

A Story of Two Movements: The MS Community Honors Dr. King



I am excited to serve as Vice President of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at the National Multiple Sclerosis Society; to be a part of a movement, something much bigger than me. And I'm serving in a role where I can live out my passion to ensure that everyone, regardless of their race, ethnicity, who they love, how they identify, what university they did or didn't go to or where they were born, can access resources that enable them to live their best and fullest lives. I am fortunate to partner alongside many others within the Society, and the MS community at large, who give their heart and soul every day to see a future without MS. An organization that truly [walks its talk](#): "the National MS Society is committed to creating a world where everyone, of every race, can live a life free of MS and free of injustice and inequality."

Of course, this work is a journey, and there is no expectation that we will get there overnight. We are very clear that the work will be hard, but worth it. There is a passion and commitment to do the work to dismantle the systemic racism and discrimination in all its forms, and to remove the barriers to equitable outcomes for our marginalized communities. To date, we have achieved more advances in MS than have been achieved for any other neurological condition. I am excited to see where we can go from here as every voice is lifted and included as collaborators toward a world free of MS.

This inherent spirit and propensity towards progress and positive change is reminiscent of a

very profound figure and exemplar for change that has been ever present in my personal life and professional work for as long as I can remember.

I was first introduced to the civil rights movement and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., affectionally known as “MLK” or “Dr. King,” at the age of 6. I had a thirst for knowledge and a question-everything attitude, always asking “why” to every piece of information that came my way. I recall consuming a massive stack of Jet magazines, a prominent publication of the time that focused on celebrating the Black experience, in my grandmother’s living room. Unfortunately, this introduction was a somber one, as it was a 10-year-old issue of the magazine and a look back at his life.

He was 39. He was a father. He was a husband. He fought for the rights of people that looked like me (and you)... and he was gone. It was hard to fathom at my young age that a human being could be murdered and ripped away from the family that loved them and a world that needed them; only because they wanted Black people to not only have equal rights under the law, but access to all available resources and true liberation to live a free life, and someone (and many others) did not want the same.

It has been 43 years since I learned about him, 54 years since his death on April 4, 1968, and 67 years since he started his fight for justice alongside Rosa Parks (and many others) on December 5, 1955, with the [Montgomery Bus Boycott](#). And for as many years as I breath and walk this earth, with honor, great admiration and respect I will follow the lead of Dr. King and continue to work to give a voice to the voiceless, hope for the hopeless and do my part to create a world where my children and yours can feel safe, respected and cared for; I firmly commit.

I invite you to move with me, as the MS movement continues today, 75 years strong, to address racial disparities and inequities in the healthcare system that impede access to care, and ultimately, a cure, for MS. In the spirit of Dr. King and looking forward to Martin Luther King Jr. Day on January 17, a National Day of Service established to honor the legacy of Dr. King, and this year’s holiday theme, “[It Starts with Me](#),” I encourage you to consider joining the MS movement in any or all of the following ways:

- Join the [MS Activist Network](#)
- Reflect on the [2021 Black MS Experience Summit](#) and explore ways to get involved
- Share your story to raise awareness of your MS experience
- Participate in a [Dr. King commemorative event near you](#)
- Register for a [Society event](#) or start your own [DIY fundraiser](#)