

Why Martin Luther King Was Qualified To Be President

The following is excerpted from Lyndon LaRouche's Jan. 3, 2001 webcast. Subheads have been added.

Debra Freeman: I have a question from Sen. Joe Neal from Nevada. He is the chairman of the Legislative Black Caucus there. And his question is: "How can you get African-Americans to buy into the 1933-65 period, when civil rights were at their worst, especially in the South, during that time-frame?"

Lyndon LaRouche: Well, I think the point is, one has to look back actually at the period, look at what the mentality was. This was a period in which the African-American, so-called, began to move in large numbers out of the Republican Party, into the Democratic Party around Roosevelt. . . . There were some cases, like our old friend Hulan Jack, the former Borough President of Manhattan, who was typical of the so-called African-American role inside the Democratic Party under Roosevelt. In other parts of the country, things were not so good.

Take, for example, remember, Birmingham at the end of the war, after the war had been fought, and the fight among African-Americans in Birmingham for rights, and other cities of the South. So the conditions, even after Roosevelt's Presidency and death, the conditions of African-Americans in the United States in the Democratic Party, were not that good. But there was something else going on, and one has to look back to Martin Luther King; not because he's the only figure. Frederick Douglass before him was extremely important in this respect, as a pacesetter, for the liberation of former slaves.

But Martin was exceptional, in the sense that he rose above other so-called leaders, and this became more clear to us when we lost him, than when we had him. Because suddenly, we looked back a few years after Martin's death, and we could realize more keenly what we had lost in him.

He was a man who had risen to a point of spiritual strength as a leader, where he was not a leader of African-Americans; he was a leader of Americans. He was the type of person, who would have been admirably qualified to become the President of the United States. Because he was, implicitly, a potential President of all the people. He was a leader, really, of all the people.

Real Political Unity

Who rallied around Martin? From the New York area, and other parts of the country, it was the Jewish, Yiddish



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Renaissance, the children of the Yiddish Renaissance, [of those] who came to the United States as immigrants, who were among the leading people who responded to the question of civil rights, from the standpoint of the experience of the Yiddish Renaissance, in Eastern Europe, in the struggle for civil and political rights there; the struggle for Jewish emancipation by the Renaissance movement. Others were involved. Martin was never specifically a secretion of African-Americans. He was of African-American so-called extraction, but he was not genetically African-American. There is no such thing as a genetic African-American, really. Human beings are human beings. He was a person who, in that situation, showed himself as a leader of the people. A person who could unify people, around higher goals, which addressed, at the same time, these specific problems of any section of the population.

We lost him. That's our problem now.

People are looking for an interest group kind of composition of politics; I don't believe in it. I believe in responding to the fact that somebody's abused, or suffering, or aspiring to get some freedom and so on, that's fine. But that's not the way real politics works.

Real politics works, when you stop thinking about categories, and think only about human beings. When you say there is no race but the human race. There are idiosyncracies, differences — they're not important. Because when you know people from around the world, you know what's important about a person is their mind, and the moral development of that mind. The creative power of that mind. The development of those qualities of that mind. To be a leader, is a person to see these minds.

It may sound theological, but, look, it's important. Ask yourself, what's your sense of identity? Who do you think you are? What do you think you are? What do you think is your significance once you're dead? Are you a dead dog, to be buried and forgotten? Or does your life *mean* something while you're living it? And will it *mean* something after you're dead? What is that quality that makes your life meaningful, even after you're dead? What do you do with your life, while you're alive, that makes it important even after you're dead, for future generations? What do you do to honor the past, to give new meaning to the past? To give possibility to



Lyndon LaRouche addresses the Jan. 3 Washington seminar by video-conference. "I think the problem is, what we need is leaders of passion. Leaders impassioned by agapē, who love people, who love the future, who are going to fight for the future."

the future? Do you think of yourself as being of a certain skin color, or some other foolish thing?

What It Is To Be President

You think of yourself as a human being, with human qualities, as every other human being has human qualities. And you think about what's important to people, their real interests. The real interest of every person is, what does my life mean when I'm dead? What will it have meant, and what does it continue to mean, when I'm dead? Who is going to ensure that that life of mine will continue to mean something after I'm dead? I raised good children; who's going to protect those children, after I'm dead? Who's going to protect those grandchildren, after I'm dead? Who's going to see to it that they're guaranteed the right to an education, after I'm dead?

That's what it is to be a President. It's to be a person who cares for all of the people, not because of what they think they want, for gratifications, in this moment or that moment of life. But what they *care* about. Particularly as they get older, they think about their children and grandchildren. They think about their life and what does their life *mean*. The in-between being born and dying. What does that life mean in eternity? As expressed typically, by the way you think about your children and grandchildren, and so forth, and those who come after, and other nations.

Martin was the kind of person who expressed that point of view. Others around him did not express that, with the same effectiveness. They did not express what Paul in *I Corinthians* 13, refers to as *agapē*, the Greek term *agapē*, which comes from Plato's dialogues. Which is used by Paul to define that quality. Martin had *agapē* as a quality. That's what his power was. Not the power of a fist. Not the power of a rabble-rousing speech. Not the power of just rabble-agitator. He was a man of

agapē, who, had he lived, would have made a better President than anyone who came after him.

That's what the point is. Frederick Douglass had some of the same qualities, in his time. Other people, less known, have had the same qualities. And it's because there was an instinct for this, among people who had been oppressed. Sometimes people who have not had the best appreciation of life, because having nothing material, having no security, they have nothing left for them, except that which is in them, is essentially human. And sometimes they respond with greater humanity, just because they have nothing but humanity in them, and no other kind of wealth.

No, the African-American generally, responded in a very intelligent, and sensitive way, as expressed by their movement away from the Republican Party, which had betrayed them, into a Democratic Party, which had been their greatest oppressor, when they recognized in Franklin Roosevelt, something, a spark, with which they could identify. And the African-American, despite the abuse that he suffered at the hands of Dixiecrats, and others, continued to cling to that, up to the present time.

This was not the fact they were rewarded. This is the fact that it was human. And sometimes human beings smell something, that they respond, which other people who are less sensitive, may overlook.

So, I don't think that's the problem. I think the problem is, what we need is leaders of passion. Leaders impassioned by *agapē*, who love people, who love the future, who are going to fight for the future, and when the people know they have those kinds of leaders, the people will smell it, and they will respond accordingly. Our concern should be to *be*, to become, and to produce and develop such leaders. That's the answer to the question.