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In a world inclined to grasp the safety of ignorance when the desperate face of crisis is presented, each person holds the decision to either speak their truth, or remain unvoiced; as it is the same individual left responding to the drawbacks of humanity when undeniable change is demanded. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. served as a powerful catalyst for systemic change regarding the civil rights that define the principles of equity. In declaring his voice, he projected a dream that not only dismantles the stereotypes that protect discrimination against blacks, but accomplishes a legacy of leaders of color who feel empowered to challenge their oppressors.

Once, I was speechless. As part of the black community, I sought acceptance from those who could not comprehend the anxiety that overwhelmed me. The constant discouragement from my white counterparts contributed to my diminished sense of belonging. Such animosity was brought to words by an adult, white woman from my neighborhood supermarket. Haughtily, she advanced toward me and ridiculed my behavior, warning me of the negative way I appeared to the public as I laughed and shopped in the aisles. She suggested that I was intoxicated and needed to collect myself so as not to cause a scene. As well, she further implied that the city of Milford is reluctant to accept people of color, meaning that my rowdy actions would only further such polarization.

I was only 15, and I had never felt alienated by a stranger because of my joyful personality. I felt helpless as a stranger that I expected respect from invalidated my existence instead.

But in a moment of isolation, I found clarity in the fact that the stranger was speaking from a position of prejudice. I registered that I have the ability to be an agent of change for an experience that all people of color undergo. Being degraded in my neighborhood inspired me to speak out about the impact of normalized racism, and to spread awareness on how it is instilled within my community.

I gained the courage to create a platform that combats ignorant mindsets with education. In response to an outcry of present global civil unrest, I helped develop the district of Milford's first student-led committee surrounding matters of race, equity, and social justice. I revised the Milford Public Schools Resolution outlining the measures the Board of Education will take to practice allyship with people of color. In a city of 55,000 residents, my amendments protect the position of each person of color that has felt divided from it.

And to which I now speak, I take after Dr. King's resilience and strive to amplify the voices of people of color that have been timelessly overshadowed. In practicing allyship, I look to the ignorant to deconstruct the walls that separate them from coexisting and respecting people of color. Never to fear being ostracized by the people I once desired acceptance from, always in the defense of people of color victimized by inequality.