



HOUSING CALIFORNIA

January 18, 2021

“You see, I think that, to be very honest, the movement made Martin rather than Martin making the movement. This is not a discredit to him. This is, to me, as it should be.”

- Ella Baker

Today, we remember Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s undeniable courage, powerful leadership, inspiring voice, and ultimate sacrifice. And of course, we recall his dream, one we at Housing CA share and strive for still.

Even as we acknowledge the profound progress our country has made, we know that we have so much more work to do to achieve Dr. King’s vision, to shed the remnants of Jim Crow, and to end structural and institutional racism. In 2021, Black, Indigenous, and other people of color still experience disproportionate rates of poverty, housing instability, incarceration, and police violence. Our neighborhoods and schools are still segregated, and discrimination persists -- in employment, housing, voting, education, and other areas of life. That white supremacists could storm our nation’s Capitol unimpeded is a particularly stark reminder of the challenges that lay ahead.

Serendipitously, the same week we celebrate the legacy of one of history’s greatest civil rights leaders and reflect on where we are now, we have reason to embrace hope for a better future. The inauguration of Joe Biden and Kamala Harris will mark a dramatic shift from the failed, oppressive leadership of the last four years. President-elect Joe Biden’s inaugural speech will focus on unity, moving this country forward and getting things done. His platform highlights transformational changes, including investments that will advance racial equity and provide affordable housing for all Americans. As our country’s first Black and Asian and female Vice President, Kamala Harris provides hope for strong leadership that reflects our country’s rich diversity.

But the great Ella Baker reminds us that hope and individual leadership are not enough. An organized movement made Dr. King’s achievements possible. An organized movement that included brave Black women like Stacey Abrams and many others made this Wednesday’s inauguration possible. And an organized movement must continue to hold even principled leaders accountable, to make racial, economic, and social justice possible.

Housing CA is committed to contributing significantly to this movement -- by centering the voices of people with lived expertise, mobilizing people across the state, and joining partners across the country -- to demand more and to get ever closer to realizing Dr. King’s dream. Because, as he said in that incomparable speech, “we are not satisfied and will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.”

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