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Racist evil stains U.S.: Kennedy

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NEW YORK — Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) said yesterday "the evils of racism stain every aspect of American life."

In an address to the Martin Luther King Junior Center for Social Change, Kennedy said the stain can be removed "if only we have the will to do it."

Kennedy paid tribute to King, who was slain six years ago last Thursday, as a man who carried a message of compassion and wisdom and love to all Americans.

"We forget too quickly the message that he carried," Kennedy said. "For it is easy to forget. It is easy to appeal to the Nation's fears. It is easy to hate. It is easy to turn away from the plight of other people."

He said today's struggle for equality "must be made against a history of racism . . . we must realize that part of every effort must be the struggle to erase the shame of racism in the United States."

"America has the means to solve any problem once it is convinced that the problem is real and must be solved," he said, including the problems of racism and decaying cities.

"It is here in the cities where the battle will be won or lost," Kennedy said. "It is here where we will learn whether a nation pledged to equal justice for all can fulfill that pledge once and for all."