



Notes from the Chief

What I'm working on for You



"Not everybody can be famous, but everybody can be great because greatness is determined by service."

- Martin Luther King Jr.

Reciting the many great words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. has become a treasured part of the day that commemorates his service to the cause of advancing civil rights. His remarkable gift of the written and spoken word has provided an inspiration to millions of people who share his dream of hope and fairness for all people in America, regardless of race, religion, gender or creed. He was a remarkable advocate for equality for all people of color in America, including Indian Country.

I recently signed an executive order formally recognizing Martin Luther King Jr. Day, the third Monday of each January, as a Cherokee Nation national holiday, closing all of the tribe's government offices and granting paid administrative leave to employees. However, on that day, I encourage all Cherokee Nation employees to dedicate the day in service to others. By devoting this day to service and care of others, we move closer to Dr. King's vision of living and working together as one community. Through our deeds, we honor Dr. King's legacy. Going forward, that commitment to service on the third Monday of January will better unite and strengthen each of us, and the entire Cherokee Nation. "A Day On, Not a Day Off" can be a day to connect community service to the social justice issues that Dr. King fought for during his lifetime. On that day, and every day, we should all be an advocate for people who face injustices in their lives.

While we have certainly made positive progress for people of color, we still have far to go to meet true equality and opportunity for all. Now more than ever, we should make standing for the voiceless a priority in our country and community.

Part of Dr. King's enduring legacy are the seeds of hope he planted in the hearts and minds of millions of Americans that life could be and should be better. That hope carried a generation forward, and it

continues to inspire me today. Real hope is believing life will be better soon. It is not a fleeting wish that things will get better, but a true belief that a brighter future lies ahead. At Cherokee Nation, our goal is to build brighter futures for all of our citizens. A brighter future today, tomorrow and seven generations from now.

Dr. King devoted his life to serving others and fighting for justice and equality for all people. Beyond a celebration of his life, MLK Day is also a reminder that every day each of us can play an important role in continuing his work. Dr. King once said, "Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'What are you doing for others?'" We are forever indebted to Dr. King. His fight increased the opportunities and freedoms that we all enjoy today. And, a most fitting tribute would be for each of us to rise every day and ask ourselves, "What can I do to help someone today?"

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