

MLK Grande Parade Houston

On the morning of January 20, 2020, Foundation for India Studies (FIS) participated in the 26th Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Grande Parade for the ninth year in a row. Students from the Youth Leadership Development Program of Houston (YLDP), event chairman Mr. Nish Bhan, and volunteers from FIS walked in solidarity to support the civil disobedience tactics implemented by both Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi Ji through their fight for equality. Many spectators of the parade stood along the side and cheered for the group exclaiming phrases such as, “Represent,” or “Freedom fighters.” It was a wonderful experience as all the teenagers and adults had the chance to revive the legacy of two great leaders who influenced radical differences that shaped society for the better today. Mahatma Gandhi Ji was an Indian lawyer and nationalist who practiced nonviolent resistance to achieve independence for India from British colonial rule and his actions inspired many movements across the globe. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. followed Gandhi Ji’s ideology and was an activist who was most prominent in the Civil Rights Movement in 1955 to 1968 in order to end legalized racial discrimination and segregation in the United States.

As a team, we were all able to learn various concepts and ideas that can be implemented in our everyday lives to help promote a better society. One of the most important truths we obtained from this experience was: unity is strength; this may sound a little cliché, but it is an honest revelation that we took away from the parade because so many Houstonians regardless of race, color, gender, and ethnicity came out to participate in the parade or to encourage those who were. When looking at a whole city attending one event, to uplift the pride of a great leader and pay tribute to him, it portrays the great outcomes of being together standing up for a single cause. In addition, by coming as one, people can accomplish even better things today because the power is with the public now; many of the beneficial societal changes have come from groups of individuals being unified under one reason.

As we went to the parade on behalf of YLDP, it was our responsibility to showcase the real leaders inside of us with the different assignments and circumstances. Prior to the event, it was our job to spread the details of the parade through the radio; as required, we completed the task on time and Mr. Nish even appreciated our dedication towards the service project we were doing. As another means to express our leadership skills, whenever Mr. Nish needed anything from us whether it be some information or some help, we made sure to always be first in stepping forward to assist him so that the parade can run smoothly on the part of FIS and YLDP.

This entire service experience has meant so much to us; it has given us precious memories and insightful teachings that will help us grow to become strong leaders and responsible members of society.

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