

Today, Monday, January 18th, is Martin Luther King Day. I am celebrating the day by reading the comprehensive history of the movement of over six million black Americans from southern states to the North between the Civil War and the Civil Rights movement. She concentrates particularly on people who left the South during the decades of the 1930s, 40s, and 50s. *The Warmth of Other Suns* by Isabel Wilkerson is not a new book. It was published in 2010, but for those of us who did not read it when it first came out, it is still important for us to read this epic now. The author tells the tale through a general history of the migration, but her book is made personal in a very human way by her use of three particular journeys to explore the profound changes created by this movement. She had the good fortune to conduct interviews with countless still living participants in this migration. Three in particular became recurring characters in her book, though they did not know each other nor did they move to the same parts of the North. The book is not brief; over five hundred pages seem daunting to people who do not enjoy reading for long periods, but her account is so beautifully written and important to our understanding of this significant period in our history that reading it is no chore at all. It is, instead, hard to put it aside to concentrate on work here at home.

There are many compilations of memorable quotations from Martin Luther King's speeches. Here are a few that seem particularly important to me:

"Every man must decide whether he will walk in the light of creative altruism or in the darkness of destructive unselfishness."

"The limitations of riots, moral questions aside, is that they cannot win and their participants know it. Hence, rioting is not revolutionary but reactionary because it invites defeat. It involves an emotional catharsis, but it must be followed by a sense of futility."

"Let no man pull you so low as to hate him."

"Never succumb to the temptation of bitterness."

"We must concentrate not merely on the negative expulsion of war but the positive affirmation of peace."

"Nothing in all the world is more dangerous than sincere ignorance and conscientious stupidity."

"All progress is precarious, and the solution of one problem brings us face to face with another problem."

"Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane."

"Never forget that everything Hitler did in Germany was legal."

And, most memorable of all for me is not the "I have a dream" line, but this: "Nonviolence means avoiding not only external physical violence but also internal violence of spirit. You not only refuse to shoot a man, but you refuse to hate him."

