

MLK and a Modest Proposal for Real Resistance

No day in the American civil calendar is better calibrated to the kind of virtue signaling that is the favored activity of much of our elite class than Martin Luther King Jr. Day. Showing your full-blooded commitment to MLK Day events is a great way to demonstrate to everyone that you are on the right side of history, that is, on the side of the morally righteous who oppose inequality of any kind. It also signals that you are prepared to agree with any complaint from racial or other minority populations that they are being illegitimately prevented from achieving success.

As America is in a period of enhanced, accelerated awakening, there is considerable energy for expanding the cultural footprint of the MLK holiday. Some communities and many college campuses have already turned the holy day into a week of ritualistic contemplation of racial wokeness. On the campus where I am employed, for example, the sacred week typically encompasses numerous guest lectures and consciousness-raising seminars by activists, along with sacrificial repasts and religious celebrations at which King's various speeches are grandiloquently read and celebrants cloyingly commune in their haughtily noble commitment to the future realization of a multiculturalist utopia.

The MLK holiday is one of the chief days of celebration of the progressive creed in America. King is, properly, forever attached to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s which, as Christopher Caldwell argued brilliantly in [*The Age of Entitlement*](#), constituted nothing less than a revolutionary transformation of the American constitutional republican system. This profound and pathological mutation was from a former basis in individual rights and limited government to a radical new foundation in group-based rights determined by

historic victimization status. Individual rights now decrease insofar as they theoretically come into conflict with the project of total equality and the elimination of all social disparities, especially those correlated to racial identity.

Those with traditionalist sensibilities, though they may find King a relatively unobjectionable figure—especially compared to other thoroughly despicable leading lights of the Civil Rights Movement such as Huey Newton, Angela Davis, or Stokely Carmichael—are unlikely to be as enthusiastic about this cult as are its woke members.

It is for them that I propose another holiday in January. It needn't take the place of MLK Day, though it is in thorough opposition to the principles on which MLK Day is based. Let's imagine it occupying the calendar space just after the MLK events, as a reminder about the true face of the social order that was upended by revolutionaries not entirely unlike King, but long before his birth.

The implied and frequently explicit claim of MLK celebrations is that the only social regime that could be opposed to the multiculturalist, anti-authoritarian, anti-traditionalist value system of the MLK cult is racist, fascist, and evil. This is false. The social order preceding the age of revolutions in the West was known in French as the *Ancien Régime*. It was founded on traditional authority, centered ultimately on God, and then here on earth on the political sovereign, the King, and the body of law that descended from God and relied on the King for its implementation and protection. It was overthrown by a variety of revolutions—English, French, American—and evolved into further elaborations through the years, including the Civil Rights Revolution of the 1960s.

January marks the striking of the two most significant and earliest blows against that Old Order by the revolutionaries. We might do well to mark those days to remind ourselves what

was lost and what tragedies have befallen us because of these outrages. These holidays would be opportunities to celebrate traditional order and authority but still more they would be days of mourning, not only for the nations most directly affected, but for all in the Western world who understand the fundamental values that have been stripped away from us and not yet effectively replaced.

On Jan. 30, 1649, the English monarch Charles I was beheaded by English revolutionaries and sent to the incorruptible throne he was certain awaited him in heaven. The brutality of Cromwell and his regime followed. On Jan. 21, 1793, the French revolutionaries performed the same monstrous act against their King Louis XVI, and later in the same year, to their Queen Marie Antoinette. The descent into the demonic savagery of the Committee of Public Safety's reign of terror would begin before the year expired.

In these two abominable moments, the murderous designs of the revolutions now dominating American, British, and French societies were realized, and the already established trajectory of the assault on authority was given still greater velocity. This was the consequence of the foolish utopianism of those who, in the words of the Comte de Ségur, "without regret for the past, without misgiving for the future... trod gaily on a carpet of flowers that hid the abyss beneath [them]."

Celebrating Kings Week (I suggest the last week in the month) would not require that one literally be a monarchist. It would simply be a collective opportunity to recall the extreme dangers and violence of revolution, and to recognize the splendors and majesty of the Western tradition even prior to the emergence of the political institutions that most contemporary Westerners, in their ahistorical ignorance of the vast expanse of their own civilization, mistakenly believe to be the only ones possible.

On the campus where I teach, this year's MLK Week events have been, apparently unironically, given the title "Lessons in Resistance." Anyone paying the slightest bit of attention knows that adherence to the radical principles articulated under its aegis hasn't the slightest thing to do with resistance to anything except the traditional American political principles that the Civil Rights Movement assaulted and that nearly the entirety of American elite culture now opposes. It's a rather long way from courageous "resistance" to standing on the side of those who dominate the entirety of American culture and society. The real resistance in our times is in recognizing what a tremendous loss this revolution that is now orthodoxy produced, and to acknowledge the beauty of what it trampled underfoot.

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