

## **What Advice would Martin Luther King Jr. give to President Barack Obama?**

By Niamh Quinn-Tierney

In the North wing of the White House in Washington D.C., President Barack Obama was getting ready to be sworn in as the 44<sup>th</sup> president of the United States. He straightened his tie, smiled at himself in the mirror and checked his watch.

“An hour to spare,” he said reaching for the gold doorknob.

“Lovely wing the North wing,” a voice said from behind him. “Did you know that it was built by slaves?”

Obama stared at the speaker. “Please sit,” said the voice of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Obama slowly sat down. “Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.,” Dr. King said, shaking Obama’s hand. “Yes, of course,” answered Obama. “And I am...”

“President-elect Barack Obama, I know.” Dr. King said smiling. “It is for that reason that I have come to see you.”

“It is an honor to meet you sir. To what do I owe this tremendous honor?”

“I’ve come to offer your some advice,” Dr. King said smiling. “Firstly you must remember you can always make things better. There is always another stair to climb, another book to bind, another house to build and another plate to fill.”

“Sir, those are not encouraging words,” said Barack. “But you see, the beauty of that is,” Dr. King said, leaning forward, “is that things do improve. Take this room for example. It was built by slaves a long time ago. And here sitting in it is the first black president of the United States of America.”

“Perhaps understanding that things are never perfect is a good thing,” Obama said. “Precisely, there is always room for improvement and change can happen with effort,” said Dr. King leaning back into his chair.

“Thank you for your insight,” said Obama. “Is there other advice you can offer?” “Yes. I will mention two other things,” answered Dr. King. First of all, you may have made history and you are president of the United States, but you aren’t, and never will be, superior to others. The world is a much bigger place than you and the U.S. But, you are powerful. Those in power have a responsibility to help other people the most. Think of it as ripples in the water. When one person helps another it spreads like ripples in water. The more powerful the person or the country, the stronger and bigger the ripples.”

“I love your point of view,” Obama told Dr. King. “And what is your last point?” he asked.

“No violence. Non-violence is the way to go,” said Dr. King. “Violence is a seething monster destroying everything in its path. It’s best not to tempt it.”

“And now, I’m afraid it is time to leave you,” Dr. King said, standing up and walking to the door.

“Thank you for your time,” Obama said, also standing up briskly and walking to the door. Dr. King took Obama’s hand. “Good luck son.”

“Thank you, sir.”