

Remarks by Councilmember Tim Burgess, Seattle City Council
MLK Celebration, City Hall
Seattle, Washington

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It's Not Too Late

Some young children growing up in our city face a very steep mountain when it comes to their education, their quality of life, their ability to achieve their full potential. In so many ways, their path will be very difficult and crooked, but we can make straight that path; it's not too late.

Some young men and women in our city despair because their hopes and dreams have been squished by prejudice, racism, structures and systems that keep them down, but we have the ability to unleash new hope; it's not too late.

In some neighborhoods in our city people are tired, moms and dads work multiple jobs and still barely make ends meet, crime is persistent and has been for decades and people are afraid, but we can change this reality, too; it's not too late.

As a city, and as a family of public servants, we can take stock of these realities and we can point to the many good things we have accomplished—creation of the Seattle Preschool Program to give our children a strong and fair start, passage of paid sick and safe leave so moms and dads know they can care for their kids without risk of losing their jobs, the new minimum wage law that will help to lift families out of poverty, and the beginnings of long-needed and sustainable reform of our Police Department.

Dr. King often spoke of “the fierce urgency of now” because it's not too late.

In his book about the ‘I Have a Dream’ speech, State Representative Drew Hansen, recounts another time Dr. King shared his dreams for America.

“In his Christmas Eve sermon at Ebenezer (Baptist Church) in 1967, (Rev. King) delivered another “I Have A Dream” speech, in which he envisioned a future America that God has delivered from poverty, as well as from racial discrimination:

Rev. King said: “I still have a dream that one day the idle industries of Appalachia will be revitalized, and the empty stomachs of Mississippi will be filled, and brotherhood will be more than a few words at the end of a prayer, but rather the first order of business on every legislative agenda.”

As we honor Martin Luther King, Jr., let's recommit ourselves to the vision he cast and let's make it the first order of our business.