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My Personal Leadership Philosophy

Leadership can be defined as “the art of motivating a group of people to act toward achieving a common goal.” (Ward). One of the most celebrated and revered leaders in American history, Martin Luther King Jr., is the blueprint of what I believe a great leader should be. Known as a symbol around the world of hope and peace, he led many knowingly and unknowingly through the way he lived. King embodied many commendable traits that I incorporate into what I believe a leader should be, like complete commitment to his cause, amazing communication skills, and selflessness. My personal philosophy is that if a leader can be all three of those, they will be revered by their followers.

The point of leading others is to achieve a certain goal or cause. Without that end goal, those being led have no reason to follow or even want to follow. Martin Luther King Jr. called for all people regardless of race, gender or creed to have equal civil and economic rights and for the end of racism. This goal was something that many in America were extremely passionate about which made them want to follow King’s lead especially through his obvious commitment to the cause. He showed this commitment by continually fighting for what he believed in by being on the front line in marches and protests, giving numerous speeches around the country, and even persevering through many attacks and arrests that happened to not only him, but his family as well. This extreme dedication is a trait that I idolize because he walked the walk, not just talked the talk. King went out and showed his beliefs through his actions which is what any

good leader should do. Delegation is one part of leadership but by visibly fighting for the same cause as those you're leading toward, anyone would be motivated to follow you. That is only one part of many that relate to being a great leader.

The next trait that is immensely important if not the most important is the ability to effectively communicate. A leader is nothing with communication skills. Communication is the difference between followers feeling obligated to the cause and actually being passionate towards the cause. Martin Luther King Jr. mastered the art of communicating. This is especially exemplified in the way he delivered his speeches because of his understanding of his audience. He was very skilled at using tone to make his audience feel the words he was saying. The most famous example of this is King's "I Have a Dream" speech during the March on Washington in which he used various rhetorical devices like repetition, imagery and tone. During the speech he said, "I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood. I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice." ("I Have a Dream,"). He knew that although it is important to inform people, that is not what inspires them; stories and metaphors are what move peoples' hearts. The ability to effectively communicate is a skill that is absolutely necessary as a leader but there is one more that truly inspires followers.

Selflessness – the concern of others' needs and wishes more than one's own – is the ultimate inspiration. Martin Luther King Jr. was especially known for this amazing trait as he was one to always put others before himself. For years he worked with anti-poverty activists to not only help African Americans but also other minorities like Hispanics and disadvantaged

whites. He also chose to take the non-violent approach against the civil injustices faced by African Americans knowing it was the harder route to take. One of his most famous quotes, “Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that” exemplifies this selfless nature of his. A good leader puts the needs and wants of the overall organization above their own which is what makes others inspired to want to follow them.

My personal philosophy is that a leader should be selfless, have complete commitment to the goal that needs to be accomplished, and incorporate great communication skills. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was an amazing leader and someone I aspire to be like as I continue to grow. His legacy has undoubtedly touched millions of lives throughout the years and will continue to inspire generations of leaders and followers.

Works Cited

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