

On the first day of training for my job as a peer facilitator with UNCG's kaleidoscope program, we were asked to pick our favorite social justice quote as a sort of ice breaker. I selected Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous quote "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

It's a short quote, but a powerful one. It reminds us that our struggles are interlocking, that we should not forget that our troubles are often shared with those that differ from us in many ways. The work I have done in service to the UNCG community is focused primarily on LGBTQ issues and gender justice, specifically issues facing the transgender, genderqueer, and gender-nonconforming population. I have the honor of serving as the current head officer of Trans*Form UNCG, the university's first student organization aimed specifically at serving the needs of the transgender, genderqueer, and gender-nonconforming population, as well as educating the larger non-transgender population about our own. The trans community is an oft-underserved one, and as a member of the community, I have felt that lack. We at Trans*Form are taking action to make sure that other trans people in Greensboro do not have to feel underserved, and to make Greensboro a place where trans people are safe, are comfortable, are happy.

In my work with Trans*Form and the work I do as a peer facilitator with the Kaleidoscope program, I try to keep my favorite Dr. King quote in mind. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. This quote reminds me that it is not possible to fight for gender justice without also fighting for racial justice, class justice, ability justice, and all other struggles for basic rights. If we fight for trans justice without also fighting for racial justice, we are only fighting for the rights of white trans people. If we fight for trans justice without also fighting for ability justice, we are only fighting for the rights of able-bodied trans people. To me, this consciousness, this commitment to ensuring that our fight is intersectional, is one of Dr. King's biggest legacies.

This legacy has helped us to better understand one another, to better realize the connections between each other and to strengthen our own movements by looking to those who have experience with other movements, fighting other oppressions. It would be foolish, offensive, and downright wrong of me to equate all oppressions or say that any oppression is exactly the same as any other.

As such, this means that in any community, there will be those who face different troubles than others in that same community, troubles that these others may never fully understand. In these instances, we can look once more to Dr. King's work and teachings. We can strive to embody the coalition-building he inspired, to unite across differences to fight for a more just world. We can take steps to unite our communities in membership in Dr. King's Beloved Community by always treating others as our spiritual siblings, practicing love and patience with each other both in peace and in conflict.

I urge us all to keep this in mind as we work in our social movements, whatever they may be. We cannot fight one injustice and neglect the others; to do so is to betray our own communities and our own selves. We can and must unite across our differences if we wish to make any meaningful progress. We must keep in mind Dr. King's legacy of coalition-building and joint action in order to uplift not just ourselves, but all of humanity. In this way, we can fight injustice anywhere it occurs, and therefore ensure justice for everyone, everywhere. Thank you.