

## Called by Martin Luther King, Jr. to choose peace

**By Ashland Culture of Peace Commission**

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As we honor the memory of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in his work for justice and peace, one word comes to mind which encompasses both: love.

I recently attended the meeting of the committee that plans and produces the Martin Luther King Day celebration, and it's the word I heard most. It is represented in the songs and speeches and in the demonstration of attendees holding up hearts on the Plaza after the ceremony ends at the Historic Ashland Armory.

Love gives birth to peace. It is the condition and action of peace. "I think that we come from a tradition of non-violence," Paul Collins told me after going through the details of the program with his colleagues. "I think that's part of having a culture of peace — having a positive effect in the community."

While we spoke, people filtered out of the room waving and hugging in anticipation of the event which is in its 28th year. "People are representing skills and their hearts."

So, what does it mean to represent your heart for peace?

In that room it meant minding the details of a program that is intended to evoke the memories of a great man who dreamed, marched and spoke often of justice as a foundation for a loving world. The quote he may be most known for encompasses this belief: "Darkness cannot drive out darkness. Only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate. Only love can do that."

The Ashland Culture of Peace Commission understands that, right now in this present time, many may feel the need to solidify a lasting justice through action. But justice does not stand alone. it stands with peace and love. It is created from

both.

Dr. King understood this as he united Americans under his vision where he dreamed that all people could be judged by the content of their character — a character which he often said was built for love.

How does one step into a place of love which creates peace and justice? We look again to Dr. King, who said, “Love is the only force capable of transforming enemies into friends.” To embody this, the Ashland Culture of Peace Commission believes one must be willing to embrace that which is most difficult — understanding the other and, through this process, creating a community which truly includes everyone.

We begin by coming together on a horizontal line where no one is higher or lower, seeing the world through another’s eyes which is neither right nor wrong but a collection of unique experiences worth exploring.

Peace is not easy and there is no way to it. Peace is the way. We begin its practice through love, and justice is born.

As we remember Martin Luther King Jr., we have this opportunity to begin again within our own hearts, families, neighborhoods and nation. He called us to peace throughout his life and in his death. This year, perhaps when it’s most difficult as we struggle with a nation divided by economics and power, we have the opportunity to defy division and choose peace.

*This column was written by Bob Morse and other Ashland Culture of Peace Commission writers. Email comments and questions to [ashlandcpc@gmail.com](mailto:ashlandcpc@gmail.com), or drop by the commission office at 33 1st St., Suite 1. The ACPC website is [www.ashlandcpc.org](http://www.ashlandcpc.org); like the commission on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/AshlandCultureofPeaceCommission](http://www.facebook.com/AshlandCultureofPeaceCommission); follow [twitter.com/AshlandPeace](https://twitter.com/AshlandPeace) on Twitter.*



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