

When I think about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream, I reflect on both history and my story. I envision his dream through the lens of someone who had dreams before even falling asleep.

Moving from the Philippines to the United States was both exciting and terrifying. I had to trade comfort and familiarity for uncertainty in a foreign land. As an immigrant still figuring out where I fit in, his dream of equality and belonging resonates with me.

Dr. King once said that people should be judged by the content of their character, not the color of their skin. I deeply agree as someone who felt like an outsider during my first months in a country famously symbolized by the Statue of Liberty. This statue crossed oceans to stand as a welcome to newcomers, yet many immigrants are not greeted with the same acceptance. This contradiction reshaped how I understand Dr. King's dream by realizing that equality is not only about laws or speeches but about actions that make people feel seen and valued.

I have a dream too, just like Dr. King. I dream of not only a seat at a table but also one where our cuisine is celebrated and integrated into the American table. This dream represents a hope for equal opportunities to succeed while embracing who we are, instead of shrinking ourselves in order to fit in.

In the Philippines, the concept of bayanihan—helping one another as a community—is deeply rooted in our culture. Progress happens when people care for each other, like the organizers of the March on Washington who joined Dr. King. While I may not have the same influence or resources they had, I believe I can still accomplish progress through small but meaningful actions.

One way I hope to make a difference is by leading a volunteer program in my community with young children, especially those from immigrant backgrounds. I want them to know that their cultures are something to be proud of, not something to hide. I believe that my Filipino heritage and their heritage add more to the story of what America is. I hope to begin this program monthly through my school or a local community center. The first meetings would focus on learning about different cultures, followed by activities with food, music, and dance. I believe these elements are fundamental to culture and connection. Through this program, I hope to celebrate differences and open eyes to culture beyond stereotypes.

Dr. King once said, "If you can't fly then run, if you can't run then walk, if you can't walk then crawl, but whatever you do you have to keep moving forward." As I continue high school and build my future in this country, I carry those words with me. My dream is to succeed not only for myself but also for my family and other immigrant families who sacrificed so much to be here.

Dr. King's dream did not end in 1963. It lives on in classrooms, in immigrant families, and in students like me who are still learning what it means to belong. Through kindness, courage, and pride in who I am, I hope to continue that dream.