Thank you, Mr. President.

I rise in support of this resolution. It is a privilege to stand and honor the legacy and work of a man who made so many things possible for all of us. And though this is not considered my first official speech on the floor, it is indeed appropriate that today is the first time I speak as a newly elected public servant, as the Senator from one of the most racially and economically diverse districts in Washington, the 37th district in the heart of the county named for Martin Luther King, Jr.

Dr. King's legacy is central not only to the culture of my district, but also to my own life and work. His work helped make possible the path I myself have taken, from being a 16-year old girl who came to this country by herself for a college education to an advocate for human rights to becoming the first Indian-American legislator in the Washington state Legislature.

Dr. King was deeply inspired by Mahatma Gandhi, a great leader from my own birth country. Like Gandhi, Dr. King was a once-in-a-generation leader. The two men pushed for changes that were seen not only as impossible, but dangerous to society. As if toppling the tall walls of segregation would weaken our country instead of strengthening it.

But what makes leaders great IS the ability to look beyond accepted wisdom and recognize genuine truth. Against all odds, Dr. King helped organize and lead a movement that forced our nations' leaders to remember what makes our country great - that we hold the truth to be self-evident that all people are created equally – and that we should be judged by the content of our character, not the color of our skin.

Dr. King had a remarkable ability to move millions by peace, even in the wake of generations of enslavement and violence. He followed Gandhi's principles of nonviolent resistance, also known as Satyagraha—satya meaning truth and graha meaning adherence to, or insistence upon. Satyagraha then meant an insistence on truth, and this is what Dr. King preached and acted upon.

And while we all know about his fight to end racial segregation and discrimination, the truths he carried went far beyond race. He spoke out against the war in Vietnam. He lifted up working families and sought to end poverty. And he continually reminded us that that love-- not hate-- builds our character and our collective society.

I know that Dr. King would be proud of how our nation has grown in the half century since he died. Historically oppressed and disenfranchised people have forged their way into many corners of this great nation, even into our highest offices.

But, in my own first week of elected office, I have been reminded again and again that we still seek to overcome many of the barriers Dr. King began to break down.

We are faced with an educational opportunity gap that sees three-quarters of our black, Latino and Native American students falling behind by the 10th grade.

We have 440,000 children across this state who do not get enough to eat, and 30,000 school-aged children without a roof over their head.

In Washington and across America we have growing income inequality, and poverty has actually tripled in the last decade in both rural and urban places across our state.

And we have a dangerous disconnect between law and justice, one that leaves too many innocent civilians open to unfair treatment at the hands of a system that is supposed to protect them.

From a jail cell in Alabama, Dr. King wrote that "We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny."

This is as true today as it was then. So as we remember and honor Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. today, I hope we are courageous and that we put people over politics. Our actions have the power to change millions of lives for the better. That would be the way to truly honor the legacy and work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

I urge this body to adopt this resolution. Thank you, Mr. President.