

Remembering Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: Rev. Marthame Sanders

Tariq got the call from his parents. His uncle's home was being demolished. He tried desperately to call them back, but the phone was dead. He was beside himself - they lived next door to his uncle, and there was no telling what could happen during a home demolition.

This was the latest in a string of bad news for the 18 year-old. Several cousins had been killed. His parents were out of work. And his town was being completely isolated, surrounded by a 25-foot high cement wall on all sides. Meanwhile, Tariq tried to focus on his studies. It was his freshman year of college, and his life seemed upside-down.

A few weeks later, an organizer came to campus, talking about "non-violent resistance." An intelligent, thoughtful young man, Tariq was by nature a skeptic. But the past few months had filled him with rage. The thought of non-violence seemed so naïve, but something grabbed him. Perhaps it was desperation, anything that could bring a glimmer of light to his darkened life.

Tariq is a Palestinian Muslim, a person too often written off as a terrorist. The kind of anger and desperation he felt can easily provide fertile soil for militancy. And yet, Tariq found himself at a non-violent protest. Israelis and Palestinians joined hands against Israel's building of the Separation Barrier and the further expropriation of Palestinian land. He found himself next to a young Israeli, the first he had ever met who wasn't carrying a gun. His eyes lit up as he recounted the story. He had found a reason to hope.

Dr. King left a legacy that non-violent resistance can change the world. Such hope glimmers as a candle in an ocean of darkness. The darkness shall not overcome it.

The Rev. Marthame Sanders is a Missionary in Residence of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). From 2000-2003, he and his wife Elizabeth lived in the Palestinian Christian village of Zababdeh. More information about their ministry can be found at www.saltfilms.net.