

In 1963, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. gave an empowering speech to an entire nation about the racial injustices plaguing the country at the point in time and for the last one hundred years. King was committed to serving his community and educating its people for the better good. He advocates for “freedom and justice” for all people of color and does this through emphasizing the importance of organization and peaceful protest. He educates the listeners of his speech to be optimistic about the future while providing a blueprint to advocate without the use of violence. King’s service advanced civil rights to new levels, ultimately culminating in the Voting Rights Act of 1965 which prevented states from discriminating upon the African American’s right to vote. In the tradition of MLK, CSULA students and faculty continue to serve the community to advance the rights of educators and students.

Faculty and students of the CSULA community have used activists like MLK as inspiration to further improve the quality of education for students of color on campus and the CSU system. On February 27, 2020, four undergraduate students and one alumna of CSULA had the opportunity to travel to California’s state capital city to lobby for the Assembly Bill 1460. I had the privilege to be one of these five young women from CSULA to advocate for the importance of racial equality in the CSU system. This bill calls to make ethnic studies a requirement across all CSUs. I lobbied for this bill knowing the impact and difference it can make on not only the students who will be introduced to this requirement but to the future workplace. We lobbied peacefully, going door-to-door in the state capitol building, using our student voices to speak to senators or their representatives in hopes of persuading those to vote yes on the bill within the following week. Following MLK’s example, we did “not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence” for we easily could have when we did not agree as a cumulative body with targeted senators.

“But there is something that I must say to my people, who stand on the warm threshold which leads into the palace of justice: in the process of gaining our rightful place, we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds. Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred [...] We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline.” Students like myself and around the state of California vigorously but peacefully advocated to follow the truths of social justice like MLK.

Works Cited

"I Have a Dream," Address Delivered at the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom." The Martin Luther King, Jr., Research and Education Institute, 25 Jan. 2019, kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/i-have-dream-address-delivered-march-washington-jobs-and-freedom.