

Dr. King's Assassination 50 Years Later: Looking Back & Moving Forward, Mildred Guyse's Perspective

By Shawnta S. Barnes - April 3, 2018



Mildred Guyse was a teenager living in Indianapolis when Dr. King was assassinated. As an adult, she became an educator teaching in both Fort Wayne

and Indianapolis in both Catholic and public schools. In 2010, she retired from Wayne Township after teaching in the district for 25 years. She currently instructs pre-service educators at Marian University making this her 42nd year as an educator. Below is her perspective on Dr. King's assassination and how we continue to move forward.

Shawnta Barnes: Where were you and what do you remember about April 4, 1968?

Mildred Guyse: I remember my social studies teacher Ms. Taylor at my school IPS #44 talking about Bobby Kennedy coming to town. The teachers were so excited. They had planned to carpool together to go hear Bobby Kennedy speak after school. I was around 13 years old and in the 8th grade, so politics were not that important to me although my family always talked about the importance of voting. They also were fans of the Kennedys.

I was at home getting ready for dinner when the news came on. I don't remember what was on the TV at the time. I really don't remember too much, not until the news that Dr. King was shot and killed. From what I remember, my parents were sad, but they were not surprised. They felt the rights of black Americans were going to have a set back because Dr. King was such a strong leader. A couple of questions my mother had were, "Who will take his place?" and "What will we do now?"

SB: What has changed in the past 50 years?

MG: More African Americans are involved in politics voting, running for office, etc. Many African Americans being satisfied with where we are now and taking our rights for granted.

SB: What has stayed the same?

MG: African Americans still fighting for equal treatment, opportunities, and being treated fairly. African Americans are not viewed as equals.

SB: What do we need to do now in our community to make life better for the future and carry on Dr. King's legacy?

MG: We must let our younger generation learn, know, and understand our history. If we don't know where we have been, we won't know where we are going.

SB: What are you doing to make life better for the future and to carry on Dr. King's legacy?

MG: I try to make sure the future teachers that I instruct realize the importance of sharing ALL the history of the US – that black, brown, etc. history is just as important as white American history. Education of our children must be inclusive and done not just in February.

It is also important that family history is shared and celebrated. When family members share and learn their heritage, it builds pride and positive self-esteem. This attitude blossoms and creates a safe and caring community. When people have a good self-image, I feel they will do positive things and become positive members of our society.

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