

Marching is important, but it's not enough

By Cameron Vickrey
FOR THE EXPRESS-NEWS



For many years now, our family's tradition for Martin Luther King Jr. Day has been to walk the streets of the East Side of San

Antonio shoulder to shoulder with friends from our church and our sister Black church.

San Antonio holds the largest MLK march in the country, averaging 300,000 people. If you've never attended, it's a beautiful sight to behold. As far as the eye can see are rows of all kinds of people pressing on toward the future we hope and pray for.

Even though I love this tradition, I'm not going to make my kids go this year.

Last year, sadly, the San Antonio march was canceled due to extremely cold temperatures. Before the cancellation but after we saw the forecast, my husband and I boldly told the kids, "We are all going to this march no matter what it feels like outside! Get your gloves on and toughen up."

As the day drew closer, the temperatures dropped lower, and the protests from our tweens and teens grew to a fever pitch. I was really wishing we hadn't thrown down the gauntlet so hard, because now we were trapped. If we caved to their demands, we would look weak. Right? Seasoned parents reading this probably know better, but I'm sure many of us have made these kinds of self-righteous mistakes.

God delivered us from this conundrum with a cancellation. Instead, our family had good conversations about our values and why the march matters to us in the first place. I determined right then I wouldn't force the march on them again, no matter the weather.

Because, ultimately, a life of anti-racism is about more than a march once a year. As much as I cherish the tradition of MLK marches, if that's all we're doing to instill an anti-racist spirit in ourselves and our kids, it's not enough.

I do not want to downplay the importance of marches and protests in the movement for justice, but I don't think it is the only measure of appreciation for



Staff file photo

The MLK March is a cherished family tradition, yet a life of anti-racism requires so much more.

Dr. King.

There are plenty of other ways to celebrate the day. Did you know it is the only federal holiday that is also a designated day of service? Finding a way, big or small, to serve others is a meaningful way to commemorate the day.

If you've never read King's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" or if it's been awhile, that's a great thing to do. It will take you about half an hour to read in full, and it is a masterpiece that

is as important today as it was in 1963.

This letter is where we get King's critique of the white moderate and famous quotes such as, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." I learn more every time I read it.

Or, if you are interested in a contemporary voice, I recommend the writings and YouTube videos of Jemar Tisby. Tisby is a historian, professor, author and minister who writes prolifically about anti-racism and the

church. Subscribe to his Substack, or buy one of his best-selling books.

And if you feel inspired to do some introspective work, consider taking a class called "Let's Talk Race." This course meets once a week for five weeks online and is designed for white Christians, but it's open to all and good for everyone. I took the class last year. The class cultivates a safe space to uncover your own racial biases, which we all have, and to understand more about our history.

I hope you'll consider taking one of these actions or attending our city's MLK March, assuming it's not canceled again for weather. I plan to be there if it happens, but my kids will likely celebrate the day off from school by sleeping in.

Instead of piling on a guilt trip, I will try to model for them that anti-racism is not a once-a-year demonstration but a lifetime commitment of everyday choices.

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