

Perspective is Key

“We will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.” - Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. coined this expression in his speech “Beyond Vietnam.” This quote has many different meanings. It could mean one thing to one person and another thing to someone else. Dr. King was a unifier. His message spoke to so many different kinds of people. That is why his message is still relevant today. The beauty of this quote is that it can have a different meaning for every point of view. This quote, to me, says that we don’t focus on when our enemies are silent, but when our friends are. When we need help we go to our friends, but we only remember when they weren’t there for us when we needed them and we forget when they were.

When I first read this quote, I thought of a couple different meanings, but the first one I thought of was friendship. We are so dependent on our friends that we almost become ungrateful for them being there for us. That’s why we only remember when they are gone. After a while we forget the words people try to harm us with because they are not true. For some reason, our human nature makes us yearn for affection, and when we don’t receive it, we always remember when we did not have it, but forget when we did.

Another quote Dr. King said during his speech was, “when silence is betrayal.” This quote, I think, goes along with the main quote because it is also talking about the betrayal we feel when our friends are not there for us, or are silent when we need them to speak up. When we say things that we think are important and our friends don’t support us, we feel betrayed because when you say something, you expect others to support you and your opinion. I can not recall a time in my life where I have said something really important and my friends have not backed me

up and made me feel like my opinion is being heard. Reading this quote made me realize how supportive my friends are, and how I also need to be supportive to my friends when they need me. In order to have good friends, you must show yourself friendly.

Even though these words from Dr. King were originally spoken in opposition to the Vietnam War, we can use their meaning to better ourselves as friends, citizens, and human beings. His contagious compassion for others is still impacting people of all ages and all walks of life. May we continue to strive toward Dr. King's dream where the silence of our friends means peace, not apathy, and the noise of our enemies becomes meaningless babbling that attracts the attention of no one.

