

Beverley Wright: Make a commitment to help race relations

12:05 AM CST on Monday, January 19, 2004

By BEVERLEY WRIGHT

"I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.' "

On a day when we honor a man who stood for justice and equality and gave his life so that racial injustice no longer would exist in America, we should reflect.

How far have we come from that day when the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. recited his "I Have a Dream Speech"? We all have heard the words from the speech, but how many of us actually have tried to make the vision a reality?

I have had the opportunity to be involved with an organization that is working to improve race relations in Dallas. The Dallas Dinner Table brings together diverse people to dispel racial myths and encourage cross-cultural communication, one dinner at a time.

More than 80 dinners will take place today throughout the city. People will dine in homes, churches and restaurants, all to discuss race relations. The program is part of the journey toward better understanding the perspectives of those from different races.

We all have inherent biases. The goal is to recognize when we are operating from our biases and to develop a willingness to consider other perspectives and opinions.

My commitment is to spread the Dallas Dinner Table dialogue far and wide. I am part of a small, passionate team that knows how such personal conversations can have a bigger impact than large events. The challenge is: "What happens after the dinner?"

I encourage the 800 participants of the Dallas Dinner Table this year – and others – to make a personal commitment to continue the dialogue.

Here are some of the commitments made by past participants:

- 1) Strongly consider public school for your children.
- 2) Find out more about the Asian culture.
- 3) Be more vocal and active in the community when it comes to racial issues.
- 4) Develop a plan to ensure that your children understand and appreciate diversity.
- 5) Challenge yourself to develop closer relationships with people of other ethnic groups.
- 6) Continue discussions with your dinner group.
- 7) Host a dinner next year and learn some basic Spanish.

It always seems to come down to personal commitment. What will you do to continue the dialogue? The dinner is just the beginning!

Beverley Wright is chair of the Dallas Dinner Table.