

**Remarks of Mayor Noam Bramson**  
**Martin Luther King Day - 2011**

As we look around this room, seeing people of different races and traditions relating to one another as friends and colleagues, as human beings first and last, we know that Dr. King did not labor and sacrifice in vain. Surely he would be pleased by the changes that have occurred in American society since his passing.

And yet there are times when I wonder if we have not simply exchanged one set of inequalities and divisions for another.

Inequalities of circumstance. In America today, the gap between the well-to-do and the struggling is wider than at any time in almost a century, wider than in the rest of the developed world, and getting wider still by the day.

Divisions of understanding. We obtain our news from sources so carefully calibrated to confirm our pre-existing views that it feels almost like there are no agreed facts anymore, only opinions that we assert without regard to whether they comport with truth.

These inequalities and divisions do not have the moral clarity of Jim Crow. They are not imposed by law. In fact, one could argue – and many do -- that they are the fruits of a fuller expression of rights.

So it is not my place today to suggest any public action, but rather an acceptance of individual responsibility.

As the President said this week, let us have the moral imagination see the world through the perspective of others. Let us walk a mile in the shoes of our neighbors, and perhaps, in so doing, hasten the day when their shoes – when everyone's shoes – will be strong and sound enough for our common journey.