

Monday, January 21, 2008

Happy Birthday, Martin Luther King, Jr.

Â Martin Luther King, Jr., presented his immortal "I Have a Dream" speech when I was just four months old. When he was shot dead on April 4, 1968, I was only five years old, and he was only thirty-nine.Â I have been very positively influenced by the nonviolent path in fighting for social justice from Gandhi and Martin Luther King, How did they take up and stay on the nonviolent path? For both, their deeply-held religious beliefs helped them on that path. For Gandhi -- writes Radhika Rao --he was also influenced by the non-violence of his mother and of Tolstoy, and the civil disobedienceÂ message ofÂ Rousseau. Martin Luther King, Jr., was heavily influenced by Gandhi's non-violent path, starting with Mordecai Johnson's discussion of Gandhi at King's college. Ironically, hanging in King's office was a picture of Gandhi; both were assassinated. Â On non-violence, King said: Â "The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy. Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it. Through violence you may murder the liar, but you cannot murder the lie, nor establish the truth. Through violence you murder the hater, but you do not murder hate. In fact, violence merely increases hate.... Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that." Â In overcoming violence, we have a very long way to go.Â Happy birthday, Martin Luther King, Jr., and thanks. Jon Katz.

Posted by Jon Katz in Constitutional Law at 00:05