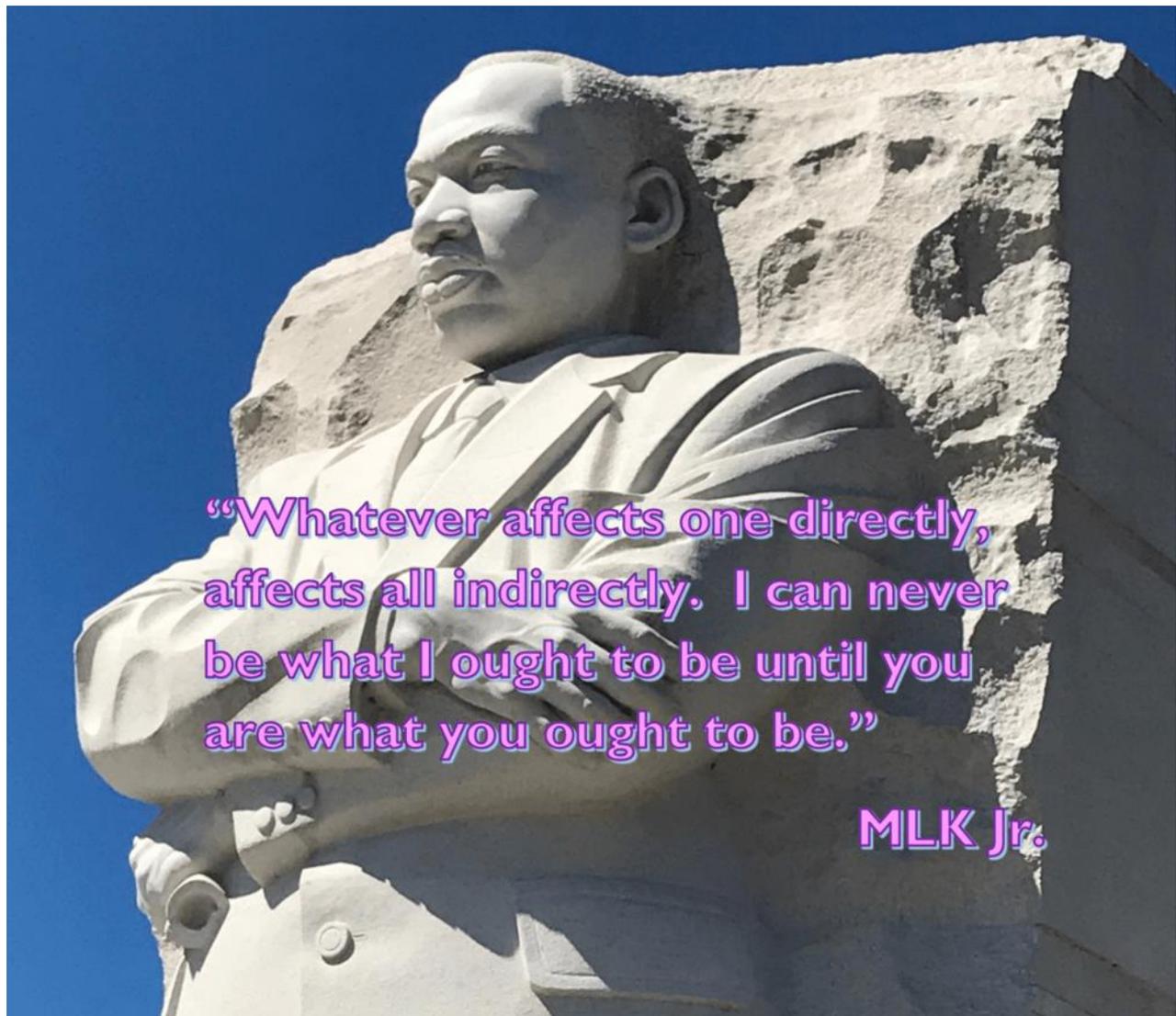


We Must Hold Each Other Accountable for Our Children's Education

By Shawnta S. Barnes - January 23, 2018



On Friday, January 19, 2018, Indianapolis Public Schools held its 37th Annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Tribute at Crispus Attucks Medical Magnet High

School, where I currently work. This annual tribute was presented by IPS Racial Equity Office and IPS Crispus Attucks Museum with their partner WFYI. Our entire student body in addition to alumni and community members attended the event.

IPS elementary students recited poems and the Crispus Attucks choir filled the air with melodic notes. IPS Superintendent Dr. Ferebee addressed the entire audience but his focus was our student body:

It's never too early for you to begin your fight for peace, love and justice in your community and our nation at large. I'm reminded of a student who is on my student advisory council who has taken her time and energy and taken up her cause around domestic abuse specifically domestic abuse among students, teens...I'm not asking you to take that as your cause of injustice to address, but I'm asking you to think about what you will do. Everyone in this room has the responsibility to do so.

Dr. Ferebee's words helped set the tone for the day. Although the keynote speaker Rev. Winterbourne Harrison-Jones spoke well, the words that seem to resonate with our students were those spoken by the black male educator who addressed the audience after the keynote address. This man was a former IPS student and as my students said, "He kept it real." He told them he understood how hard it is when you come from certain backgrounds, when you are poor and hungry, but still need to perform academically. He used an analogy to compare school to a race and told them they had to finish. He wanted them to move beyond looking out for self; he wanted them to help out each other. In black baptist church fashion, he had them turn to one neighbor and then turn to the neighbor on the other side and say, "I'm going to hold you accountable to finish this race. We are all counting on you."

Do our students know we are counting on them to finish the race? Are we providing schools where they can successfully finish the race? When people try to convince me that we need to keep educating the same way we have before, I wonder how many more students need to stop short of the finish line for them to figure out that we have to change. Our legacy lives on through our youth. They won't be able to fight for causes, finish school and

change the world without us fighting alongside them and helping them along the way.

If you are reading this, I am holding you accountable for helping at least one child to finish the race. You can mentor, volunteer in a classroom or just be a listening ear. Investing in our children is an investment in our future and is needed to for us to continue to build the legacy and dream of Dr. King.