

History 101

Contributed by Dave Palumbo
Thursday, 08 February 2007

Once again, February is upon us; and while the thought of my 39th birthday on the 17th should be first and foremost on my mind, it's the fact that February is Black History Month that's really got me thinking. You see, it was something that the late, great, civil rights leader, Martin Luther King Jr., once said that sparked this keen state of introspection.

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"We must learn to live together as brothers or perish together as fools."

When you take a close look at the current state of online bodybuilding forums you'll understand where I'm coming from. As I scan these negative energy-plagued message boards, I can't help but compare the plight of the bodybuilder to that of the disadvantaged Afro-American.

With a fringe sport that teeters so precariously on the border of mainstream extinction, it's absolute insanity for our "Iron" brothers and sisters to wage verbal warfare against each other. Instead, we should be uniting and helping our sport gain the prestige and public acceptance that it deserves. We should be aiding, welcoming, and loving each other instead of bickering, ridiculing, and viscously attacking all of our perceived imperfections. Despite all this chaos; however, I do see a ray of hope within all the darkness. That hope exists because the sport of bodybuilding, unlike so many other fraternities, has been able to see beyond the color of one's skin or the nation of one's origin; and while this observation may appear to be superfluous, I believe it to be a tremendous leap in the right direction.

King explained it perfectly when he said:

"Every man must decide whether he will walk in the light of creative altruism or in the darkness of destructive selfishness."

I pray for the sport of bodybuilding. I pray for the athletes. I pray for the fans and supporters. I pray for a future where innovative, progressive, ideas may be shared and exchanged among the entire brotherhood of bodybuilders the world over.

I leave you this month with the following poem that was written by my father, Salvatore R. Palumbo, in remembrance of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

FREE AT LAST

In the martyr's sense of tragedy

He saved the soul of America!

Which had tried for most of its
young troubled life to darken

away the very race it had long

suppressed for centuries, until

he ignited the flaming torch of a

dream he'd had in the image graven

Shadow of the Lincoln Memorial

--binding together the wounds of

a nation before his crucifixion

into martyrdom--in the niggering

flash of a shotgun blast heard

round the world.

His cross to bear!

And all of a nation's tragedy

. . . as though having been killed

by something terribly, fearfully

evil and small and rotting away

in the crawlspace of its cowardice,

Something greater had finally

swept him away into history

as potently dangerous to

everyone as--Love thy Neighbor

or judge not by the color of

one's anatomy. . . the face of

one's inner character and

destiny.

And who could resist the

purifying dream of this

Or the ideal born on wings

of love

Past every bigot's bullet
ridden fall from grace

The cry that lives
and never dies. . .

A nation's pride!

Like echoes of the cracked
and stricken liberty bell

Tolling. . .

Free at last! Free at last!

Thank God Almighty we're

free at last!