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People often speak about dreams as if they belong to individuals—something you discover, declare, and defend as your own. Yet I have come to understand dreams less as possessions and more as inheritances. They arrive unfinished, shaped by those before us, waiting for someone willing to continue them. The question is not whether I have a dream of my own, but whether I am willing to carry one forward.

When Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech at the March on Washington, history preserves a voice. But the dream did not begin at the microphone, nor did it end there. Its power came from participation—ordinary people choosing to show up and shape something larger than themselves.

I attend a private school in New Haven where division is subtle rather than explicit. There are no explicit barriers or formal exclusions. Instead, patterns form. Students with similar socioeconomic backgrounds gravitate toward one another. Conversations about country clubs, second homes, or luxury brands unfold casually, signaling who feels secure and who hesitates before entering the discussion. During my freshman year, I noticed how belonging could feel conditional.

I remember being asked where my outfit was from and answering honestly: Goodwill. I felt a lump rise in my throat, wrapped my arms around myself, and wished I could take the word back. I have always valued finding something overlooked and making it my own. The laughter that followed was not harsh, yet it clarified something: identity can be interpreted through superficial markers. Division does not always shout. It settles into tone, into posture, into who speaks without hesitation and who quietly measures every word.

What challenged me most was recognizing my own capacity for silence. In my desire to fit in, I have ignored other students who were searching for connection just as I was. I chose comfort over courage. I laughed along when jokes made others shrink, stayed seated when someone hesitated to join in conversation, and told myself it wasn't my place to intervene. Looking back, I see how inaction reinforces patterns that feel natural but are not inevitable.

A later moment shifted my understanding of responsibility. While sitting with a group, I watched another student attempt to join the conversation and gradually withdraw under subtle dismissal. I recognized the change in her expression because I had felt it before. This time, I chose differently. When she began to leave the table I left with her. The action was simple and widely unnoticed, yet it represented something larger: a refusal to accept exclusion as normal.

Since then, I have translated that awareness into consistent action. I intentionally build friendships across social and geographic boundaries, choosing seats and conversations that disrupt familiar patterns rather than reinforce them. I make it a habit to acknowledge those who might otherwise remain unseen—a greeting in the hallway, an invitation to join a table, a conversation initiated rather than avoided. These moments are small, but repeated over time they reshape who feels welcome and who feels invisible.

Dr. King's dream persists not because it was spoken once, but because it is carried repeatedly in communities across the country. In my community, carrying it forward means refusing indifference. It means noticing who stands at the edges of a room and choosing not to leave them there. I cannot transform every structure around me, but I can reshape the space I occupy. If dreams are inheritances rather than possessions, then carrying one forward may begin not with a speech, but with the decision to see someone fully and refuse to leave them unseen.