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Even at the risk of sounding cliché, I unreservedly lend my support to the notion that the era of the pandemic we live in, fueled by aggravated tensions and fear of the unknown, has been hard for all of us. What started in the early months of 2020 as a temporary two week quarantine has spiraled into the two **year** mark of COVID-19's reign of terror. Millions of lives have been lost, and despite valiant efforts by healthcare professionals and brilliant scientists around the world, there appears to be no end in sight. Coupled with various racially-motivated injustices and xenophobic sentiments both African-American and Asian communities in our country have had to face, it is more than evident that these past two years alone have been draining to say the least.

Of course, now, we face two glaring options: succumb to the darkness woven by the hardships of the recent past, or, alternatively, forge a new path, looking to the future for what's to come. There are days where the former option is undeniably the easy way out, but with a little extra effort, the latter is easily attainable; this is where the insightful words of Martin Luther King Jr. come into play:

“Darkness can not drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.”

Though at times countering dark or particularly unhappy moments in our life with equally dark responses is a tantalizing option, King asserts that doing so only succeeds in exacerbating the

issue. Instead, utilizing a flipped perspective, a flipped approach to our problems in this modern day is the first (and most essential step) in actively countering the darkness and hate. This is represented perfectly in the case of the pandemic; COVID-19 has taken a heavy toll on all of us in unique ways, but is most tangible in its effects on our mental health. Being separated from family, experiencing loss on varying scales, and going through isolation has been draining. However, by working to network with others around us, getting our vaccines/boosters, and wearing masks, it is more than possible to end this dismal state we find ourselves in. Martin Luther King Jr. fought for collaboration. He fought for the common pursuit of a goal, regardless of background or any socially-defining characteristic. He fought for a better, more unified world. In this same way, we can embody the messages he shared to thousands of people that resonate deeply with many to this day. As the cast of *High School Musical* said, “We’re all in this together.”, and as cheesy as this may sound, in times where we need the collaboration and contribution of all, this celebratory quote is more true than ever. Moreover, regarding anti-Asian and African-American sentiments our country has experienced as of recently, people in these groups have every right to be angry at the injustices they have faced—not just now, but since the institution of the United States as a nation. As an Asian-American woman, it makes my blood boil to see elderly Asian individuals suffering racially-motivated attacks by cowards who have assigned xenophobic reasoning (i.e. Asians proliferated COVID-19 and therefore are to blame for the virus) for their wrongdoings. However, when I look to MLK’s aforementioned quote, I see a definite means a compromise with the feelings I (and several other people of color on a national scale) harbor; though I unequivocally stand by my feelings towards those who have committed atrocious crimes against people on the basis of their skin color (and do not foresee these feelings in specific changing anytime soon), I know hate begets hate, and it truly gets us nowhere. Instead, by choosing to love, we can progress hand in hand towards the betterment of our nation, hand in hand all the while. Martin Luther King Jr. wanted an America that could stand together as equals, skin color and background aside. And so, I want to love.

Our country stands in a precarious position, and if I, if all those that surround me in our beautiful community love one another, we can bring the light that will expel the darkness.

COVID-19. The tragic murder of George Floyd. The infuriating assault of Asians. The list of what has plagued our country and its communities for the past two years continues on and on. In this age, humanity has experienced what no one should ever have to. Yet, even in a place where defeat is the easy out, we have to refuse to concede. We have to rid the world of darkness and hate with undying love—love for our neighbors, love for our friends and family, and perhaps most importantly, love for ourselves. The task ahead of us is daunting, but with Martin Luther King Jr.'s wise words in mind, resounding success is imminent.