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Remarks
by
Hon. Bridget G. Brennan
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Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Service of Celebration
Baptist Ministers' Conference
of Greater New York & Vicinity

Convent Avenue Baptist Church
January 17, 2011

Dr. Owens, Chairman Brock, Reverend Clergy, Distinguished Guests,
Friends.

I am honored by your invitation to speak and humbled to be on the same program as Roslyn Brock and so many other dignitaries. I have admired the courage of Dr. Owens and many here present with whom I have worked to improve our communities. Chairman Brock, I am inspired by your efforts to recognize health care as a civil rights issue. In doing so, you have been true to the vision of Dr. King.

Everyone knows that Dr. King had a dream, but Dr. King's life was not about dreaming - it was about doing. It was about confronting injustice. He saw America emerging as a land of affluence and comfort, in the midst of which was suffering and poverty. In his book, "Where Do We Go From Here," Dr. King wrote about a Chicago neighborhood where every day he saw children whose noses were running, whose bodies were ailing, all from diseases for which medical science had long ago found cures; in Dr. King's words, these children lived in a "society which has mastered most of the diseases from which they will too soon die."

This is the tragedy that Chair Brock has worked so hard to prevent. And today, in neighborhoods all around this Great City, I see parents struggling to protect their children from the despair of drug addiction; I see neighborhoods and

housing complexes organizing against drug gangs; I hear ministers and community leaders raising their voices against the spread of drugs and the violence. Many of the clergy here today raised their voices recently when this state was thinking about approving laws that would have lead to the widespread distribution of marijuana in our most vulnerable communities. Thanks in large part to your righteous protests the medical marijuana bill was defeated.

This great city - which has become safer than most of us would have ever dreamt - must not have its pockets of violence and addiction within vast areas of wealth and comfort. To accomplish that - we must all be doers. It is easy to point fingers - much harder to offer a firm hand of support while still insisting that all stay on the righteous and moral path and respect each other. It is not enough to tell our children what they shouldn't do; we must inspire them as well; they must have good safe schools and recreational opportunities to fill their leisure time. We must insist that they become all they can be, but we must also firmly and lovingly correct them when they do wrong.

For when the community speaks the honest truth, all must listen. I too have listened and learned. I have heard it said that drugs are the evil - but at the same time, we must not make an enemy of our own people who have been caught up in their grip. I have heard that message – and it is honest and true. It is not enough to make arrests and walk away - we cannot call our job done until

communities have the resources they need to keep the problem from coming back over and over again. That is the true struggle.

It is a struggle that together we can win. And to do - not just to dream - but to act together - will greatly honor the memory of Dr. King.

Thank you.