

# WHO ARE THEY? WHO ARE WE?

I see public adoration  
of justice seekers like Mandela, King and Parks.  
I see t-shirts, badges, social media dedications and television  
announcements  
and sometimes I am comforted by this atmosphere of abundant  
praise  
but other times I can't help but wonder if the indomitable, intense  
passion of such figures  
is somehow rendered moderate by us turning them into buzz  
words  
into popular jargon for self-promotion  
Maybe we should transport ourselves  
To the time when our most loved visionaries rose to prominence  
and think about what our role may have been

We would like to think  
that we would stride arm-in-arm with King  
Bathe in his beautiful words  
and proceed to live out his dream,  
reflecting it in every action, every breath

But would we?  
If we are not the equivalent now then why would we be in the  
past?  
Look at us now.  
Integration, that ideal people died and struggled for  
has been warped  
to accuse the most vulnerable of self-segregation  
and we treat this as rational conversation.  
We rejoice over the dignity of people like  
Rosa Parks and Paul Stephenson

who refused to subside to injustice  
Now we let people endure racist abuse  
and think that by hiding behind our camera phones  
we are addressing intolerance

How can we be complacent about the present yet passionate  
about past abuses?  
Sometimes I envision the next generation of radicals  
whose names are now little-known  
but will make our present state of living seem incomprehensible.

In anticipation of the future, remember this:  
If you're not living the dream, you're living a nightmare.

By Dareece James, student in Bristol and member of the Journey  
to Justice exhibition planning group



Sanitation workers' strike, Memphis, 1968 © Ernest C. Withers