

## **Martin Luther King Jr. Day**

**Speech delivered by Mayor Fuller at Newton's 54<sup>th</sup> Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day Celebration  
January 17, 2022**

Good morning.

I am so glad we are together today to celebrate the life and enduring legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. whose words 53 years after his murder are still piercing in their truth.

We know that the lived experiences of our students and residents make clear that racism is right here, in our Country and in our City.

White supremacist banners are hung over our highways. Hurtful words are uttered in our school hallways and on our sidewalks. Systemic racism and unconscious bias undermine public health, economic opportunity, educational achievement, and the quality of daily life for people of color.

We have so much work ahead to form a more perfect union.

Here in Newton, we as a community, as civic leaders must institutionalize equity and social justice, reinforce inclusion, affirm diverse identities, support victims of hate and bias, foster respect among all of us, and celebrate differences.

On this day, I look to Dr. King's words from his book, *Where We Go from Here: Chaos or Community* as a guidepost:

"Racism today is real, but the democratic spirit that has always faced it is also real."

On January 1<sup>st</sup>, I took the solemn oath to support the Constitution of the United States and I am committed to our shared goal of forming a more perfect union, establishing justice, promoting the general welfare and securing the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity.

Notably, this democratic spirit is only possible if all of us have access to the ballot box and our right to vote is protected. To paraphrase Dr. King, so long as we do not firmly and irrevocably possess the right to vote, we do not possess ourselves.

Let's stand up, speak out and in the words of John Lewis, "Make good trouble" when those values are threatened.

Dr. King challenges us to choose chaos or community. I choose community – a community where our varied and divergent pasts don't tear us apart, but instead brings our rich traditions together to build a better society.

Please welcome Giana Bergas, the President of the Black Students Union at Newton South.