Continuing a King’s Legacy

Don’t you think it’s ironic that Dr. Martin Luther King’s last name is “King”?

A “king” is a man who rules over a kingdom, land or government. The king’s only purpose from the moment he is seated on the throne until his death is to protect and govern his nation in the best way possible. Today kings do not play roles in most governments, but if we look back in history, we see that kings are leaders, not followers. They are looked up to as higher and more favored, but they also face hardships.

This is no bolt from the blue. It has been said that some men have greatness thrust upon them. However, we Americans have forgotten how to honor royalty and the royal order. In his essay, “Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Us in Today’s World,” Dr. Vincent Harding states, “…we can now place him in the national pantheon of heroes and leave him there—formally honored and celebrated, but essentially ignored and denied.”

I think the word “hero” is an understatement when we consider the pathway Dr. King has paved. Hero is a term often applied to comic book figures. In real life, a hero does good deeds, but when he dies, he is essentially forgotten. This is not the hero’s fault. The reason we don’t remember heroes is that their work is done. The phrase, “My work here is done,” holds true.

People don’t remember changes or good deeds done. They passively accept them as if hard-won liberties were easily obtained. Dr. Harding is right when he says, “Yet if we make such a choice we would not only demean and trivialize Dr. King’s memory and meaning, but we would also rob ourselves and our children of a magnificent opportunity to grapple with truth.”

We as Americans need to stand up and continue the legacy of Dr. King, because his work is not done. The king’s work never dies. Dr. Martin Luther King should be treated the same way. He worked until the hour of his assassination. In royalty, a king’s work doesn’t end with his death. Instead, it becomes the duty of his successors. Who are Dr. King’s successors? We are.

All Americans benefited from Dr. King’s work and message. As his successors, it is our duty to uphold his memory and follow in the footsteps of the “King.” When a king dies, if there is no successor, then the nation falls. Our nation has been slowly falling because our King is dead and we are moving slowly, or worse not moving at all, to continue his legacy. We do not want our nation to crumble or the liberties we have earned to slip away. We must still strive for equality in the peaceful ways the King has paved.

A great king does all that he can for his nation and gives his “last full measure of devotion” to protect it. That’s what Dr. King did. He gave his last measure and began a legacy. Now it’s our duty as the princes and princesses of our nation to let Dr. Martin Luther King’s memory and journey reign and continue.