



Dear

In light of the profound injustices that continue to challenge our world today, we commemorate Martin Luther King Jr. Day by reflecting on the very vision and principles he demanded:

A world free from violence, and an ongoing commitment not just to seek understanding, but to take action for justice by reimagining new and radical ways of living together.

Last November, Outright's youth organizers joined the [Education Justice Coalition](#) (EdJCo) organizers in a retreat, and in solidarity with marches around the country and in the nation's capital, the group of 22 youth and adults joined Burlington's protest against the war on Palestinians.

Reading a joint statement from the podium, they shared the following:

"Schools can either be sites of social replication and oppression or sites of social transformation. Our students deserve a complete education, deserve honest truthful conversations and deserve a free and war-free future. All youth deserve a future. Palestinian children deserve to grow up. As we gather, the US is funding the murder of children by the hundreds. We join in the demand for an immediate ceasefire. May all children grow up to see a free Palestine."

Today's youth understand that without fundamental changes and transformation, history is destined to repeat itself.

In their actions at the November march, they embodied the values echoed in the enduring and profound words of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King:

“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.”

Reflecting on these words and the leadership of youth organizers, we call to mind our [Organizational Vision](#):

“A world where LGBTQ+ youth have boundless possibilities for joy, and all people know liberation.”

This deep alignment with Dr. King’s philosophy and the demands from youth for an end to violence are precisely why Outright Vermont joins thousands of organizations across the U.S. and internationally in calling for a ceasefire.

Rooted in both grief and solidarity, our position is reinforced by our [Queer Ethic and Guiding Principles](#). These principles are our north star, reminding us of the actions necessary to realize our vision and mission for a more just and peaceful world.

The ongoing genocide in Gaza and violence in the West Bank has created a humanitarian crisis, wherein indiscriminate bombing has caused the tragic loss of countless lives.

We know the impact of a war abroad has cascading effects across the globe in a multitude of ways, including the escalation of hate crimes targeting our own Jewish and Muslim communities. In Burlington, Vermont, three Palestinian students were tragically shot because of their identity. We must continue to recognize that this level of harm and violence most disproportionately impacts communities of color.

We acknowledge the ongoing suffering of the Israelis since the events of October 7, 2023, and unequivocally condemn violence against innocent individuals, including the harrowing plight of hostages and the immense struggles faced by so many families. **Our stance is clear: such acts are neither supported nor justified.**

And, the unwavering support of the United States for Israel’s ongoing military operations against the Palestinian people has resulted in the death of over 24,000 civilians, including nearly 10,000 children. We refuse to ignore the war crimes and utter crisis unfolding in front of the world. Palestinian children and adults - including LGBTQ+ and allied youth and adults - who have survived thus far are enduring starvation, dehydration, lack of medical care, and the utter destruction of infrastructure that literally blocks their escape to safety.

We must reject the notion that some lives hold more value than others.

The use of violence, power, and control to provide safety for a select few at the detriment of others cannot be justified or aligned with our struggle for liberation. And in this conflict, specifically, it's important to recognize and address dynamics of [pinkwashing](#), wherein the portrayal of Israel as more liberal in LGBTQ+ rights compared to Muslim-majority countries has been used as a way to divert attention from the ongoing atrocities.

As a fundamental principle, there is nothing queer about using violence, power, and control to create safety for some at the expense of others.



Perhaps ironic - or maybe not at all - but just a week before the November march where Outright youth organizers spoke up for justice, the University of Vermont canceled a lecture by Palestinian poet and journalist [Mohammed El-Kurd](#), in effect censoring his truth.

Censorship is nothing new; however, attempting to maintain peace at the cost of justice is misguided. Consider what would have happened if those who tried to censor Dr. Martin Luther King had been successful.

Ultimately the attempts to silence Mohammed El-Kurd backfired, and his remarks were instead shared virtually, reaching an audience of thousands in Vermont and beyond.

As Mohammed El-Kurd says:

"I refuse to live in a reality in which the subjugation & the statelessness of millions and millions of people can just be business as usual. I refuse that giving people their full rights can be considered inconvenient or an inconvenience. I refuse to live in a reality like that."

As youth lead the way, we hold tight to the wisdom that without structural shifts and deep transformation, history repeats itself.

Today and always, may we continue to find ways to show up alongside each other - perhaps not all singing the same note, but most certainly creating a chorus of harmony. As we each hold our own, we call for freedom, justice, and an end to violence.

Too much is at stake to be silent.

With deep care and concern,



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Executive Director



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