanted to do justice to the day and of course to the memory of Dr. King. But that first power-point slide was not giving me the depth of thought I wanted as an introduction. So I decided to read Dr. King's thoughts on the "Beloved Community." **He was indeed a visionary...and a passionate one.** I was amazed at him being able to imagine such a possibility of genuine intergroup and interpersonal living when for many people in our country, legal segregation was still an accepted way of life and many 'poor' people were on the outside of our 'plenty.' Somehow he was able to look beyond that reality and focus our hearts and minds on a new possibility-a new reality, a place where love and justice dictated the actions of our hearts and hands.

Just sitting in the quietness of my room, which was over the campus bookstore, I was blown away when thinking that a man so young could be so philosophical and forward thinking. Maybe he saw in us what we had not seen in ourselves, the potential to be the 'community' he dreamed. After reading a bit more and reflecting on what I had read, I was left with this overwhelming sense of thankfulness. I felt good knowing that a mere man had lived among us, dressed in our skin and subjected to our failures, but yet was driven to call us, all of us, to a level of human excellence-a place where 'others' mattered. **He knew we couldn't stop the wind. But he seemed to have known that in the serving of others, we become powerful.** King described this powerful process as this inescapable network of mutuality.

As I write this newsletter, I am emotionally looking across the waters to Haiti and further to places of conflict and human suffering in the Middle East and beyond. All the while, I am not forgetting that even here in America, many of our fellow citizens are facing hard times. We are all being touched by the challenges faced by others, home and abroad. Technology has brought the needs of others to our doorsteps. We know the needs of others! The need to embrace this inescapable network of mutuality is growing. Dr. King would remind us to not sidestep the urgency of the moment. **The groaning of human need is our own.** I understand this as do so many others. But there are those who have not come to this conclusion. The inescapable network of mutuality has not registered with them. Dr. King's 'Beloved Community' is farfetched in their minds. However, I feel that the 'community' Dr. King and others dreamed is a 'bar' not to be lowered. We may never see it in its fullness, but the process of building it is what makes our humanity of long lasting value.

All of this flooded my thoughts while sitting in my small room at Deerfield preparing for my speech. I wanted to give myself and those listening a call to action, not just a collection of oft quoted phrases. I wanted to challenge our hearts and hands to welcome the work of his vision into our daily lives, where we live, work, study and play. Such actions will overtime cause 'them' to become 'us.' His vision for our country and the world is indeed timeless and universal. **Timeless visions will always have a place for the next generation to lead the charge and light the way.** These are the acts of our humanity that keeps us civilized. We accept the fact that our neighbors matter. Even as I sat and recalled my segregated upbringing, I was filled with thankfulness for what I had received from his heart-a challenge to live beyond the past. Now assured of my talk, I quickly changed the first power-point slide to simply say, "Thank You." I found these two words to be powerful words-words that speak of community being built and experienced. This is my challenge this month as we embark upon another year and the start of a new decade. Take heed to the words of Dr. King and embrace humane involvement with others as natural and right. **Create reasons for 'others' to simply say 'Thank You.'**

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