

""Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly."-Martin Luther King, Jr.

This statement reminds me of the war between Russia and Ukraine and its impact on the citizens of these countries and the rest of the world. The war's consequences have been felt in many European countries that opened their borders to Ukrainians who had to flee their country (mainly children, women, and senior citizens). Although we are about 5,500 miles away from Ukraine, we, as Americans, have also been impacted by this war. Some of our economic difficulties, including higher gas prices, have been attributed to the war. Similarly, because of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, European countries witnessed a sharp increase in energy and food prices. It is without any doubt that those who are impacted by poverty have been negatively impacted the most. According to UNICEF, the conflict drove an additional four million children into poverty across Europe and Central Asia. This is about a 20% increase since 2021!

The conflict between Russia and Ukraine has been going on for centuries. According to a newspaper article, it was intensified during Stalin's regime, who took away food from Ukrainians to distribute to regions of former Russia during the famine of 1932-3. Almost 4 million Ukrainians died as a result of this. It is often called Holodomor (*Holod* means hunger, and *mor* means extermination in the Ukrainian language) and is considered genocide by a number of countries against Ukrainians. Eventually, in 1991 Ukraine declared its independence with the fall of the Soviet Union. But the tension between the two countries continued to escalate, ending in war a couple of years ago. This brief historical context further validates Dr. King's statement as not only current but also historical injustices play a role in our current situation.

Dr. King famously said, “Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend.” Just like Dr. Martin Luther King, I have a dream. I dream that in the near future, we will allow the transformative power of love to turn enemies into friends to have a world where freedom and happiness rather than war and destitution become our destiny.

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