



Hear It Through The  
***Grapevine!***  
 The Newsletter For  
**Brookdale Orchard**  
*Feeding the Mind Body & Soul*

January 15, 2024  
 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day  
 National Observance Edition

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**Mittie Imani Dreamweaver's  
 Ladybug Lessons, Litanies & Lyrics  
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**Charge It To My Head!**

As Americans across the nation take a day off annually to commemorate the birth of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, a month to celebrate Black History, and a summer holiday to celebrate the release of enslaved African Americans in Texas nearly two years after having been freed by the Executive Order known as the Emancipation Proclamation; I remain haunted by the words of a young man distributing flyers for economic justice over twenty years ago on the main bus route through our community.

In many ways, his passionate declaration of "*we get programs, they get jobs*" has been a driving force for our vision to provide educational, training and employment opportunities for our low, darn near no-income residents in our St. Matthew Brookdale Orchard community.

As the media promoted "*King Day opportunities*" through free admission to museums, national parks, the Rock-N-Roll Hall of Fame and other exciting venues

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It was brought to my attention that in listing my "network" by groups in the last edition of the *Grapevine*, while mentioning my faith family, academic alumni groups all the way back to high school, and even sororities that I don't even belong to, I inadvertently left out my more recent relationships established through Deuteronomy 8:3 Café Books & Music, The National Institute for Restorative Justice, Kumbaya On The Shore and Brookdale Orchard! Well, here's another one of those simple folk sayings: "*Charge it to my head and not my heart!*"

I have posted the edited version of the December 31st Edition, "If It Ain't Broke," (which ironically was), on the At-A-Glance page at [brookdaleorchard.org](http://brookdaleorchard.org)!

MIJ

The opening paragraphs of *Death For Living Wage* are excerpted from the February 2023 prologue of the *Brookdale Orchard Prospectus for Civic Support & Funding*. Titled "We Get Programs, They Get Jobs," the full narrative can be read at [www.brookdaleorchard.org/ladybug-lessons-2023-prologue/](http://www.brookdaleorchard.org/ladybug-lessons-2023-prologue/)

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including the University Circle ice-skating rink adjacent our neighborhood, they were not thinking about the overwhelming majority of our neighbors who do not have jobs from which to benefit a day off with pay in January or June, nor cars to access the Cuyahoga Valley National Park, and not since childhood have I seen anyone walking around this neighborhood with ice skates.

The work that we do, and the opportunities we provide through Brookdale Orchard truly honors the lives of enslaved Africans in America who were held in captivity and laboring nearly 300 years without pay to enrich this nation, and for the compassionate preacher crying out in the wilderness – the one whose life and prophetic voice was

snatched away while marching for the dignity of a “living wage” for those upon whom we look down: the least, the lost, the locked out and left



behind, and those with the fortitude and courage to collect our garbage.

All too often overshadowed by the recitation of Reverend King’s “I Have A Dream” speech ending with the resounding shout of “*free at last,*” in his prophetic speech “I See the Promised Land” delivered on the eve of his assassination, Dr. King reminded the gathered crowd that all over the “colored” world, from Johannesburg to Memphis, “*the cry is always the same—*” *We want to be free.*” Likewise, even when excerpts are recited from his last public words, never are they the part where he calls for “*an economic withdrawal*” from businesses with unfair hiring practices—including bottlers, banks and bakers of bread. No one talks about that, not even the clergy that he called out for being more comfortable with preaching about “*streets flowing with milk and honey,*” rather than “*children who can’t eat three square meals a day.*” Nope. It’s a speech that no one wants to talk about it, let alone recite on a day dedicated to the memory of his birth. No one wants to recall the fact that in the end, he lost his life standing up, even while kneeling down, for economic justice for “*public servants, who happen to be sanitation workers... determined to be men.*”



Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., marching with striking Memphis sanitation workers, 1968

Dr. King began that prophetic speech on April 3, 1968 by sharing that if he could have chosen



any place in the history of time, he was exactly where he wanted to be, in the mid-twentieth century. And before silencing the crowd with his fearless, foreboding confession that he’d come to the end of his journey, he framed his victory with the story of a little girl’s well wishes following a horrifying experience resulting the first assassination attempt on his life by a “demented black woman” whose plunged knife landed mere inches from his aorta, nearly ending his life.

Having read in the *New York Times* that if he had sneezed he would have died, the simple conclusion of the little girl’s letter meant more to him than those that had come from around the world, including the president, vice president and governor of New York where the attempt took place: “I’m simply writing to you to say that I’m so happy that you didn’t sneeze.”

In reading the end of his speech on the following page, like me, you may think that the speech should have been named “If I Had Sneezed.” And, like that little girl, we should all be happy and ever so thankful that he did not.

MIJ



Final Passages of  
**“I’ve Seen The Promised Land”**

The last sermon / speech delivered by Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.  
April 3, 1968, Bishop Charles Mason Temple, Memphis Tennessee  
Reprint from *A Testament of Hope*  
*The Essential Writing and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*  
James M. Washington, Editor, HarperCollins, Publisher 1991



“You know, several years ago, I was in New York City autographing the first book that I had written And while sitting there autographing, a demented black woman came up. The only question I heard from her was, “Are you Martin Luther King?”

And I was looking down writing, and I said yes. And the next minute I felt something beating on my chest. Before I knew it I had been stabbed by this demented woman. I was rushed to Harlem Hospital. It was a dark Saturday afternoon. And that blade had gone through, and the X-rays revealed that the tip of the blade was on the edge of my aorta, the main artery. And once that’s punctured, you drown in your own blood—that’s the end of you.

It came out in the *New York Times* the next morning, that if I had sneezed, I would have died. Well, about four days later, they allowed me, after the operation, after my chest had been opened, and the blade had been taken out, to move around in the wheel chair in the hospital. They allowed me to read some of the mail that came in, from all over the states, and the world, kind letters came in. I read a few, but one of them I will never forget. I had received one from the President and the Vice-President. I’ve forgotten what those telegrams said I’d received a visit and a letter from the Governor of New York, but I’ve forgotten what the letter said. But there was another letter that came from a little girl, a young girl who was a student at the White Plains High School. And I looked at that letter, and I’ll never forget it. It said simply, “Dear Dr. King: I am a ninth-grade student at the White Plains High School.” She said, “While it should not matter, I would like to mention that I am a white girl. I read in the paper of your misfortune and of your suffering. And I read that if you had sneezed, you would have died. And I’m simply writing to say that I’m so happy that you didn’t sneeze.”

And I want to say tonight, I want to say that I am happy that I didn’t sneeze. Because if I had sneezed, I wouldn’t have been around here in 1960, when students all over the south started sitting-in at lunch counters. And I knew that as they were sitting in, they were really standing up for the best in the American dream. And taking the whole nation back to those great wells of democracy which were dug deep by the Founding Fathers in the Declaration of

Independence and the Constitution. If I had sneezed, I wouldn’t have been around in 1962, when Negroes in Albany, Georgia, decided to straighten their backs up. And whenever men and women straighten their backs up, they are going somewhere, because a man can’t ride your back unless it is bent. If I had sneezed, I wouldn’t have been here in 1963, when the black people of Birmingham, Alabama, aroused the conscience of this nation, and brought into being the Civil Rights Bill. If I had sneezed, I wouldn’t have had a chance later that year, in August, to try to tell America about a dream that I had had. If I had sneezed, I wouldn’t have been down in Selma, Alabama, to see the great movement there. If I had sneezed, I wouldn’t have been in Memphis to see a community rally around those brothers and sisters who were suffering. I’m so happy I didn’t sneeze.

And they were telling me, now it doesn’t matter now. It really doesn’t matter what happens now. I left Atlanta this morning, and as we got started on the plane, there were six of us, the pilot said over the public address system, “We are sorry for the delay, but we have Dr. Martin Luther King on the plane. And to be sure that all of the bags were checked, and to be sure that nothing would be wrong with the plane, we had to check out everything carefully. And we’ve had the plane protected and guarded all night.”

And then I got into Memphis. And some began to say the threats, or talk about the threats that were out. What would happen to me from some of our sick white brothers?

Well, I don’t know what will happen now. We’ve got some difficult days ahead. But it doesn’t matter with me now. Because I’ve been to the mountaintop. And I don’t mind. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I’m not concerned about that now. I just want to do God’s will. And He’s allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I’ve looked over. And I’ve seen the promised land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people will get to the promised land. And I’m happy, tonight. I’m not worried about anything. I’m not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.”

## Join The Mission!

Without fanfare that we cannot afford, we have launched a funding campaign to raise \$500,000 to restore and retrofit a 1921 building anchoring Brookdale Orchard to serve as our education, training, and brand production center. While jumping through the algorithms and deadlines of philanthropic entities, without financial resources for fund development staff (it's a "catch 22"), we want and need to include funding support from individuals, congregations, and social organizations, and offer several levels of giving corresponding with the Orchard's signature symbols of the Underground Railroad Quilt Codes of Freedom.



**The Campaign for Tubman Hall has Launched!**

(Join the mission to fund our future Education and Production Center!)

We are especially hopeful of significant support from the black community as the building will be named Tubman Hall in honor and recognition of Harriett Tubman, who committed her life to the physical, emotional, and mental emancipation of enslaved – and some free – black people in America. Everyone's gift will be publicly recognized on the branches of the "Tree of Life" sculpture to be displayed in the lobby.



**Are There 50 Members Who Can Contribute \$100 each to Help Your Organization Become A Tubman Hall North Star? Or Perhaps 100 Members to Contribute \$25 Each to Become A Safe House/Safe Sanctuary**



### **\$5,000 Conductor's Navigating North Star**

No GPS, no compass, so they followed the star. They learned to look toward heaven and *Follow The Drinking Gourd*. It was a combination of good old-fashioned astronomy and geography combined. Traveling mostly under the cloak of darkness, knowledge of the location of the North Star within the Big Dipper constellation, was critical for conductors. If your freedom, indeed your very life depended on it, do you know which way to go to head north?

**UGRR Quilt Codes of Freedom: The North Star pattern was critical in keeping freedom seekers moving north toward freedom.**

**Pattern block from Brookdale Orchard Dedication Sampler Quilt by Friends Quilt Together**



### **\$2,500 Safe Houses / Safe Sanctuaries**

From the infamous First African Baptist in Savannah, Georgia with its floorboard airholes in the pattern of the Kongo cosmogram, all the way far north to First Presbyterian in Green Bay, Wisconsin, congregations and the homes of ministers served as some of the first safe houses on the Underground Railroad. Like many on the National Park Service UGRR site, the house still stands in Ripley overlooking Ohio's "Jordan River" where Rev. John Rankin, his wife Jean, and their children welcomed freedom seekers with an oil lamp in the window lighting the way from 1822—1865'

**UGRR Quilt Codes of Freedom: The Log Cabin informed freedom seekers that the person at that location was safe to speak with. It could also be a signal that they needed to seek shelter. In most cases, it indicated that it was a safe house where they would find shelter, food and rest.**

**Pattern block from Brookdale Orchard Dedication Sampler Quilt by Friends Quilt Together**

For more information on The Campaign for Tubman Hall Giving Levels and our other funding campaigns, please visit [brookdaleorchard.org/education/](http://brookdaleorchard.org/education/)