

## Correcting Capitalism: King's Critique of Economic Injustice

King's concept of the beloved community formed his ideas about American capitalism, whose excesses he saw as related to the racism and violence he fought against. King embraced Frederick Douglass's passion to correct economic injustice, as well as the fierce self-reliance of Booker T. Washington, both of whom were King's role models. The dignity of every man, woman, and child is the nucleus of King's "beloved community," a concept whose genesis can be found in the works and teachings of Christian theologians Walter Rauschenbusch, Henry George, Henry Fosdick, Howard Thurman, and Paul Tillich, all of whom critiqued the excesses of capitalism that demand the labor of the many to supply the luxuries of the few. It was King's Christianity that led him to believe the God of the Universe had endowed the Earth with enough resources to provide every person with enough to eat, thereby freeing them to use their God-given talents to pursue happiness and live with dignity.

King scholars have identified and developed a framework to meet the burdens of racism, sexism, and sadism, as well as to provide insight into the harm of militarism versus the promise of nonviolence (Burrow 2006). Many studies on King have focused on his attempt to heal the nation of racism, his insistence on remaining nonviolent in the midst of personal threats and intimidation, and his call for pursuing peace between the

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United States and the Soviet Union and Vietnam (Nemeth 2009; Branch 2006). Thus, historians have noted his contributions to ending racism and the Vietnam War but, for the most part, have neglected his contribution to economic justice, limiting his role in the struggle to the last four years of his life. Thomas Jackson (2007) is the exception. He traces King's interest in economic justice to the beginning to his ministry. Although Jackson fills a tremendous void, he fails to provide the context of King's position on capitalism. King believed that capitalism must be disciplined by a beloved economy – that each community member must be treated with dignity and respect. For King, the benefits of capitalism were not the privilege of a few but rather for everyone to enjoy. King sought to end poverty through guaranteeing a minimum annual income for everyone willing to work.

In this article, I will use a chronological approach to examine King's critique of the economic exploitation inherent in capitalism. King's critique of economic justice and the flaws of capitalism evolved as he dug deeper into the roots of social injustice and worked to eradicate poverty. This brief study identifies the salient ethical statements made by King on economic injustice, demonstrating – contrary to the prevailing understanding of most scholars – that King, from the outset of his ministry, concerned himself with the injustices caused by an economic system that privileges a few to the detriment of the majority. In fact, the twin missions of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) were to save the soul of America and to end economic exploitation, racism, and militarism. This article, then, retraces how King, by extending the virtues of a beloved community to economic realm, developed his deepening understanding that capitalism needed some type of correction in order to improve the lives of all people.

King's reformist sentiments about capitalism can be found in his sermons, speeches, articles, and other communications, both to organized labor organizations and to other audiences as well, and was inherent in his concept of the beloved community, where all – regardless of their economic station – are treated with dignity. Existing scholarship places the beginnings of King's modifying capitalism agenda just four years before his assassination. But in his 1950 reflections on his journey to a Christian ministry, King relates that seeing the Great Depression's soup lines as a child first ignited his interest in economic exploitation (King, Papers, vol. 1, 1992, 359). Accordingly, King already expresses concern about income and wealth inequality in the early 1950s, as evidenced, for example, in his sermon "Paul's Letter to American Christians" (King, Testament, 1986, 416). Throughout his work, King offered a valuable ethical analysis of prevailing economic theories that continues to be relevant. The mounting challenge of overcoming economic exploitation eventually led to his "Poor People's Campaign," announced in December of 1967, which demanded the implementation of public policy toward the goal of ending this portion of triple evils racism, militarism and economic exploitation. King was assassinated on his way to seeking redress in Washington; however, the economic

reforms that he campaigned for in Memphis, Tennessee, provided cornerstones for the “beloved economy” he sought to build (Young 2009, 6; Wood 2005, 85). In retracing the development of King’s economic theory, this article seeks to contribute to the intellectual discourse about King by broadening our understanding of the scope of his radical social reform agenda, as well as about the economic theory that emerged during a period of crisis in American society. King’s persistent attempt to structurally reform capitalism demonstrates that he believed there can be no beloved community without a beloved economy.

King’s concern with both the economy and the community is related to his desire to establish a beloved relationship among all human beings. It is from this overarching premise of the beloved community that the necessity of a conceptual framework that embraces all Judeo-Christian believers – and nonbelievers – becomes noteworthy, for the triple evils persevere in America and around the world. Examining King’s early ministry in the context of reforming capitalism yields concrete evidence that the civil rights movement’s leaders, including Martin Luther King, Jr., were concerned about the economic conditions of all people throughout the world, and in particular those dwelling in the richest nation in the world.

## **EARLY INFLUENCES**

King’s concern for economic stabilization went beyond African Americans. His work on the Connecticut Tobacco Farm taught him more than how to harvest tobacco; it gave him first-hand knowledge of the economic privation faced by laborers of all races, none of whom were compensated fairly for their labor:

During my late teens, I worked two summers against my father’s wishes – he never wanted my brother and me to work around white people because of the oppressive conditions – in a plant that hired both Negroes and whites. Here I saw economic injustice first hand, and realized the poor white was exploited just as much as the Negroes. (King, *Strength* 1963, 77–8)

King also understood the link between economic exploitation and racism, which he expounded on in his speech “God Marches On,” delivered following the march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, in March 1965 – much earlier in his civil rights work than previously understood. His criticism of capitalism’s flaws was ongoing throughout his journey from Montgomery to Memphis. King began building the framework of his economic analysis of America in the summer of 1955; he began with the African American community’s fragile economy. King’s insights were prophetic, his speeches poetic:

[The economic problem] radiates in our communities like the rays of the beaming sun. In every community people are hungry, unemployment is rising like a tidal wave, housing conditions are embarrassingly poor, crime and juvenile

delinquency are spreading like the dew drops on an early fall morning. (King, Papers, vol. 4, 2000, 220)

Here King is building on a theme that Walter Rauschenbusch taught and Harry Fosdick preached, namely, the necessity of religious leaders to concern themselves with people's social conditions in this world rather than (or in addition to) their well-being in a future world. King lamented,

[h]ow we can be concerned with the souls of men and not be concerned with the conditions that damn their souls? How can we be concerned with men being true and honest and not concerned with the economic conditions that made them dishonest and the social conditions with the economic conditions that make them untrue? (Ibid., 222)

Similarly, King appropriates the pericope of Dives and Lazarus from Luke 16:19–31, a parable of sin and evil, to discuss American capitalism's failure to provide for laborers. King notes in an October 1955 sermon that Dives – who was rich on Earth – went to hell, and Lazarus – poor and ill during life – went to heaven: “There is nothing more tragic than to find a person who can look at the anguishing and deplorable circumstances of fellow human beings and not be moved. Dives’ wealth had made him cold and calculating; it had blotted out the warmth of compassion” (Ibid., 236). King returned to the same theme on March 18, 1968, in his speech “All Labor has Dignity,” in which he spoke about individuals so selfish and indifferent to the plight of others that they accumulated wealth at the expense of others. King did not condemn wealth per se; rather, he condemned the failure to share the economically generated wealth with the poor: “Dives is the American capitalist who never seeks to bridge the economic gulf between himself and the laborer, because he feels that it is the natural for some to live in inordinate luxury while others live in abject poverty” (Ibid., 238). He believed that wealthy people must pay those who work for them a living wage. He saw economic equality as spiritual prosperity.

## **BUILDING THE BELOVED COMMUNITY**

Following the success of the Montgomery bus boycott, King became a sought-after speaker and was called upon to aid in desegregation efforts elsewhere. In 1956 he first introduced the idea of the beloved community to the Diaspora; it would prove to be one of his most enduring legacies, the pinnacle of his efforts to redeem the soul of America from the triple evils of racism, militarism, and economic exploitation (Fairclough 1987, 32). King was inspired by Walter Rauschenbusch's interpretation of the beloved community, which had been inspired by Josiah Royce. Royce was a philosopher who first coined the phrase the beloved community.

The SCLC, with King at its helm, incorporated the beloved community into its fight against segregation, and it became the backbone of the civil rights movement as a whole

(Wood 2005, 95). The concept was hardly foreign to African Americans; it has deep biblical roots, and permeates the book of Ephesians (Young 2009, 2) – a text King (and the entire civil rights movement) leaned upon heavily. In it, King’s imaginary Paul argues that the church is the beloved body of Christ. He uses the term “beloved” in the first chapter after saying that believers are adopted into the family of Christ in the fifth verse:

He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace that he lavished on us.... In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God’s own people, to the praise of his glory. (Ephesians 1:1–9)

A large segment of Christians in America – particularly in the South – did not heed the teachings of the scriptures at that time. The interpretation of the preceding passage that would argue against segregation in Ephesians holds that everybody, regardless of race or beliefs, has Christ’s blood. King often lamented that the most segregated time of the week in America is Sunday mornings (King, Testament, 1986).

The terms “beloved” and “redemption” can also be found in King’s sermons as early as August 1956:

We will have to boycott at times, but let us always remember that boycotts are not ends within themselves. A boycott is just a means to an end. A boycott is merely a means to say, “I don’t like it.” It is merely a means to awaken a sense of shame within the oppressor but the end is reconciliation. The end is the re-creation of a beloved community. The end is the creation of a society where men will live together as brothers. An end is not retaliation but redemption. (King, Papers, vol. 2, 1998, 344)

In 1956, at the age of twenty-seven, King already possessed a coherent vision of the beloved community and followed the Pauline definition of the new age and the purpose of humanity. His interpretations of the Bible were explicitly relevant to the civil rights movement.

## **KING AND CAPITALISM**

King’s most in-depth analysis of the benefits and drawbacks of capitalism is in Paul’s “Letter to the American Christian,” a sermon he delivered on November 4, 1956. King noted capitalism’s strengths: that various goods and services can be delivered rapidly, efficiently, and abundantly, strengths that made the United States a wealthy nation. How-

ever, King appealed to the nation to understand that with great blessings come great responsibilities, such as ensuring dignity and respect for all, regardless of their economic station: “[Capitalism] can cause one to live a life of gross materialism. I am afraid that many among you are more concerned about making a living than making a life” (King, Papers, vol. 1, 1992, 416). King knew that a person is more than the sum total of his or her material possessions, and warned about a society that valued individual wealth over the collective good. King's activism aimed at correcting capitalism in order to realize a beloved – and therefore just and truly Christian – community.

King, through the imaginary Pauline letter, wanted well-heeled capitalists to use their power and influence to promote better distribution of resources for everyone. King's vision was not limited to correcting capitalism solely in the United States: “You can work within the framework of democracy to bring about a better distribution of wealth. You can use your powerful economic resources to wipe poverty from the face of the earth” (King, Papers, vol. 2, 1998, 344). King understood that the ability existed to eliminate poverty across the world, but the moral will of the majority of people to do so was lacking. King gave this analysis of wealth inequality:

God never intended for one group of people to live in superfluous inordinate wealth, while others live in abject deadening poverty. God intends for all of his children to have the basic necessities of life, and he has left in this universe “enough and to spare” for that purpose. So I call upon you to bridge the gulf between abject poverty and superfluous wealth. (King, Papers, vol. 2, 1998, 344)

King sought the help of the affluent to work against income and wealth inequality so that each of God's children could live a quality life. King's desire to correct the excesses of capitalism – specifically, the exploitation of the poor by materialistic individuals – stretches back to the first few years of his ministry, and his opinions about capitalism are consistent with his positions on violence and racism:

The misuse of capitalism can also lead to tragic exploitation. This has so often happened in your nation. They tell me that one-tenth of one percent of the population controls more than 40 percent of the wealth. Oh, America, how often have you taken necessities from the masses to give luxuries to the classes. (Ibid., 416)

By underscoring that the poor are just as worthy as the rich in the eyes of God, King confronted an issue that resurfaces again and again in American history, the inequality of wealth. King's Poor People's Campaign addressed the lack of capital available to the poor (Young 2004); the concentration of wealth, he knew, leads to exploitation, and luxuries for the few were obtained at the expense of necessities for the masses (Bellamy 2009).

King's critique of capitalism continued in his ministry and public statements. He

called upon capitalist leaders to use the democratic government to improve the distribution of resources for the masses. King displayed a faith in capitalism and democracy. King, through the imaginary Pauline letter, wanted well-heeled capitalists to use their power and influence to promote better distribution of resources for everyone. King's vision was not limited to correcting capitalism solely in the United States. He understood that the ability existed to eliminate poverty across the world but the moral will to do so was lacking. King gave his analysis of wealth inequality. "God never intended for one group of people to live in superfluous inordinate wealth, while others live in abject deadening poverty. God intends for all of his children to have the basic necessities of life, and he has left in this universe "enough and to spare" for that purpose. So I call upon you to bridge the gulf between abject poverty and superfluous wealth" (King, Papers, vol. 2, 1998, 344). King sought the help of the affluent to work against income and wealth inequality so that each of God's children could live a quality life.

King discussed the immorality of inordinate wealth existing among a sea of poverty. Similarly, he provided what Baldwin (1991) describes as the core of King's beloved community in discussing God: The belief that God is impartial, that God created each person unique, but that God created no one human better than the other. Second, it reveals a sacramentalistic idea of the cosmos as echoed by the psalmist: "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof – the world, and they that dwell therein; each human being only has a finite interest in land because life is mortal" (Burrow 2006, 172). King's correction of the misuses of capitalism involved clarifying to whom the world really belongs – to the masses, not the top one-tenth of one percent who at that time controlled 40 percent of the nation's wealth. In King's view, this correction could reconcile the historically fragile relationships between the rich and the poor, blacks and whites, Jews and Arabs.

At his first speech at the Lincoln Memorial on May 17, 1957, King addressed American citizens, but his message was for Congress:

Give us the ballot, and we will no longer have to worry the federal government about our basic rights. Give us the ballot and we will no longer plead to the federal government for passage of an anti-lynching law; we will, by the power of our vote to write the law on the statute books of the South, bring an end to the dastardly acts of the hooded perpetrators of violence. Give us the ballot, and we will transform the salient misdeeds of blood thirsty mobs into the calculated good deeds of orderly citizens. (Ibid.)

Pluralism as envisioned by James Madison, King underscores above, was unachievable as long as poll taxes, literacy tests, and other obstacles impeded African Americans from exercising their franchise. Through the ballot box, they could elect legislators and judges who would protect their interests; without access to it, African American contractors could not work as government contractors despite paying taxes to the very government

that oppressed them. And governmental disenfranchisement promoted hatred rather than love, keeping a beloved community of men and women of all races beyond reach.

### **KING AND ORGANIZED LABOR**

King's critique of capitalism sharpened in his speeches to labor unions in the early 1960s. He spoke about the effects of technology on American workers. King's keen analysis of social conditions was reflected in "Change Must Come to the United Neighborhood Houses of New York," a speech he gave in the early 1960s: "It is an economic truism that the more we create miraculous instruments of production, the more we create both material surpluses and human surpluses" (King, Morehouse 2.3.0.600\_007).

It appears to me that this is just as true today: we suffer not from a lack of consumable goods but from too few consumers who are able to purchase those goods without incurring debt. Although the United States is the richest nation in the world – indeed, King would say, because the United States is the richest nation in the world – there is an income crisis affecting the poor and middle class traceable to high unemployment rates, underemployment, wage suppression, outsourcing, and a minimum wage outpaced by inflation (Dobbs 2006, 116; OSU 2012). And those factors are tied directly to discrimination. One of King's concrete political solutions was a "guaranteed income" for all Americans through which he envisioned eliminating poverty (King, Testament, 1986, 615):

We have come a long way in our understanding of human motivation and of the blind operation of our economic system. Now we rather widely acknowledge that dislocation in the market operation of our economy and the prevalence of discrimination thrusts people into idleness and bind[s] them in constant or frequent unemployment against their will. The poor are less often dismissed from our consciousness today by branding them as despised and incompetent. We also know no matter how dynamically the economy develops and expands it does not eliminate poverty (King, Morehouse, 2.3.0.600\_006).

The poverty rate for African Americans in the 1950s was 22.4 percent. It had declined to 12.3 percent by 1973 because of public policy changes such as the Civil Rights Act and the "War on Poverty" made during the 1960s, without which the poverty rate would likely have increased instead. Even so, it was nearly 8 points higher than the national average of just 4.78 percent. Clearly, racism – in the form of policies like "last hired first fired," which affected blacks disproportionately – contributed directly to that phenomenon. King believed that the resources to wage a "War on Poverty" were too limited to effectively eliminate poverty.

It was often remarked that "a rising tide lifts all boats" – a quote made whenever Republicans wanted to justify tax cuts and attributed to President John F. Kennedy and actually made in 1963. Apparently, the poor may not have had many boats to put into



the great oceans of economic opportunity in the world because we have had plenty of tax cuts and the rich have gotten much richer since the 1980s. The rich have bigger yachts but the poor's tug boats are sinking. The amount of poor in the nation has not dipped under 12 percent since 1978 (Morgan 2011). According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2011 the unemployment rate for African Americans was approximately double the national rate; the poverty rate among blacks was twice that of whites (Macartney, Bishaw, and Fontenot 2013).

The King collection at the Atlanta University Center holds primary source documents that evince King's deep interest in economics and contradict general perceptions that he concentrated his efforts on race issues and nonviolence (Young and Sehgal 2010). According to Andrew Young, to avoid being labeled a "socialist" or a "Communist," King tended to curtail his discussion of economics or address them cryptically: "We said we just want the same thing everybody else had. Martin's decision not to talk economics put the country very much at ease" (Young and Sehgal 2010, 65). This explains why King never gave a speech that addressed economic conditions in the United States comprehensively until the Poor People's March in Washington in 1968 (Bretz 2010). But a close examination of King's speeches and writings makes clear that economic opportunity was at the heart of his understanding of the aims and goals the civil rights movement (Young and Sehgal 2010, 61). Although he frequently addressed economic issue in veiled fashion, King consistently throughout his career professed that the economic inequities in the United States result directly from capitalism's inability to meet the needs of the working poor.

As early as 1961, King spoke to labor union gatherings about the history of organized labor and the economic challenges confronting workers. He addressed the Fourth Constitutional Convention of the AFL-CIO in Miami. (King, Morehouse, 2.3.0.140\_001). He spoke in Detroit in April 1961 about the similarities of the economic conditions facing blacks and whites and the need to raise the minimum wage, then just \$1.25. He sprinkled economic analysis into speeches to local unions. He told the United Packinghouse Workers of America on May 21, 1962, that racism within the union itself was undermining its bargaining position with the Minneapolis-based meat-packing union (Jackson 2007, 95). In October 1963, King reminded attendees at the thirtieth anniversary gathering of District 65 of the AFL-CIO that the suppression of the voting rights of Southern blacks would yield congressional delegations from Southern states that opposed workers' rights (King, Morehouse, 2.3.0.270\_002).

King did not speak solely to labor unions about economic inequality. He expounded on housing and employment discrimination to the National Press Club in July 1962 in Washington DC (Ibid., 2.3.0.400\_015). Following his acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize, King lectured in New York City, voicing his opposition to tokenism within the struggle for economic justice. He addressed the need for fair housing policies before the

United Neighborhood of Houses of New York in his speech "Change Must Come" (Ibid., 2.3.0.600\_002). And King spoke forcefully on behalf of the poor and the disenfranchised at the Republican National Convention in San Francisco in 1964, where he argued that white laborers suffered from income suppression as a result of slavery and segregation, too, in the form of depressed wages, and he called for G.I. Bill-type legislation to address those ongoing inequities:

Few people consider the fact that in addition to being enslaved for two centuries, the Negro was, during all three hundred years robbed of the wages of his toil. No amount of gold could provide an adequate compensation for the exploitation and humiliation of the Negro in America down through the centuries. Not all the wealth of this affluent society could meet the bill. Yet a price can be placed on unpaid wages. (King 2008, 2.3.0.1610\_011)

King's speech at the Democratic Convention in Atlantic City, New Jersey, that same year addressed the voter suppression caused by the party's refusal to recognize Mississippi's delegation to the convention. In 1965, King appeared in Atlanta before the Hungry Club to deliver "A Great Challenge Derived from a Serious Dilemma." Indeed, King wrote and spoke many times prior to 1964 on the economic conditions of poor people and how to ameliorate their plight.

King also delivered many sermons touching on his concern with economics. His topics included comparisons of Communism and its incompatibility with Christianity, and how the materialism of the United States outpaces its ability to pay consumers enough to consume items and the immorality of greed. In November 1961, King addressed the Fellowship of the Concerned, a part of the Southern Regional Council, delivering the sermon "Love, Law, and Civil Disobedience" (King, Testament, 1986, 43). In it, he described Communism's fatal flaw: its tenet that the ends justifies the means, thereby opposing Lenin's reliance on violence, which was unacceptable to Christians. King consistently attacked wealth for wealth's sake, as on March 31, 1968, at the National Cathedral, when he lamented, "The richer we have become materially, the poorer we have become morally and spiritually" (Ibid., 620). And in 1967, he explained why greed is sinful in the sermon "Why Jesus Called a Rich Man a Fool," relating a story of a rich farmer building a bigger barn for his abundant harvest rather than distributing the extra food to the poor. The rich man's soul was required of him that very evening.

### **KING THE LABOR ORGANIZER**

The aid of advisers Stanley Levison, Ralph Helstein, Ella Baker, and A. Philip Randolph ensured King was always well-prepared for his speeches to labor unions (Jackson 2007, 71). In his 1961 speech to the United Auto Workers Union, King spoke of labor's history of struggle – and triumphs – gaining their confidence by demonstrating his

knowledge of their tactics and tenacity:

I would like to open by saying that organized labor has come a long, long way from the days of the strike-breaking injunctions of federal courts, from the days of intimidation and firings in the plants, from the days that your union leaders could be physically beaten with impunity. The clubs and claws of the heartless anti-labor forces have been clipped and you now have organizations of strength and intelligence to keep your interest from being submerged and ignored.

An admirer of the social gospel crusader Walter Rauschenbusch, King understood the role the church could play in organizing labor in New York (Ibid., 15). But he also understood the value of organizing directly. Both the church and labor could employ economic boycotts and non-violent protest to pursue social and economic victories. He told the 1961 AFL-CIO convention in Miami:

Negroes in the United States read this history of labor and find it mirrors their own experience. We are confronted by powerful forces telling us to rely on the good will and understanding of those who profit by exploiting us. They deplore our discontent, they resent our will to organize, so that we may guarantee that humanity will prevail, and equality will be exacted. They are shocked that action organizations, sit-ins, civil disobedience, and protests are becoming our everyday tools, just as strikes, demonstrations and union organization became yours to insure that bargaining power genuinely existed on both sides of the table. (King, Testament, 1986, 202)

Furthermore, King underscored the shared values of the labor movement and the civil rights movement by unmasking their common foes:

A duality of interest of labor and the Negroes makes any crisis which lacerates you a crisis from which we bleed....Whether it be the ultra-right wing in the form of Birch societies or the alliance which former President Eisenhower denounced, the alliance between big military and big industry, or the coalition of Southern Dixiecrats and Northern reactionaries, whatever the form, these menaces now threaten everything decent and fair in American life. Their target is labor, liberals, and the Negro people. (Ibid., 203)

It was the same economic forces – and often the same political bodies – that opposed both desegregation and a living wage for labor, and went to great lengths to block the representation they sought in Congress.

King knit together the triple evils of militarism, racism, and economic exploitation, and saw the equivalence between racist tactics to exploit African Americans and anti-labor tactics to exploit white laborers: both resulted in financial gains exclusively for the wealthy and privileged. And he believed the power of combining non-violence with eco-

conomic boycotts – the strategy that brought the segregationist bus company to its knees in Montgomery, Alabama – could affect change for blacks and whites alike.

In his speech before the United Packinghouse Workers Union in 1962, King challenged innovators to find a moral, dignified alternative for American workers being displaced by technology:

As machines replace men, we must again question whether the depth of our social thinking matches the growth of technological creativity. We cannot create machines which revolutionize industry unless we simultaneously create ideas commensurate with social and economic reorganization which harness the power of such machine for the benefit of man. (King, Morehouse, 2.3.0.250\_004)

King remained critical of innovators who displaced American workers but remained unwilling to employ their inventiveness to create alternative jobs or to use their wealth to bridge the gap between rich and poor. Today's kings of industry behave similarly, outsourcing American jobs with no concern for the effect on the American economy and the displaced workers.

### **KING AND HUMAN DIGNITY**

For King, civil rights were human rights: "The struggle for civil rights is a fight for human dignity in its broadest dimensions," he said to the labor union in Chicago (Ibid., 2.3.0.250\_005). Industry was relying more and more on technology and less and less on human labor. King knew that the dignity of those subsequently idled had to be preserved or many would wind up in jail or become addicted to drugs and alcohol:

The economists have prophesized of the tragic effects of automation and cybernation: educators warned of the lapses in our system of education, but no member or groups within the power centers of our society are prepared to face the drastic reforms which will be necessary to deal with these situations. (Ibid., 2)

King was prescient in identifying the social upheaval that would result from the loss of American manufacturing jobs, although he did not foresee how the growth of the service industry would offset that job loss somewhat.

The right to respect and human dignity – the enemies of segregation – was a core principle in King's beloved community. Absent it, he showed blacks and labor the power of economic withdrawal. And King differentiated between desegregation and integration. Desegregation was the removal of legal barriers to inclusion. Integration was based on agape love, enabling people of all races to work together, shop together, live together, and invest together because they see themselves as woven together in a single garment of mutuality.

In conclusion, King foresaw a need for a beloved economy to overcome the vast

shortcomings of income and wealth economy. He understood the need for every individual to be able to participate in the marketplace regardless of their race, religion, nationality or their social class membership. He embraced the poor, the rich, the black, the red, the white and the yellow people.

As Andrew Young has noted, King understood that having capitalism without access to capital for everyone was as meaningless as having a democracy without everyone having the right to vote (A. A. Young 2009). King did want a global economy and talked often of how interconnected each individual on the planet were. However, King was against the exploitation of one group of people for the benefit of a few people. The Poor's People March on Washington came after King realized the contribution of government policy toward displacing farmers and laborers in favor of paying people not farming at the behest of major agricultural companies (Ibid). King knew that government policy must be equally intentional in cultivating an economy to embrace all the people as it had been in sustaining inequality. King envisioned democracies around the globe possessing love, power and justice working together to correct economic injustices.

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