



December 01, 2017

Subject: An Open letter to our Union Brothers and Sisters

We ask you to join us in I AM 2018, as we memorialize the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., struck down in the struggle for justice, our struggle, and your struggle too.

I AM 2018 will be an occasion for reflection, and an opportunity to re-commit to carry forward the causes for which Dr. King fought, and for which the Memphis public works workers—the pioneers of our union, AFSCME Local 1733—marched in 1968.

We particularly wish to remember Echol Cole and Robert Walker, the sanitation men crushed to death, February 1, 1968, 4:20 pm, in the compactor of a malfunctioning, obsolete truck, in which they had sought shelter from a downpour. They were 36 and 30 years old, respectively, trying to raise a family on the minimum wages paid by the city. Their deaths sparked the walkout of 1300 fellow sanitation workers.

We ask you to join us on February 1, 2018, for a national Minute of Reflection. That day should not be a “normal” work day. For sanitation workers like us, we ask that every garbage truck in America come to a full stop at a moment of your choosing, so that every worker can reflect—and re-commit. This occasion should be for all public service workers, not only trash collectors. However you can organize the observance (whether a moment of silence, a stopping of work, a rally or a prayer meeting), we will feel your solidarity.

Together, we will resolve that day to wake up America. There is so much to be done, so much business unfinished from 1968. America needs to re-engage with workers’ aspirations: for dignity on the job, for quality public services, for prosperity to be shared among all of us, for human rights for everyone.

AFSCME Local 1733 and its members are organizing a solidarity march honoring the historic sacrifices of Robert Walker and Echol Cole for their contributions to the city of Memphis and AFSCME. The march will be led by original Memphis Sanitation strikers, current AFSCME members, community leaders, clergy and Memphis residents. The procession will include a wreath ceremony at the exact mile markers where Robert and Echol lost their lives fighting for the basic respect and dignity all workers deserve.

- *What are your plans on February 1st to honor the legacy of Robert Walker and Echol Cole?*
- *Will you join us?*

Confirm your intentions at www.iam2018 and, when your plans for February 1st are in place, post them on the site.

Sincerely,

Keith Johnson
Interim President

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