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Dr. Martin Luther King is a hero to me. His dream for equality, a dream that he ultimately died for, and the peaceful manner in which he fought inspire my life daily. In fact, if not for MLK, I would not exist, because it would not be legal for my parents to be married.

If not for MLK, I would not have waited in line at the age of five with my parents to be the first family to vote for our first black president. I would not have grown up in Newtown, CT, attending school with primarily white peers.

There are so many things that would not be where they are today, but we still have so much work to do.

I have felt the rage of being called a “fat lipped nigger” by a boy in my class whom I thought was my friend. That same year, I decided to try something new with my hair and grew it out and got cornrows. Three girls in my cluster went to the administration of the school to say they didn’t feel comfortable around me because “I might be a drug dealer”.

This year, kids on my baseball team decided to send very racist memes to our team group chat and made fun of me for complaining about them, knowing I am the only non-white kid on the team. Also in school, where I am one of very few brown skinned students, it is very common for people to make racist comments to me. On an almost daily basis, I remember Dr. King and I carry on his message. Not just about blacks, but about everything that makes us who we are like our abilities, income, religion, or sexuality.

I take a stand, peacefully, but knowing that I am not the first. I have written essays, spoken up to adults who can help, and simply pointed out the ignorance around me. I have a picture of MLK and other black leaders above my bed to remind me not to give up on my dream.

My dream is that we are able to celebrate our diversity and accept each other as we are.

My dream is that my little brother, who shares my black hair and brown skin, never experiences what I have.

My gratitude is that I have so much more than I would if not for the dream of Martin Luther King.