

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2024

Statement on the 56th Anniversary of the Assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.
April 4, 2024

Fifty-six years ago today, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., gave his last breath in the cause to redeem the soul of our Nation. He was in Memphis to march with sanitation workers rightly demanding safer working conditions, fairer wages, and basic dignity as part of the larger quest to make real the promise of America for all Americans.

But then, an extremist, armed with a rifle in his hands and fueled by the poison of White supremacy in his heart, shot and killed a great American who loved his country so deeply to make it better—even greater—even when it didn't always love him back. Dr. King and generations of foot soldiers known and unknown embody a patriotism that continues to inspire generations of Americans, including me.

Dr. King is one of my political heroes. I was just out of law school when my hometown of Wilmington, Delaware, was among the many cities engulfed in turmoil in the wake of his assassination. His unfinished mission inspired me to leave a prestigious law firm to become a public defender and begin a career in public service.

Since then, I've seen the push and pull and progress and setback on everything he stood for, from voting rights to jobs and justice for all Americans. I've had the greatest honor to serve as Vice President to the first Black President and now President with the first woman Vice President, as we carry forward his vision of a beloved community.

But, on this day, and in this time, we all do well to remember another essential lesson about Dr. King's life and legacy. All Americans—regardless of party or background—should be able to reject political violence and hate-fueled violence in any form. We must condemn it, not condone it. We must confront it, not whitewash it. As we do, we must teach history and make history, not erase history. We must choose community over chaos.

Jill and I send our love to the entire King family. We especially keep in our hearts the legacy of Mrs. Coretta Scott King, who we all miss dearly and who did so much in her own right to redeem the soul of our Nation.

May God bless Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

NOTE: The statement referred to former President Barack Obama.

Categories: Statements by the President : Martin Luther King, Jr., 56th anniversary of assassination.

Names: Biden, Jill T.; Harris, Kamala D.; Obama, Barack.

Subjects: Civil rights movement; Hate-based violence, efforts to combat; Martin Luther King, Jr., 56th anniversary of assassination; Racial equality, improvement efforts; Vice President; Voting rights, protection efforts.

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