

CARP USA: MLK and the Heart of Service: 40 Days Recap

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"Everybody can be great...because anybody can serve."
-- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Foundation of MLK service day

Over the past 20+ years in the city of Oakland, MLK day has grown from 20 volunteers to over 3,000 volunteers that come out the third Monday of January to serve in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. This year in particular, Dr. King's legacy of service was to be honored not just on one day but throughout a 40 day period.



Last year, Fall of 2020, young adults from Service for Peace and CARP joined in twice a month trash clean ups in the city of Oakland. On the foundation of many projects taken from previous years in the city of Oakland, the mural project came into fruition. During one of the clean ups in Sobrante Park, Cynthia

and Sylvia Brooks, Chair for [Sobrante Park RACNCPC](#), shared with us valuable history and powerful visions they have been working on for many years to uplift the whole community. One of the projects they shared was wanting to paint a mural that can revitalize the community. Her story inspired us to want to help make the project come to life, and we began conversations on how we can bring their vision to reality.

Planning the Mural Project

During our first meeting, the mural design team discussed the importance of wanting our theme throughout this 40 day mural project to be "revival." Listening to Cynthia and Sylvia's vision for Sobrante Park, their hearts yearned for spirits to be revived, positive messages to be spread, inspiration to care for the environment, diversity to be represented, among other themes. We began to realize the mural was more than an image being painted onto a wall; it was an opportunity for the people to feel a sense of belonging, welcoming, and strengthening, and most importantly for the community's story to be represented.



The design team's design for the mural they'd be working on for their 40 Days of Service.

During the 40 Days of Service, the mural team and volunteers from various organizations would meet once a week to help paint the welcome section of the mural stating: "Welcome to Sobrante Park." Each service day, a group of 15 to 20 volunteers would show up early in the morning ready to contribute to beautifying the wall. Many times while painting the wall, passersby would stop and express their utmost gratitude for our service and also want to learn how they can begin to plug in and contribute to the project. It was an incredible feeling seeing the face of true joy and gratitude from the community.

Along with the mural project, there were various clean ups and service projects happening throughout the city of Oakland during the 40 Days of Service. Each service project not only left an impact on the community and volunteers but opened doors for people to engage with the community. The mural project in particular allowed for people to extend a helping hand by either asking how they can be involved to help design the second portion of the mural, supporting through donations to provide materials, or even offering bags of ice and bottles of water on hot days. The spirit of service definitely lived beyond the days volunteers came out to paint and pick up trash.



Conclusion of MLK 40 Days of Service and Mural Project

As we came to an end of the 40 Days of Service, a powerful community clean up was organized in partnership with District 7 Councilmember Treva Reid and her office, to celebrate the completion of the

welcome sign mural and 40 Days of Service along with many other organizations such as [HigherGround](#), [Good Hope Resource Center](#), [Roots Community Health Center](#), among others. Together, the many organizations and donation partnerships hosted a safe event with 100+ volunteers to commemorate Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s heart of service.

We had various speaker representatives share a short message building up our spirits and why we were gathering to go out and serve. Treva Reid shared a few words about the power of the people coming out together to serve for the sake of making the community and world a better place. Markus von Euw from Service for Peace touched upon the history of MLK 40 Days of Service and how we can continue to honor Dr. King's heart of service even beyond the 40 days.

Later, in an organized fashion, Rosa Velazquez and Haley Hester, D7 District Representatives, facilitated getting volunteers into their teams and tools to begin the clean up service project. As teams began to head out, team captains led a short ice breaker for groups to get to know each other and share their reasons for coming out to serve.

After a few hours, volunteers trickled back to the corner of 105th Ave and Edes Avenue to conclude the mural painting by stamping their hand print onto both sides of the wall. It was an opportunity for volunteers to creatively be involved and contribute a part of themselves to the mural. Some volunteers expressed their handprints symbolized the souls that will protect the wall and help keep it maintained for future generations to see and be proud of.



Closing Reflections

It is incredible to reflect back to October 24, 2020, the first day when a small group of young adults from Service for Peace came out to help clean up Sobrante Park compared to a 100 volunteers and various organizations of the Oakland community gathering on February 27, 2021 to collaborate on one goal of creating a peace-loving environment to ultimately revitalize the community. 161 bags of trash, 4.5 dump trucks, 14 organizations, 100+ volunteers, all participated with the heart of wanting to create a peaceful world through service.

And this is not the end! The mural wall is around 300 ft. in length. We have only completed 1/3 of the wall and will continue planning and painting the rest of the wall this summer. Council Member Treva highlighted that service shouldn't be just 40 days but for the next four years of her term. Service projects will continue to happen to revitalize individuals and the community to bring hope to the world. Service is more than the external aspect of going out and putting your words into actions, but internally about spreading love and positivity, developing a peace building spirit, and planting seeds of hope. Let's continue the spirit and legacy of service beyond the 40 days and bring into our daily lives at home with friends and family, work and everywhere we go.

Mural Project Reflections

First of all, I really appreciate being part of this mural and MLK 40 days of peace project. This is my first

time doing a mural. When I was invited to be a design team for the mural, I just wanted to do a mural that I've dreamed of. So I didn't know how amazing it is to design for those who will see the mural and paint the wall, not alone, but together. While painting the wall, many neighbors encouraged us, saying "Thank you." Their words made me feel appreciation and motivation to make this mural better. The feeling couldn't be gained by painting a small canvas alone. While helping people to hand-print, I felt we were right to complete this mural with everyone. Still now, I feel so accomplished and excited that the mural will brighten up the neighborhood. I believe this mural is what ideal art should look like. - G. Thein (CARP)



Community Clean Up Feb 27th Reflections

Today's service project was a great experience for me! Honestly, the work itself was quite simple in terms of just picking up trash, and it can be kind of easy when looking at what we did to argue that there was no major impact, as trash may end up there again quite easily. Where I felt there was the biggest impact was in building this sense of community with others. Hearing the speeches in the beginning showed me how, even though we may all be from different parts of the Bay Area, our being there and supporting this East Oakland community brought us all together in heart. We were all there together to make a change in the community, and it was a really beautiful thing. When we were walking through the neighborhood, though we've never been there, people treated us with kindness as if we were another local of the area. Building this sense of community through this project and all of the other projects throughout this time is what I felt was our biggest impact, and I'm excited to be able to create a sense of community in whatever way I can serve. - B. Buerger ([Generation Peace Academy \(GPA\)](#), 2nd year)

I am so grateful that we got the opportunity to serve and help out today! The community and the people I got to meet and talk to we're all so nice and kind, and the spirit really lifted me up as well. Throughout the actual trash pickup, I felt every little piece of trash mattered, and I felt like I was able to connect to God's heart of desperation in seeking to save each person's life in this world. My highlight was definitely being with other amazing brothers and sisters and reuniting with some that I haven't seen for awhile. - R. Ishikawa (GPA 2nd Year)

I really enjoyed cleaning up the streets of East Oakland meeting new people and getting to converse with people that I haven't seen in awhile is always fun. Another thing that I thought was really cool was the mural and getting to put our own handprint on it. Thinking about it, I think it was really smart, a way for everyone to put something personal on the wall. - D. Morita (GPA 1st year)