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Martin Luther King. Author Unknown, Wikipedia Commons.

'All Life Is Interrelated': MLK, The Principle Of Interrelation And Environmentalism – OpEd

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By [Charles Pantelick](#)

On the day of remembrance of Martin Luther King and the ideals he espoused, it is valuable to reflect on the power of his ideas

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By Sushant Sareen The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) designated terrori

and words. Dr. King's orations rallied the public and united diverse peoples, groups, and communities to pursue a common goal of combating societal challenges that directly or indirectly affected them. Even when a particular hardship does not impact one group, he reminded us that it is the collective duty of all people to rise together to combat it.

This fundamental principle of interrelation is the essence of boundless communal action and solidarity. Expounding on the topic of interrelation, in 1967, Dr. King gave five lectures, "The Trumpet of Conscience," under the CBC Massey Lectures, an annual Canadian broadcasting special. In his final lecture on Christmas Eve, Dr. King said, "It really boils down to this: that all life is interrelated. We are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied into a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly" (King, "Peace on Earth," 1967).

Understanding the interconnectedness of people and problems worldwide fundamentally changes one's perspective. No problem exists in a vacuum; thus, understanding Dr. King's principle on interrelation helps us comprehend that issues of injustice have a ripple effect. When a problem occurs in one realm, it can often touch different, disparate areas of the world. Conversely, solutions can travel over time and space to mitigate turmoil in individuals and communities.

Turning to our modern-day environmentalist movements, one can clearly see how Dr. King's interrelation, unity, and equality ideals provide sustenance and convergence. A fellow civil rights activist, James L. Farmer Jr., vividly applied the notion of interrelation in the context of the environment: "[I]f we do not save the environment and save the Earth, then whatever we do in civil rights or in a war against poverty will be of no meaning, because then we will have the equality of extinction and the brotherhood of the grave" (Farmer).

Tree planting campaigns fully embody Dr. King's principle of interrelation. Planting trees can help solve environmental injustice and create a virtuous cycle that remedies other

st Masood Azhar and his organisation Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) are once again emerging



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Dear Debashis Chakrabarti, Thank you for your interesting article. It would be very helpful if you provided us with details...

intractable problems plaguing vulnerable or under-resourced communities. In this regard, the High Atlas Foundation (HAF), fulfills a vital role. By following a participatory development process created through invitation, [interfaith nurseries](#), distribution, reforestation, and monitoring, communities can counteract issues surrounding the environment and socio-economic challenges. HAF's partnering communities see the multifaceted benefits of tree planting that can target multiple injustices simultaneously. HAF believes that bringing communities together through collective care for the trees allows Moroccan citizens to work together despite differences in religion and gender.

Trees benefit the environment by improving soil fertility, air quality, and water retention while helping prevent erosion, acting as windbreaks, providing shade, and reducing the harmful effects of climate change. The benefits do not stop with the environment; communities can reap monetary benefits by selling the products from the trees. Planting trees has a positive ripple effect in communities, from clean water initiatives to women's empowerment. Bringing the community together to plant and maintain trees creates a platform to address other systemic issues. Through tree planting, communities can target their interrelated problems and reap the multifaceted benefits of overcoming them.

On this day of remembrance for MLK, one can not help but be awed by his legacy but also be mindful that change does not happen on its own. First, a multi-front approach must be taken to truly vanquish global injustice, targeting all kinds of interrelated injustice. Second, all people, even those indirectly affected, must be engaged in eradicating injustice. One among many examples of MLK's efforts in this regard occurred in March 1968, when he supported the sanitation workers' strike in Memphis, Tennessee. The strike protested the pay and working conditions differences between Black and white sanitation workers. Black workers were subject to polluted air and water but also to hazardous chemicals, while white workers were not. When Dr. King joined the protest, he organized demonstrations that raised awareness of racial and



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financial inequality alongside the environmental inequality involved in the workers' plight. Although Dr. King did not live to see the fruits of his labor, he recognized the importance of viewing issues of inequality from multiple perspectives to understand their interrelation better.

Without justice in all areas of life, the world can not achieve lasting and effective equality. Simultaneously pursuing environmental justice and striving to mitigate other inequities is paramount to ensure lasting positive change for all.

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