

# Remembering MLK and his blueprint message



By **Darin Florenz**

Darin Florenz is Black Segments Director for MassMutual's Market Segmentation and Development Team.



As a teen, I remember discussions that I had with my parents about their reflections regarding the day that the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was tragically killed during one of the most significant turning points in our country's history — the civil rights movement. I remember the acute awareness that I had of the pain in their eyes as we talked about that period of time. It was something that I could not fully comprehend at the time but certainly could feel. It left an indelible mark on me.

Over the years, I continued to gain a more in-depth understanding of the what, the how, and the why behind this inspiring leader and the history of the pre- and post-civil rights movement overall. I recall discussions with family as well as debates with friends and classmates about Dr. King and the civil rights movement. I remember the clarity of my conviction that his legacy should not be relegated to simply being a great orator with a dream but that he should be remembered as one of our greatest American leaders. He was a genius strategist, a pragmatist, an architect, and a builder who collaboratively helped design and execute a blueprint for one of the most impactful movements to drive social and economic change for the greater good of all people, not just a few. What an amazing legacy. What an amazing gift.

As I thought about how to honor his legacy this year, I spent time reflecting on some of **Dr. King's teachings that have** helped shape and influence the values of my family and of me, particularly as a father. These learnings stem directly from the massive library of wisdom that he espoused through his many books, speeches, and sermons as well as his

overall strategic approach to advancing social and economic justice, collaboratively, despite the significant powerful forces that were dead set against him.

**One of the many key learnings for me comes from Dr. King's speech on the value of having a [blueprint for your life](#).** This speech stands out to me because of the emphasis on a basic yet powerful question that I personally had as a takeaway: What do I want to achieve in life that will be meaningful and have an impact? **Or now that I've made it this far, what do I want to achieve *next* in life?** Many of us have gone through stages in life when we ask ourselves such questions.

Several months before his assassination, Dr. King gave that blueprint speech at a junior high school in Philadelphia. He noted that in constructing a building, an architect usually first draws a blueprint, based on the vision for the building. That blueprint serves as the plan — giving direction, the necessary details, and actionable steps for those who are to construct the building.

A building — like many tangible and intangible efforts in life — is not usually constructed successfully without a well-thought-out and solid blueprint. The question Dr. King posed in his speech to the students was: Do you have the proper blueprint for your life? Without such a blueprint, the foundation and the structure you are seeking to build is at risk or may never be fully realized.

Dr. King's analogy is clear and applicable to so many facets of our lives. Given that I have been in the financial services industry for more than 30 years, focused on serving **consumers, businesses, investors, and others, I think about Dr. King's blueprint lesson** in terms of crafting a **holistic financial plan for the various stages in one's life** — a plan that is iterative as you progress. I believe that having such a financial plan is absolutely critical for you as an individual as well as for your family, your loved ones, and your business partners. Just like the blueprint for a building, it is difficult to build it all by yourself. You need to engage outside expertise and leverage their knowledge, complementary to your own. Doing so will significantly increase your probability of success.

Dr. King was killed at the young age of 39. I believe that, if he had lived longer, he would have continued to place a greater emphasis on the importance of economics. We can achieve so much for ourselves, our families, our communities, and our country, by ensuring that each and every one of us has access to sound financial information and the resources with which to build and execute our own financial blueprint.

Financial institutions can and should play a significant role in helping to achieve that goal. For me as an executive in the financial services industry, that is what I have always encouraged individuals and business owners to do. That is what MassMutual is well positioned to do and does so in many ways — not just through the products and services offered, but also by leveraging its core competencies, partnerships, and other resources to help individuals, families, businesses, not-for-profit organizations, and communities build on their financial blueprint to realize their goals.

The intended takeaway is simple: Have a strong plan for what you are seeking to achieve. When building and executing on your plan, take the time to leverage the knowledge of experts, and then go forth with confidence toward achieving your goals.

And — if you feel so moved — think about an actionable blueprint to meaningfully impact your community or causes that are important to you. By doing so, you will have increased the probability of realizing your dreams and, perhaps, in the process, creating a lasting legacy for your family and loved ones as well as helping to create a more resilient, more just, and more loving community.

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