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7TH GRADE

DEAR MLK

On March 13, 2020, I received the best news a 6th grader could ask for, an unexpected week vacation from school. At that time, COVID felt like a distant thought. A worry for adults only resulting in free time for youtube and video games. Then things got serious. My vacation shifted to virtual school for my protection. I became nervous about the unknown. This was now a legitimate problem. One that started as a foreign issue and now it was close to me.

So there was the big bad COVID, forcing us into isolation and destroying social circles. Just when one could think things couldn't get any worse, the murder of George Floyd occurred. As a young black man, I began to feel a sense of fear I had never experienced before. To think that a black man, who was not resisting, could be killed in broad daylight by police officers for an alleged non-violent crime was a scary thought.

COVID and the unjustified murder of George Floyd led me to think, *how can I get involved? What can I do to make this country a better place?* It made me look in the mirror and also reflect on examples of people who have made a difference. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. came to mind because I am inspired by his vision, motivated by his activism, believe in his non-violent methods, and living proof of his prayer. I am one of a few black students attending my school and I experience the power of integration and unity across races every day. I acknowledge that I am just one of a few, so there is progress to be made. All of this led me to ask myself, *What am I doing to bring about change? Am I fulfilling his dream?* As a result of these questions, I decided to write this letter to express my gratitude and the need for progress...

Dear MLK,

I know you're doing well in heaven because God is taking care of you, one of his most powerful angels. On August 28, 1963, you gave a speech about a dream that you wanted to be fulfilled. There have been many ways that I have helped to fulfill your dream, like participating in peaceful protests against discrimination and racism, posting on social media about criminal injustice, speaking up about these problems in the classroom, and competitively debating about these topics as well. These actions help raise awareness of problems that African Americans continue to face every day but there is more I can do. I can create and support movements, and donate to charities that support people less fortunate. These are things that align with your vision of building community and impacting change through expressions of kindness.

Although your dream is almost 60 years old, it hasn't fully panned out the way you wanted it to. We are still being discriminated against and killed in the streets. Fewer resources are being given to schools in low-income neighborhoods. Yes, there is still progress to be made but I want to thank you for the vision. Thank you for impacting the world in a way that nobody else has. Your words continue to show a young black boy how to speak up for what's right, no matter the consequence. You showed us the power of peaceful protest. MLK, you will always be a staple in black history that will never be forgotten.

Sincerely,

Gavin