

Why Martin Luther King Jr. Loved America and Respected Her Founders

Unlike the contemporary woke culture, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. loved America and respected her founders. In his iconic “I Have a Dream” speech, he clearly rooted his dream for racial equality in the original dream of America’s founders, declaring, “I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.”

Dr. King also understood the colorblind nature of America’s founding documents and, in this same speech, he challenged America not to dispense with her founding documents, but to live up to them. He said,

“When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the ‘unalienable Rights’ of ‘Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness’ (Hyatt, *Abolitionist Founding Fathers*, 54).

Then quoting from the Declaration of Independence, he proclaimed,

“I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal’” (Hyatt, *Abolitionist Founding Fathers*, 54).

Writing from the Birmingham City Jail in 1963, Dr. King referred to America’s “sacred heritage.” He was very aware of America’s flawed and sinful history, but he also saw that there was something sacred, holy and of God in her founding.

He considered the racial injustice against which he was fighting in the 1960s to be out of character with the vision of America's founders. Indeed, in this same letter he speaks with pride and respect of the Pilgrims, Thomas Jefferson, the 'majestic' Declaration of Independence and Abraham Lincoln.

Dr. King seems aware that at a time when slavery was accepted and practiced in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and most of the world, there was a unique movement against it in 18th century Colonial America. Even those founders who were slaveholders took a public stand against it and came to agree with John Adams, who wrote,

"Every measure of prudence ought to be assumed for the eventual total extirpation of slavery from the United States. I have throughout my whole life held the practice of slavery in abhorrence" (Hyatt, 1726: *The Year that Defined America*, 101).

The brilliant black scholar, Dr. Thomas Sowell, was referring to this abolition movement when he wrote,

"Slavery was just not an issue, not even among intellectuals, much less among political leaders—and then it was an issue only in Western civilization. Among those who turned against slavery in the 18th century were George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Patrick Henry, and other American leaders. You could research all of 18th century Africa or Asia or the Middle East without finding any comparable rejection of slavery there" (Hyatt, 1726: *The Year that Defined America*, 90).

Indeed, America's founding generation understood the words of the Declaration of Independence to be a statement against slavery. In an early draft of the Declaration, Thomas Jefferson accused the British monarch of introducing slavery into the colonies. He wrote,

"He has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating

its most sacred rights of life and liberty in the persons of a distant people who never offended him, captivating them and carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere” (Hyatt, *Abolitionist Founding Fathers*, 44).

Although the above statement did not make it to the final draft, the one that did was generally understood as an attack on the institution of slavery. Jefferson wrote,

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.”

Dr. King obviously understood this phrase to be both an attack on slavery and an affirmation of racial equality. When someone suggested to him that he was an “extremist,” he replied, “Was not Thomas Jefferson an extremist?—‘We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal’” (Hyatt, *Abolitionist Founding Fathers*, 45).

Indeed, in the 18th century, when humanity was divided by race and slavery was practiced throughout the world, the words of Jefferson were considered “extreme.” When judged in the context of the times in which they lived, America’s founders were, indeed, revolutionaries on the cutting edge of human society in advocating for the abolition of slavery and liberty for all mankind.

This is why Dr. King loved America and respected her founders.

This article is derived from Dr. Eddie Hyatt’s recent books, *1726: The Year that Defined America* and *Abolitionist Founding Fathers* available from Amazon and his website at . {eo}

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