

WASHINGTON - Congressman Steny Hoyer released the following statement today in recognition of the 36th Anniversary of Martin Luther King's Assassination.

"On the evening of April 4, 1968, a loud gunshot rang out across a neighborhood in Memphis, Tennessee. A bullet had struck down Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as he was standing on his balcony at the Lorraine Motel.

"Just the day before, Dr. King delivered a speech at the Mason Temple in Memphis to support striking sanitation workers. His words to the hundreds of strikers moved past the most immediate issues of fair pay and contracts. He urged the crowd, 'Let us rise up tonight with a greater readiness. Let us stand with a greater determination. And let us move on in these powerful days, these days of challenge to make America what it ought to be. We have an opportunity to make America a better nation.'

"This Sunday, April 4th marks the 36th anniversary of Dr. King's assassination. Dr. King was only 39 years old, yet his ability to unite Americans behind the common goal of social change and his passion for peace propelled him to the forefront of the civil rights movement. His battle against injustices such as segregation, bigotry, and unequal pay seemed to have no end, yet Dr. King refused to tire of the fight.

"In March 1965, Dr. King led marchers down 54 miles of Alabama highway from Selma to Montgomery. Despite police harassment with clubs and tear gas that injured almost one hundred, 25,000 people had joined the march by its end. Five months later, on August 6, 1965, Dr. King witnessed President Johnson sign the Voting Rights Act into law. Dr. King knew that the voices shouting for an opportunity to make America a better nation were slowly growing louder.

"The inequity and cruelty that Dr. King fought against may not be as blatant but persists in our country today. As Members of Congress, it is our responsibility to keep Dr. King's spirit alive by fighting for justice and peace everywhere and for everyone. On this anniversary of his death, we should renew our commitment to ensure that every citizen's voice is heard equally in the voting booth; revitalize faith in American Democracy; and reassure every individual the right to pursue the American dream."

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