

I've been thinking about Martin Luther King all morning on this day we celebrate his life and birthday. I wonder how he would have dealt with the political situation we have in this country today. Will the values he labored for—and died for—be lost in the present culture of “whatever benefits me is right?” I have been wondering what each of us, or, more specifically, what I can do to promote the ethics and beliefs of the era that produced the civil rights movement, opposed homophobia and misogyny, asserted the rights of the disabled, and began to deal with poverty at its roots.

It is hard. We live rather isolated lives—when compared with the general population in this country today—and often our best way to help others is by donating money, something we also have in less abundance than many Americans if the national average income figures are correct.

What we do have in large supply is not easy to get to others who need it. When a pig or the chickens get overgenerous rations of skim milk during the summer, milk whose cream has been turned into part of our yearly butter supply, we feel guilty, thinking about the people who would be happy to have a glass of that fresh, organic milk as part of their meal. When excess vegetables “go back to Nature” by way of the compost pile, we think about urban people living far from good grocery stores and even farther from the farms that could provide them with healthful food for their children. When we butcher our grass-fed, organic beef, we think about the way food influences school performance, health, and general well-being.

This year, we are going to try to perform acts of random kindness with Martin Luther King in our thoughts. He lived on this Earth less than forty years. I'd like to think each of us could do at least that many acts of ordinary kindness and civility in a year.

Beyond that, I believe it is important to realize that much of the trouble in this world goes back to inequality of one sort or another. We need to understand that nearly all of us are taking more than our fair share of this Earth's resources, regardless of how simply we think we live. Just by where we live, we are very likely using more than is our right. Most of us have everything we need and much we do not need, and perhaps, this is

a day to think about inequality of all kinds and resolve to consider if what we do, what we buy, and how we live is a reflection of what we need or what we just think we want.