

FIRST AND CENTER
Pastor's Blog
April 5, 2018



“Are we completely free? You decide.” These words came from an elementary school girl who spoke during the March commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Martin Luther King, Jr. in Hartford

yesterday. Of all the moments from that march, these words stick with me twenty-four hours later. You decide, she said. Look at the evidence of the world around us, of the realities in Hartford, let alone the rest of the U.S. and the world; then you decide.

Look at educational inequities, inefficiencies and biases; then you decide. Look at continued red-lining in housing and absentee landlords in crumbling buildings; then you decide. Look at the disproportionate number of Hartford's men and women of color in the prison system; then you decide. Look at political and corporate systems that work against people of color; then you decide.

Look. That's something we all don't want to do sometimes, no matter what our race. We are tired of what we see, so we turn to some anesthetizing media of some kind or we just live our lives with blinders on or we just despair that anything could ever change because it never seems to.

But, Christians, we are people who are called to have eyes to see and ears to hear, like Jesus did. Let's move beyond posting commemorative pictures and quotes and forever referring to MLK as a “dreamer,” and so disempowering his reality-based message. This year, to honor King, let us each commit to spend some time *really looking* around us, through the media, in our neighborhoods or buildings, in our churches. Let us commit to hear the voices of young and old and in-between, who know they are not completely free, so that we can hear how that is lived in their lives. Let us admit what is real, and so be empowered to do something about it.

~ Rev. Shelly Stackhouse
Transitional Pastor