DAVID FICHTER
(20 Worcester St.)

In the year 2000 over 600 students, teachers, and families from the Martin Luther King Jr. School and the King Open School worked for a year to research, design and paint a 2500 square foot mural on the outside of their building on Putnam Ave. in Cambridge, MA. The mural depicts the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in the context of the civil rights movement and the history of non-violent social change going back to the example of the Mahatma Gandhi in India and early American Reviolutionary events like the Boston Tea Party. The mural project was funded by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, the Cambridge Arts Council, the Cambridge Community Foundation and others. It was directed by Cambridge mural artist David Fichter and King/King Open long-time art teacher Kelly Mowers, with the support of teachers, parents, staff and administrators.

At the time of the unveiling in June 2000 Logosou Kudayah, a student who had worked on the mural said the following: "I hope children of all ages enjoy this mural for generations to come."

This year, 2013, the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. School building will be torn down and a new school will be erected on the Putnam Ave. site. Although the mural is painted on panels which can be carefully and safely removed and then re-installed in the new school in order to continue the legacy of non-violence depicted in the mural "for generations to come", the Cambridge School Department or School Committee have made no plans that we are aware of to re-install the mural in the new school.

Recently our country witnessed the tragic shootings at an elementary school in Newtown Connecticut, an act of violence so enormous and heartbreaking, that all of us have been searching our souls for answers. We believe that the images of violence on television, the media, in computer games and throughout our culture to which our children are frequently subjected, can't help but effect their minds and souls. The history of non-violence as practiced by Dr. King, Gandhi, and the Civil Rights Movement depicted in the mural on the King School building from the perspective of children from age five to thirteen, is important to preserve in these times when the American culture is filled with images that reflect the opposite.

The theme, ideas and images in the mural were developed during a year -long residency in which students from grades K through 8 learned about the history of Dr. King and the non-violent civil rights movement in great depth. First grade teacher Cassie Reese recently recalled how her students learned about the sit-ins at the Woolworth lunch counter by acting out the experience in their classroom and then making sketches based on the experience. Those images were then woven into the over-all design of the mural.

The idea of a collaborative project between two schools which shared the same building, also had the goal of bridging the gap between two different school communities and cultures. Art teacher Kelley Mowers said at the time "that the collaboration has been good for the kids because it has challenged them to build all of what they have learned into the mural. Ultimately the mural stands as a testament of "children working together, depending on one another and learning to work gracefully and in harmony with each other. That's what the project is all about." The final panels of the mural show students

carrying a Chinese dragon, which was suggested and voted on by students of the King School, which had the Chinese bi-lingual program. The dragon is a Chinese symbol of strength, power, goodness, and wisdom, which students felt Dr. King's life exemplified.

We respectively ask the Cambridge School Committee and Cambridge City Council to support the preservation of the mural "Further the Dream: the Legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr." and make concrete plans for its re-installation on the new school building at Putnam Ave.

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