

I Care About America

My education began in the early 1960s in Florida's segregated public schools, where I was taught to love God and my country. I was encouraged to believe that racial hatred was an aberration of my country's true nature. And I trusted that the inequities I lived with would become obsolete one day because they were inconsistent with our national character.

But during the civil rights movement, the nightly news exposed me to the racism and violence being played out across the country. I became greatly disappointed, and then angry, and I began to lose hope that my country would ever fully embrace me.

For years, America's ideals meant little to me. The stories I'd read about the nation's noble beginnings often omitted the fact that among the signers of our Declaration of Independence were several who owned slaves. It was an unsettling irony to me that men who declared freedom to be their rightful inheritance would deny those same "blessings of liberty" to others.

Perhaps the Founding Fathers didn't have me in mind when they wrote about the equality of all men, but surely, I was on God's mind. He who created all men and women to know ultimate freedom in Him had a plan in allowing me and those like me to be here—and in allowing the Declaration's signers to lay the foundation for this great nation in spite of their inability to live up to their own standards.

Martin Luther King, in his "Letter From a Birmingham Jail," acknowledged that racial injustice was not representative of our national identity or our spiritual mandate. He wrote: "We will reach the goal of over the nation, because the goal of America is sacred heritage of our nation and the eternal will

of God are embodied in our echoing demands.”

I grew up with a great deal of sadness because my parents, grandparents and those before them were denied basic freedoms in “the land of the free.” For a long time I thought someone should make up for all we had endured. But the more I learned about God and His mercy, the more focused I became on my indebtedness to Him.

As Christ’s ambassador, I must do as God instructed the Jewish captives to do: “Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper” (Jer. 29:7, NIV).

My eternal citizenship is in heaven, but I take ownership of the fact that America is my earthly assignment—my natural inheritance. I am mandated to care, pray and believe God for His righteousness to prevail from one end of this country to the other.

America’s peace is my peace; its hope and safety are my own. I must seek God’s heart for the nation’s future, which every American—regardless of color—will share.