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"In the End, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends", said Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., a Christian minister and activist who led the Civil Rights Movement in the United States from 1955 to 1968. Dr. King's "I have a dream" speech delivered during the march in Washington on August 28, 1963, became one of the defining moments in the fight for civil rights. Dr. King was a prolific writer and an excellent orator. The "Letter from a Birmingham Jail", his 1964 Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech, and "I've Been to the Mountaintop", delivered on April 3, 1968, in Memphis, are examples of some of his greatest speeches. Through his activism, nonviolent resistance, and grass root organizing, he made immense progress towards racial equality in America. "And sometimes I will even go so far to say that it may be that the great tragedy in this great period of social transition is not the glaring noisiness of the bad people, but the appalling silence of the good people.", said Dr. King during his "Some Things We Must Do" address delivered on December 5, 1957, in Montgomery, AL. Dr. King was addressing the fact that many moderate whites at the time were afraid to speak out against racial discrimination and injustices out of fear of social, political, and economic reprisals.

"In the End, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends." Dr. King said these powerful words in the context of the lack of support from good people for the Civil Rights Movement. Dr. King called out then the appalling silence of good people, and even now this quote is still relevant. What matters is not just what our enemies do, but more so what our friends fail to do. Being silent is being complicit and letting our compatriots suffer from our

silence is wrong. Speaking up is not easy, but it is something we all must do. As Dr. King said in a speech delivered on April 4, 1967, in New York City, “And some of us who have already begun to break the silence of the night have found that the calling to speak is often a vocation of agony, but we must speak”. He was criticizing Lyndon Johnson’s stand on the Vietnam War.

I recall myself a time when I had to take a stand against discrimination. This was when I transitioned from elementary to middle school. At my elementary school, the kids who were generally from the same neighborhood. In middle school, the kids came from different neighborhoods and many spoke English as a second language. This is where I noticed a problem start to arise. My friends from elementary school decided to just stick to themselves and not welcome the other kids because they saw them as different. I felt this was wrong and spoke against it. Regardless of what neighborhood people lived in or what language they spoke, they should not be discriminated against. It is important to raise our voices against injustice, inequality and discrimination.

Mr. John Lewis, the civil rights leader, wrote in his final essay, “Though I may not be here with you, I urge you to answer the highest calling of your heart and stand up for what you truly believe.” After seeing the systemic racism, divisiveness, political disarray, and excessive use of force by law enforcement on people of color, that our country has been going through the last few years, it is truly disappointing to see silence from our leaders. Although, it is encouraging to see people of all ages, race, and walks of life protest against the unlawful killing of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and many others, all of America, regardless of race, religious beliefs, or political affiliations, need to stand up against racial injustice.

In conclusion, being silent is equivalent to doing nothing against the injustices we see all around us each and every day. COVID-19, the ongoing global pandemic, has taught us that our fellow citizens' health and wellbeing is dependent on each other. As Dr. King inspired us, let us break our silence and speak up against injustice, inequalities, and discrimination, so that we can all live "in one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all".

Sources:

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