

1995

Martin Luther King, Jr. 1929-1968

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Martin Luther King, Jr.

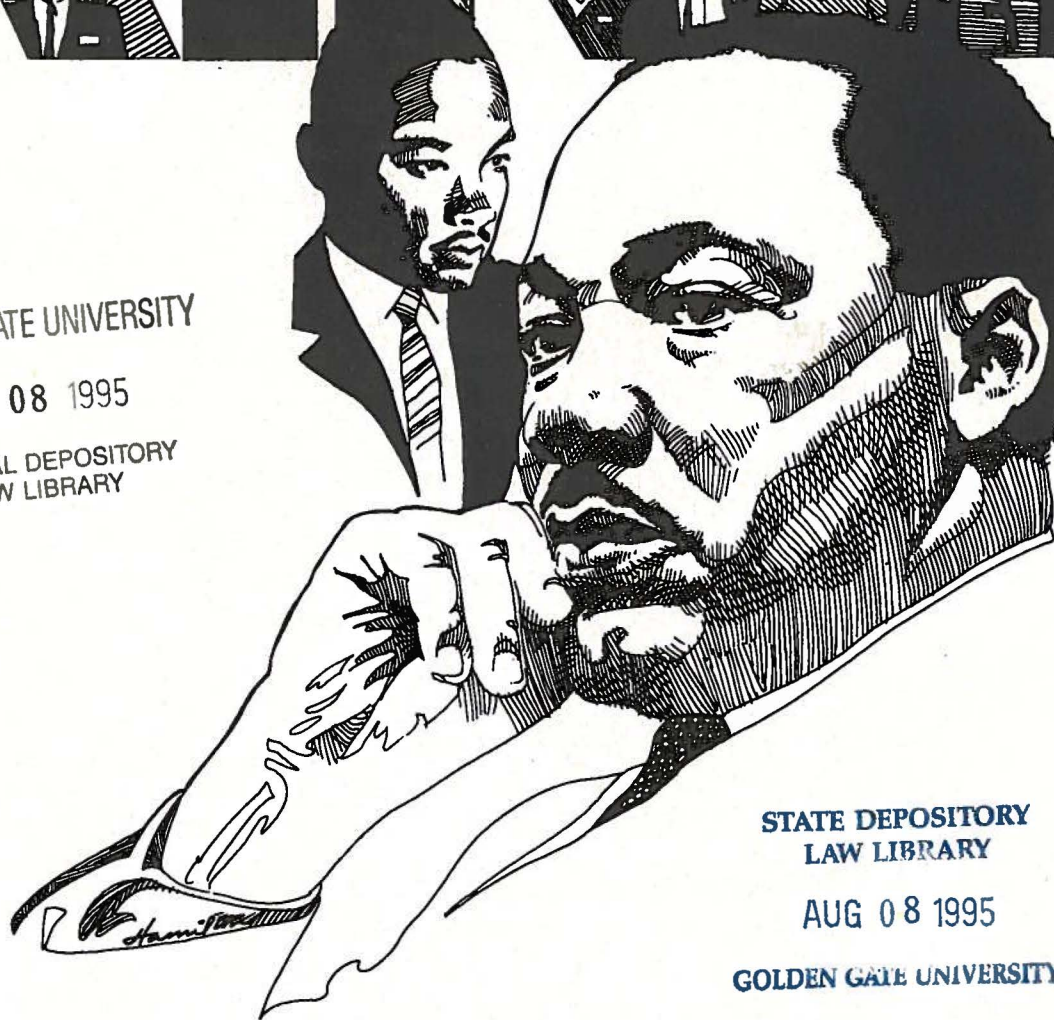
1929-1968



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Martin Luther King, Jr.

1929-1968





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PREFACE

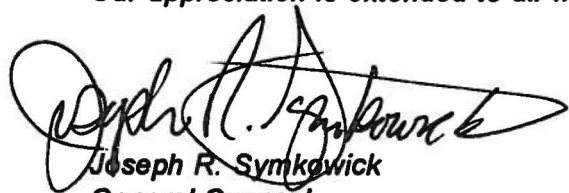
The Intergroup Relations Office, California Department of Education, receives funds authorized by the Title IV Civil Rights Act of 1964 to assist districts to resolve problems occasioned by desegregation. To meet this goal, the Intergroup Relations Office identifies strategies and develops materials which improve classroom and school climate, increase motivation for learning, and provide equitable options for students irrespective of race, gender, or national origin. Human relations materials are designed to bring together staff, students and their parents. One example of how the Title IV grant supports the core curriculum is the Martin Luther King, Jr. Guide as supplementary material for the cultural literacy strand in the California History-Social Science Framework.

The Martin Luther King, Jr. commemorative publication was first developed and printed in 1983 under the leadership of Dr. Ples Griffin and his staff, Albert Koshiyama and Bobbie J. Stanley. The 1993 draft was revised by Mattie Evans, consultant, and author of Images, a California Department of Education publication. Dr. King's contributions to civil rights and the nonviolence movement are as relevant today as when they first began to unfold. Students need to remember both the literary and oratorical contributions of Dr. King, and the nonviolent processes created for bringing the human family together. This edition continues to support the goals of the original document:

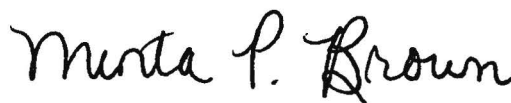
- 1. To encourage students to identify with the philosophy of nonviolence in their quest for means to peacefully resolve conflict*
- 2. To provide competence in the practice of respect for the rights of others and the courage to assist in the attainment of those rights*
- 3. To increase understanding of the "civil rights movement" and the value and significance of the contributions of Dr. King to that movement*
- 4. To provide an integrated curricula support process linking the information regarding the contributions of Dr. King to the student competencies in the core curriculum*
- 5. To assist students to increase their understanding of their roles in and responsibility to our democracy*

We consider this to be a working guide and request feedback from classroom teachers who find the content helpful in stimulating student participation and response. If you wish to share activities and/or lesson plans that may be considered for inclusion in future editions of this resource guide, please forward to the Intergroup Relations Office in Sacramento.

Our appreciation is extended to all who made this revision a reality.



Joseph R. Symkowitz
General Counsel
Legal Office



Minta Palmer Brown
Manager
Intergroup Relations Office

Students' Objectives

This resource guide is designed to enable students to do the following:

- Celebrate the life of an outstanding American, Martin Luther King, Jr., and gain an appreciation for his contributions to American life and thought.
- Understand the philosophy of nonviolence practiced by Dr. King and its relevance as a strategy for resolving conflicts in American society.
- Learn about the historical events that gave rise to the modern civil rights movement.
- Learn about Dr. King's role in the civil rights movement and the movement's impact on the quality of American life.
- Develop an appreciation for cultural diversity and respect for the traditions and heritage of others.
- Develop a feeling of self-worth and respect for the dignity of others.
- Understand that individual citizens can make unique contributions to improve the quality of American life.

Part 1

The Civil Rights Movement and Martin Luther King, Jr.

Chapter 1

Historical Overview: The Civil Rights Movement

Brethren, arise, arise! Strike for your lives and liberties. Now is the day and the hour. Let every slave throughout the land do this, and the days of slavery are numbered. You cannot be more oppressed than you have been; you cannot suffer greater cruelties than you have already. *Rather die freemen than live to be slaves.* Remember that you are *four millions!*

Henry Highland Garnet
"An Address to the Slaves of the
United States of America," 1843

The goals of the earliest civil rights struggle were twofold: to gain freedom from slavery and to exercise freedom as citizens of the emerging nation.

The civil rights movement evolved from a historical struggle that began before the Revolutionary War, a struggle characterized by unrelenting resistance and protest. As the colonies grew, so did the demand for a cheap labor supply, worsening the socioeconomic and political status of black indentured servants. Eventually, indentured servants were replaced by slaves who legally were property and therefore had neither status nor rights. The legal status of slavery did not, however, blot out the human spirit of the enslaved. Although men and women were oppressed and reduced to chattel, they were, nevertheless, human beings who yearned to be free. Their desire for freedom was made obvious by attempts to escape, uprisings, protests, and petitions.

Former slaves along with free black women and men resisted slavery by joining the Abolitionist Movement and by supporting the Underground Railroad. Their status as citizens was uncertain, however, because of contradictory laws and customs regarding the legal status of blacks in the various colonies. Thus the goals of the earliest civil rights struggle were twofold: to gain freedom from slavery and to exercise freedom as citizens of the emerging nation. The black press and the black church were in the forefront of the struggle.

The Role of the Black Press and the Black Church

During the nineteenth century numerous black-owned newspapers were published. Some were short-lived and limited in circulation; nevertheless, they were effective. *Freedom's Journal*, the first black-owned newspaper in the United States, began publication in New York City in 1827. It was

followed by the *North Star*, which was dedicated to the struggle for liberty and equality. Another black-owned paper that joined in the struggle was the *Mirror of the Times*, first published in 1855 in San Francisco. Other early publications were newsletters or pamphlets. One of the most famous pamphlets, first published in 1829, was David Walker's *An Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, a protest against slavery. Contemporary newspapers, such as the *Chicago Defender*, the *Amsterdam News*, the *Pittsburgh Courier*, and the *Los Angeles Sentinel*, continue the tradition of exposing injustices and publicizing the efforts of black citizens to affirm their rights.

The black church also evolved from the struggle for freedom and human dignity. One of the nation's earliest protests occurred in 1787, when Richard Allen and Absalom Jones led a group of black worshipers out of St. George's Church in Philadelphia because of hostile treatment. Richard Allen had a major role in founding the African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1816 and became its first bishop as well as a leading abolitionist. His efforts established a significant tradition: The church became a focal point for protest and reform, with the minister emerging as a spokesperson, a voice of protest.

In 1843 Henry Highland Garnet, a Presbyterian minister and former slave, delivered a speech at the National Convention of Negro Citizens at Buffalo, New York. The Reverend Garnet's speech, calling for slave rebellions as the surest way to end slavery, was considered the most radical speech made by a black citizen during the antebellum period.

The Struggle Against the Status Quo

The issue of slavery produced civil strife that marked a turning point in the struggle for freedom. Black men, slave and free, answered the call to arms and fought to win for themselves the rights of citizenship and a measure of freedom under the U.S. Constitution. However, the rights and freedom gained from the Civil War and President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation were short-lived. During Reconstruction numerous forces, such as unfavorable court decisions, Jim Crow laws, lynchings, and Ku Klux Klan activities, were at work to restore the status quo in the South.

Although the late nineteenth century was marked by violent racial conflict, black citizens continued to resist the injustices that were a part of their day-to-day existence. A historically significant encounter was that of Ida B. Wells, a schoolteacher, whose experience foreshadowed what Rosa Parks would undergo 71 years later. In 1884 Miss Wells was forced to give up her first-class seat while traveling on a train to Memphis, Tennessee, where she taught. She sued the Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad and won. Miss Wells became the first African American to challenge the U.S. Supreme Court's nullification in 1883 of the Civil Rights Act of 1875, a measure that sought to guarantee fair and equal treatment in public places. Unfortunately, the Tennessee Supreme Court reversed the lower court's decision.

Undaunted by this disappointing experience, Ida B. Wells went on to launch her career as a journalist and thereby gained access to a public forum to carry on the struggle against inequality and the violation of human rights. She used her Memphis newspaper, *Free Speech*, to speak out against

Although the late nineteenth century was marked by violent racial conflict, black citizens continued to resist the injustices that were a part of their day-to-day existence.

discrimination and to expose the brutal lynchings occurring throughout the South. She gained national recognition through her bold crusade against lynching. As a result of her courageous efforts, Ida B. Wells became one of the founders, in 1909, of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

The Struggle During the Twentieth Century

The struggle to gain equality for black citizens continued during the early twentieth century despite widespread violent opposition and legal segregation. Organized in New York City in 1910, the National Urban League began to challenge discrimination in employment. In 1942 the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), dedicated to nonviolent action, was founded. In 1947 CORE launched its first Freedom Ride through the southern states to integrate transportation facilities. The evolving civil rights struggle was enhanced by the efforts of Presidents Roosevelt and Truman to eliminate segregation and discrimination.

Nearly three centuries of individual and collective acts of resistance laid the foundation for the modern civil rights movement, a movement sparked by Rosa Parks's single act of resistance. Her refusal to give up her seat on a Montgomery bus set the stage for Martin Luther King, Jr., to emerge as a civil rights leader and proponent of nonviolent direct action. The yearlong Montgomery protest, during which black citizens walked or carpooled, demonstrated the effectiveness of direct action. The victory that resulted from the bus boycott gave momentum to the civil rights struggle.

During the decade that followed the Montgomery bus boycott, the struggle for civil rights was waged relentlessly in various southern states. In 1960 student sit-in demonstrations began in Greensboro, North Carolina. The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) launched Freedom Rides to protest against discrimination in transportation. Despite violent opposition the "freedom riders" successfully integrated interstate travel. The struggle continued as hundreds of student volunteers conducted voter registration drives.

To protest against racial intolerance, Martin Luther King, Jr., led a campaign of marches and demonstrations in Birmingham, Alabama, dramatizing the rigid segregation in that city. The nation watched on television as the Birmingham police turned fire hoses and unleashed dogs on nonviolent protesters, many of them children. All over the South protests and demonstrations were countered by beatings and murder; bombings of homes, offices, and churches; and all kinds of threats and intimidation.

Despite the various forms of opposition, the civil rights movement grew in momentum and participation. On August 23, 1963, over 250,000 people joined in the historic March on Washington for jobs and freedom. The successful march gained credibility for the movement. In addition, the movement gained support from a broad spectrum of American citizens who recognized the evil effects of segregation and discrimination. In 1965 thousands of civil rights supporters joined the five-day, 54-mile march from Selma to Montgomery to dramatize the denial of voting rights.

Despite the various forms of opposition, the civil rights movement grew in momentum and participation. On August 23, 1963, over 250,000 people joined in the historic March on Washington for jobs and freedom.

Congressional enactment of civil rights legislation affirmed the rights gained as a result of the various protests and demonstrations and gave further impetus to the movement, which expanded geographically and shifted its focus. Discrimination in education, housing, and employment was targeted not only in the South but in the North as well.

School integration was a slow process that met with much resistance. In 1964, ten years after the historic Supreme Court decision (*Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, which outlawed segregation in public schools), most black students in southern and border states still attended inferior segregated schools. In the North the struggle was against *de facto* segregation rather than against legal segregation.

Discrimination in housing had detrimentally affected the vast majority of northern blacks because it limited their access to education and employment. The civil rights movement initiated many campaigns against residential segregation. Scores of American towns and cities experienced demonstrations that either demanded open-housing laws or urged enforcement of existing codes.

Discrimination in employment was challenged during numerous protests, including the March on Washington in 1963. Leaders of the movement recognized that the exercise of voting rights and other citizenship rights could be either enhanced or hampered by one's socioeconomic status. The Poor People's Campaign, the last major demonstration planned by Dr. King, was organized to dramatize the plight of the poor and the need for jobs. Led by the Reverend Ralph Abernathy in 1968, the Poor People's Campaign brought together people from diverse cultural groups. They shared the shanties and muddy streets of Resurrection City, USA, in Washington, D.C., and brought the unpleasant facts about poverty and hunger in the United States to the attention of the world.

The far-reaching effects of the civil rights movement during the lifetime of Martin Luther King, Jr., are difficult to measure. It may be concluded, however, that the songs, protests, demonstrations, and numerous acts of courage have served as models for other movements striving to achieve justice and equality. If the civil rights movement is viewed as one that has evolved along a historical continuum in response to injustices in society, then the movement may be expected to continue as long as injustices exist in the United States.

Discrimination in employment was challenged during numerous protests, including the March on Washington in 1963.

Chronology: The Civil Rights Movement

- 1619 Twenty black indentured servants came to work in Virginia.
- 1662 A Virginia law made chattel slavery legal.
- 1770 A former slave, Crispus Attucks, who was killed during the Boston Massacre, was the first hero of the American Revolution.
- 1773 Massachusetts slaves petitioned the Province for their freedom.
- 1774 The Continental Congress demanded the elimination of the slave trade.
- 1775 The first abolitionist society in the United States was organized in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
- 1776 The Declaration of Independence was adopted.
- 1787 The U.S. Constitution was drawn up; it was adopted in 1789.
- Richard Allen led a protest against ill treatment of blacks at St. George's Church in Philadelphia. When the African Methodist Episcopal Church was founded in 1816, he became its first bishop.
- 1829 David Walker issued the pamphlet *An Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*.
- 1830 The National Negro Convention began annual meetings to assert demands for civil rights and the abolition of slavery.
- 1831 Nat Turner led a slave insurrection in Southampton County, Virginia.
- 1839 Led by Joseph Cinque, the son of an African king, a group of African slaves on board the slave ship *Amistad* revolted off the coast of Cuba. Slave dealers, whose lives had been spared, brought the ship to the Connecticut coast. The U.S. Supreme Court awarded the slaves their freedom.
- 1841 Frederick Douglass began his career as a lecturer with the Massachusetts Antislavery Society.
- 1843 Reverend Henry Highland Garnet, a former slave, delivered an address calling for slaves in the United States to rebel.
- 1857 The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in the Dred Scott Decision that a person of African descent was not a U.S. citizen and had no rights under the law.
- 1860 Harriet Tubman made her last Underground Railroad journey.
- 1861 The Civil War began with the Confederate attack on Fort Sumter, South Carolina.
- 1862 Robert Smalls, the slave pilot of the *Planter*, a Confederate steamer, took control of her, sailed her out of Charleston, and turned her over to the Union Army.
- 1863 President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation.
- 1865 The Thirteenth Amendment was ratified, making slavery unconstitutional.
- 1866 A Civil Rights Act to nullify the Black Codes was enacted over the veto of President Andrew Johnson. (The Black Codes were laws passed by Southern legislatures from 1865 to 1866 to maintain the status quo by denying blacks in the South many basic economic and legal rights.)

- The Ku Klux Klan was organized in Pulaski, Tennessee.
- 1867 Congress passed the First Reconstruction Act, which provided for military rule in the South.
- 1868 The Fourteenth Amendment was ratified, extending rights of citizenship to freed slaves. It states that no state shall “deprive any person of life, liberty, or property without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.”
- 1870 The Fifteenth Amendment was ratified, ensuring that the right to vote would not be denied on the basis of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.
- 1875 The Civil Rights Act, designed to secure equal rights in public accommodations, was enacted.
- 1883 The U.S. Supreme Court struck down the 1875 Civil Rights Act.
- 1884 Ida B. Wells, while traveling on a train in Tennessee, was forced to give up her seat in the first-class section.
- 1896 The U.S. Supreme Court in *Plessy v. Ferguson* upheld a Louisiana law that called for segregated railroad accommodations. That decision established the “separate but equal doctrine” that became the legal basis for segregation for over 50 years.
- 1909 The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was founded.
- 1910 The National Urban League was founded.
- 1917 A silent protest parade was held in New York City to protest lynchings in the South.
- 1941 President Franklin Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802, which required defense companies to end nondiscrimination in employment, and created the Fair Employment Practices Commission to oversee compliance.
- 1942 The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) was organized. The Justice Department threatened to file suit against black newspapers it believed guilty of sedition because they criticized the government’s racial policies in the armed forces.
- 1946 The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that segregation on interstate buses is unconstitutional.
- 1947 The Civil Rights Commission appointed by President Harry S. Truman issued its report titled *To Secure These Rights*. The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) launched its first Freedom Ride to test the desegregation of interstate transportation in the South.
- 1954 The U.S. Supreme Court issued the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* decision against school segregation.
- 1955 Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a Montgomery bus.
- 1956 The U.S. Supreme Court upheld a lower court’s decision that outlawed segregated buses in Alabama.
- 1957 The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) was organized.
- A Prayer Pilgrimage was held at the Lincoln Memorial to observe the third anniversary of the *Brown* decision.

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights was created by the Civil Rights Act of 1957 that was designed to prevent denial of voting rights.

- 1960 Student sit-in demonstrations began in Greensboro, North Carolina. The first integration suit in the North to end *de facto* segregation was brought by black parents in New Rochelle, New York. The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was organized. President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed the Civil Rights Act of 1960, a voters' rights bill.
- 1961 The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) began Freedom Rides to challenge segregation in interstate travel.
- 1964 The Twenty-fourth Amendment was ratified, outlawing the poll tax for voters in federal elections. Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, prohibiting discrimination in voting, education, employment, and public accommodations. The act also established the Community Relations Service and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.
- 1965 The march from Selma to Montgomery dramatized the denial of voting rights. Demonstrations led by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference challenged segregated housing in Chicago. Congress enacted the Voting Rights Act, which barred literacy tests and poll tax payments and authorized federal intervention to register voters.
- 1966 The U.S. Supreme Court outlawed the poll tax for all elections. James Meredith led the March Against Fear to the Mississippi State Capitol Building in Jackson.
- 1967 Martin Luther King, Jr., announced plans for massive civil disobedience in Washington, D.C., to focus on jobs and income for all citizens.
- 1968 The Senate passed a Civil Rights Act that provided for open housing. The month-long Poor People's Campaign set up Resurrection City, USA, near the White House and the Capitol.

Chapter 2

Martin Luther King, Jr.: A Powerful Presence

We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed. Frankly, I have yet to engage in a direct-action campaign that was "well-timed" in the view of those who have not suffered unduly from the disease of segregation.

*Martin Luther King, Jr.
"Letter from Birmingham Jail," 1963*

This section examines the forces that influenced Martin Luther King, Jr., during his early years, the challenges and achievements through which he earned recognition, and the image and the legacy that ensure his significant role in history.

The Early Years

In 1929 two events occurred that had a significant impact on U.S. history: The Great Depression began, and Martin Luther King, Jr., was born. Both events, although different and unrelated, have had a lasting effect on contemporary society.

Despite the devastating social and economic conditions brought on by the Depression, the Reverend Martin Luther King, Sr., pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, was able to provide a secure, middle-class environment for his family. Thus Martin Luther King, Jr., was born into and nurtured in a family that taught him traditional values: hard work, sobriety, the importance of education, discipline, and respect for authority. This set of values was undergirded by a well-grounded religious orientation and a strong sense of family. Young Martin, his sister Christine, and brother Albert knew that they were loved and that they could depend on their parents to guide and protect them.

In addition to his parents, young Martin had a special person in his life, Grandmother Williams, who showered him with love and attention; he affectionately called her "Mama." She was always there for him when he needed someone to talk to about his troubles as a preteen. She had a special place in his life that no one else could fill; thus he was deeply saddened by her death.

Martin Luther King, Jr., was born into and nurtured in a family that taught him traditional values: hard work, sobriety, the importance of education, discipline, and respect for authority.

The King children's secure home life sheltered them from the pain caused by poverty. Nevertheless, young Martin still felt compassion for the poor black people he saw standing in lines to get food. He was troubled because many children did not have enough to eat. He questioned his parents about the suffering he had seen because he could not understand why people had to live that way.

Eventually, his family and other adults realized that young Martin was a brilliant, gifted child. He demonstrated a love of language and amazed people with his ability to speak. He loved books and surrounded himself with them even before he learned to read. He had an amazing memory and could recite Biblical passages and sing entire hymns at the age of five.

Although intelligent and wise beyond his years, "M.L.," as he was known to family and friends, still loved to play and have fun. He was an active, athletic child who enjoyed playing baseball, flying kites and model airplanes, and riding his bicycle around the neighborhood. As a teenager M.L. made quite a reputation for himself as a fiercely competitive basketball and football player. On the basketball court he would refuse to pass and shot whenever he got his hands on the ball. He generally started as a quarterback in neighborhood football games because of his size. However, he usually played fullback because of his ability to run over everybody. M.L. could outwrestle any of his friends and hold his own in a fight; still he preferred negotiation to resolve disputes rather than using his fists.

Unfortunately, the secure, stable home environment that his parents provided could not protect him from an outside force—racism—which made a major impact early in his life when he learned about the cruel contradictions regarding racial differences. During his preschool years his closest playmate was a white boy who lived across the street. When the time came for them to go to school, they entered separate schools. In addition, his little friend's parents forbade the children to play together because the color of their skin was different. Naturally, Martin wanted to know why their friendship had to end. His parents explained the historical events that contributed to his painful experience. In addition, they reassured him that he had no reason to feel less worthy than anybody else.

Although young Martin had a strong sense of self-worth, he was, nevertheless, troubled by the indignities that he and other black people were forced to endure. For example, he could not buy a soft drink or hamburger at downtown stores, nor could he sit at the lunch counters. He had to drink from a "colored" water fountain and use a "colored" restroom. White drugstores and soda fountains that would serve him forced him to go to a side window for ice cream sold in a paper cup. He had to sit in the back when he rode a city bus. If he wanted to see a movie at a downtown theater, he had to enter through a side door and sit in the "colored" section. Almost everywhere he went, Whites Only signs were posted: at restaurants and hotels, at the YMCA, at city parks, at golf courses and swimming pools, and in the waiting rooms of train and bus stations. There was no mistaking that the society in which he lived had predetermined his place and treatment. Added to the normal pressures a boy growing up encounters was the challenge of growing up black. M.L. struggled to cope with his inner tension caused by

Although young Martin had a strong sense of self-worth, he was, nevertheless, troubled by the indignities that he and other black people were forced to endure.

segregation and by the expectation that he was not to resist when mistreated. For example, he was forced to endure the indignity of being slapped and called “a little nigger” by a white woman in a downtown store. That experience and others made it hard for M.L. to accept his parents’ admonition to love white people because it was his Christian duty. Fortunately, he was able to channel his anger into ferocious competition on the basketball court and football field.

M.L. entered Booker T. Washington High School at age thirteen and easily maintained a B average. His favorite subjects were history and English, and he continued to develop his remarkable vocabulary and oratorical skills. His other favorite activities were listening to opera, playing the violin, and eating soul food. He also enjoyed the attention of girls, who were impressed by his tweed suits and resonant baritone voice. Generally, he was a well-rounded, fun-loving teenager.

In 1944, when M.L. was fifteen and in the eleventh grade, he passed the entrance examination for Morehouse College in Atlanta. He entered college with a strong desire to help his people and to break down the barriers of segregation. He felt that he could achieve his goals by becoming a lawyer. At Morehouse he was influenced by a number of brilliant professors who inspired him. However, the person who made the most lasting impression was Benjamin Mays, the college president. Dr. Mays, a preacher and theologian, was a model of what young King thought a minister should be. Eventually, the young student understood that as a minister he could put his ideas into action and thereby become a force for social change. Thus he made the decision to become a minister and preached his first sermon at age seventeen. In essence, young King made a commitment to follow in his father’s footsteps and began his unique journey into the pages of history.

The Challenges and the Achievements

Martin Luther King, Jr., entered college with a clear sense of his mission; namely, to make a difference in the lives of the oppressed. As he pursued his studies at Morehouse College and later at Crozer Theological Seminary, he was mindful of world events. He knew that people of color in the United States and in Africa were struggling to gain their freedom and to claim their rights as citizens. King, a serious student, read many books as he sought ways to eliminate the evils of racism and discrimination and to bring about social justice.

In 1950 his search for direction yielded results when he attended a lecture by Mordecai Johnson, president of Howard University. Dr. Johnson, a prominent Baptist minister, had just returned from a trip to India, where he was introduced to the philosophy and tactics of Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi’s philosophy urged self-sacrifice and nonviolence. His tactics designed to free India from British rule included fasts, strikes, boycotts, marches, and civil disobedience. Inspired by Dr. Johnson’s lecture, King began to read extensively about the work of Gandhi. Although what King read had made an impression on him, the influence of Gandhi was not apparent at the time.

After graduating from Crozer, King enrolled at Boston University to study philosophy, a move that was a turning point because he achieved additional

Martin Luther King, Jr., entered college with a clear sense of his mission; namely, to make a difference in the lives of the oppressed.

Dr. King emerged as an articulate spokesman for the oppressed because he understood their pain and was not afraid to speak for them when they were denied basic human rights.

academic success and completed studies for his doctorate. In addition, he met and married Coretta Scott, who was preparing for a musical career at the New England Conservatory of Music. Eventually, the young couple had to decide where and how they would pursue their respective careers. Although neither was anxious to return to the South, a strong sense of duty ultimately led King to decide to return. His wife supported his decision to accept a position as pastor of Dexter Avenue Church in Montgomery, Alabama. A significant coincidence is that he preached his first sermon there in May, 1954, the same month in which the Supreme Court handed down its historic *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* decision against school desegregation.

After settling down in Montgomery, King focused his time and attention on performing his pastoral duties and on completing the thesis for his Ph.D. in systemic theology. Although committed to his belief in social justice, he did not initiate opposition to the injustices that prevailed. The opportunity to act on his beliefs came, however, when Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a Montgomery bus. When the call came to lead the movement sparked by her action, King was ready to accept the responsibility. His initial challenge was to serve as president of the Montgomery Improvement Association, the organization that coordinated the 382-day bus boycott. The successful boycott resulted in a court decision that desegregated city buses. Under the guidance of the young minister, the philosophy and tactics of Gandhi were transported from India to Montgomery, where they were used to obtain social justice for its black citizens.

After the successful Montgomery protest, Martin Luther King, Jr., emerged as a national leader. His ideas and philosophy served to undergird the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), of which he was president from 1957 until the time of his death. As a leader he was called on constantly to lend his presence to dramatize the need to reform unjust social conditions. He called attention to social injustices through his numerous speeches and his leadership of boycotts and protest marches. His actions reflected his firm belief in nonviolence. Dr. King emerged as an articulate spokesman for the oppressed because he understood their pain and was not afraid to speak for them when they were denied basic human rights. He spoke with courage and conviction, whether from a pulpit or a jail cell.

The Image and the Legacy

People who knew him as well as people who never met him have used many terms to describe Martin Luther King, Jr. Perhaps all of the descriptions can be summarized in one simple statement: He had a powerful presence. Dr. King's image as a significant historical figure was affirmed by a series of events that reached their climax in 1963.

In *Why We Can't Wait*, Dr. King, describes the struggle in 1963 to achieve civil rights in Montgomery, Alabama. Among the conditions giving impetus to the movement was the deep disillusion, frustration, and despair that black citizens throughout America were experiencing nine years after the 1954 Supreme Court decision that called for school desegregation. The Court's mandate to move "with all deliberate speed" was being "heeded with all

deliberate delay. . . . [L]ess than 2 percent of [black] children in most areas of the South and not even one-tenth of 1 percent in some parts of the deepest South” were attending integrated schools.¹

During this period Dr. King focused his attention on Birmingham, Alabama, which he thought was the most segregated city in America and the chief symbol of racial intolerance. This city therefore became the scene of the toughest civil-rights confrontations the nation had witnessed. The Birmingham campaign, centering on the business community, began in April, 1963, during the Easter season, a major shopping period. The campaign began with well-planned sit-ins at lunch counters in downtown department stores and drugstores. A series of marches and demonstrations followed, with the goal of filling up the jails. Over 2,000 demonstrators, many of them young people, went to jail before the campaign ended. Dr. King went to jail after disobeying a court order not to demonstrate. From his jail cell he defended the struggle in the “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” written to eight Alabama clergymen who criticized his actions.

After his release from jail, Dr. King led the campaign into a new phase: the involvement of students. He considered this involvement a wise move because children, too, had endured injustices. Hundreds of children attended mass meetings and training sessions; and hundreds of them were arrested, helping to fill up the jails. In the meantime the nation watched as police dogs and water hoses were used against children as well as adults. The outcome of these events in Birmingham was an agreement that moved the city to establish social justice for all citizens.

Dr. King saw the summer of 1963 as a revolution that changed the face of America. He wrote: “The sound of the explosion in Birmingham reached all the way to Washington, where the administration, which had firmly declared that civil-rights legislation would have to be shelved for 1963, hastily reorganized its priorities and placed a strong civil rights bill at the top of the Congressional calendar.”²

In 1963 the nation celebrated the 100th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation that freed the slaves. Thus it was fitting that the historic March on Washington culminated at the Lincoln Memorial. During his famous “I Have a Dream” speech, Dr. King reminded the crowd of 250,000 that 100 years after Abraham Lincoln’s Proclamation, black Americans were still not free from the bonds of segregation and discrimination. Nevertheless, he offered hope and a vision of a nation in which not only his children but all children could be free.

The event that affirmed that Martin Luther King, Jr., had become a historic figure worldwide was his being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Nine years after the Montgomery bus boycott, he was honored for his leadership and contributions to human rights. Along with his wife and a group of close friends and family members, he traveled to Oslo, Norway, in December, 1964, to receive the award. In his acceptance speech he stated that the award was given to the civil rights movement in recognition of nonviolence as the method to achieve social justice.

The event that affirmed that Martin Luther King, Jr., had become a historic figure worldwide was his being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

¹ Martin Luther King, Jr., *Why We Can't Wait*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1964, pp. 5-6.

² King, *Why We Can't Wait*, p. 128.

Despite his critics' opposition, Dr. King was unwavering in his commitment to secure justice and human rights for the oppressed, no matter where they lived.

During the next four years, Dr. King shifted his focus. Voter registration became a major emphasis and resulted in the famous Selma-to-Montgomery Freedom March, which again directed national attention to conditions in Alabama and the South. Dr. King also led a brief crusade to dramatize discrimination in housing in Chicago. In addition, despite heavy criticism he supported the peace movement that emerged in protest against the Vietnam War. Finally, Dr. King focused on the need to ensure economic justice for all citizens. He initiated efforts for a massive march on Washington to dramatize the plight of poor people. Despite his critics' opposition, Dr. King was unwavering in his commitment to secure justice and human rights for the oppressed, no matter where they lived.

His brief, dynamic career ended in April, 1968, while he was fulfilling his commitment to help improve working conditions for sanitation workers in Memphis, Tennessee. An assassin's bullet stilled the voice of Martin Luther King, Jr., and halted his historic efforts to establish social justice for all citizens.

In October, 1983, the United States Senate passed a bill designating the third Monday in January as a day to honor the memory of Martin Luther King, Jr. Signed into law by President Ronald Reagan, the bill ensured that Dr. King's legacy would not be forgotten. The image of the man with the powerful presence and his legacy of nonviolence continue to influence people in the United States and the rest of the world.

Chronology: Achievements and Contributions of Martin Luther King, Jr.

- 1944 Passed the entrance examination to Morehouse College and entered at age fifteen from the eleventh grade
- 1947 Licensed to preach and became assistant to his father at Ebenezer Baptist Church, Atlanta
- 1948 Ordained to the Baptist ministry
Graduated from Morehouse College with a Bachelor of Arts degree in sociology
Began theological training at Crozer Theological Seminary, Chester, Pennsylvania
- 1951 Graduated from Crozer with a Bachelor of Divinity degree
Enrolled at Boston University
- 1953 Married Coretta Scott in Marion, Alabama
- 1954 Installed as pastor of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, Montgomery, Alabama
- 1955 Received his Ph.D. degree in theology from Boston University
Elected president of the Montgomery Improvement Association, the organization that coordinated the 382-day boycott of city buses
Indicted with others in the Montgomery bus boycott on the charge of being party to a conspiracy to hinder and prevent the operation of business without "just or legal cause"
Spoke before the platform committee of the Democratic Party in Chicago
- 1957 Elected president of the newly organized Southern Christian Leadership Conference
Featured on the cover of *Time* magazine
Delivered a speech at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., for the Prayer Pilgrimage for Freedom celebrating the third anniversary of the Supreme Court's school desegregation decision
- 1958 *Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story* published
Along with other civil rights leaders, met with President Dwight D. Eisenhower
- * 1959 Traveled to India to study Gandhi's techniques of nonviolence
- 1960 Moved to Atlanta, where he became copastor of the Ebenezer Baptist Church
Arrested at an Atlanta sit-in and jailed on a charge of violating the state's trespass law
- 1961 Arrested at a demonstration in Albany, Georgia, and charged with obstructing the sidewalk and parading without a permit
- 1962 Arrested during a prayer vigil at Albany city hall and jailed on charges of failure to obey a police officer, obstructing the sidewalk, and disorderly conduct
Met with President John F. Kennedy

- 1963 Arrested during a sit-in demonstration in Birmingham, Alabama, to protest segregation in eating facilities
Wrote "Letter from Birmingham Jail"
Strength to Love published
Delivered "I Have a Dream" speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial during the March on Washington
- 1964 Appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine as Man of the Year for 1963
Jailed with other SCLC workers in demonstrations for the integration of public accommodations in St. Augustine, Florida
Why We Can't Wait published
Attended the signing, by President Lyndon Johnson, of the Public Accommodations Bill, part of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
Visited West Berlin, along with the Reverend Ralph Abernathy
Had an audience with Pope Paul VI at the Vatican
Received the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo, Norway
- 1965 Led historic march from Selma to Montgomery
- 1966 Rented an apartment in Chicago and launched an open-housing drive
Led a march in the Gage Park section of Chicago's southwest side
Agreed to serve as cochairman of Clergy and Laymen Concerned about Vietnam
- 1967 *Where Do We Go from Here?* published
Delivered speeches against the government's Vietnam policy
Announced the formation by SCLC of a Poor People's Campaign in Washington, D.C., to end poverty
- 1968 Led a protest march in Memphis, Tennessee, to help sanitation workers get better wages and improve their working conditions
Delivered his last speech, titled "I've Been to the Mountain Top," at the Memphis Masonic Temple
Assassinated on April 4 in Memphis, Tennessee

Part 2

Martin Luther King, Jr., Speaks

Introduction

Martin Luther King, Jr., demonstrated a love of language long before he started attending school. He loved to read and had a remarkable ability to memorize and recite passages from the Bible. Both at home and at school, he was encouraged to develop his oral language skills. His skills in oratory served him well in the classroom and on the playground, where he often had to talk his way out of difficult situations. Through his college and university studies, he continued to develop and demonstrate his language skills.

Dr. King's gift of oratory won him widespread respect and admiration and enhanced his success as a mediator and civil rights spokesman. His appreciation for the written as well as the spoken word is reflected in his extensive legacy of quotations, letters, speeches, and books. Whether spoken from a pulpit or written in a jail cell, the eloquent, simple words of Martin Luther King, Jr., carry a powerful message.

Part 2 contains excerpts from the following works by Martin Luther King, Jr.: "Letter from Birmingham Jail," "I Have a Dream," and "The Nobel Peace Prize Acceptance Speech."

Letter from Birmingham Jail

April 16, 1963

My Dear Fellow Clergymen:

While confined here in Birmingham city jail, I came across your recent statement calling my present activities "unwise and untimely." Seldom do I pause to answer criticism of my work and ideas. If I sought to answer all the criticisms that cross my desk, my secretaries would have little time for anything other than such correspondence in the course of the day, and I would have no time for constructive work. But since I feel that you are men of genuine good will and that your criticisms are sincerely set forth, I want to try to answer your statement in what I hope will be patient and reasonable terms. . . .

We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed. Frankly, I have yet to engage in a direct-action campaign that was "well-timed" in the view of those who have not suffered unduly from the disease of segregation.

For years now I have heard the word "Wait!" It rings in the ear of every Negro with piercing familiarity. This "Wait!" has almost always meant "Never." We must come to see, with one of our distinguished jurists, that "justice too long delayed is justice denied."

We have waited for more than 340 years for our constitutional and God-given rights. The nations of Asia and Africa are moving with jetlike speed toward gaining political independence, but we still creep at horse-and-buggy pace toward gaining a cup of coffee at a lunch counter. Perhaps it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation to say, "Wait." But when you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will and drown your sisters and brothers at whim; when you have seen hate-filled policemen curse, kick and even kill your black brothers and sisters; when you see the vast majority of your twenty million Negro brothers smothering in an airtight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society; when you suddenly find your tongue twisted and your speech stammering as you seek to explain to your six-year-old daughter why she can't go to the public amusement park that has just been advertised on television, and see tears welling up in her eyes when she is told that Funtown is closed to colored children, and see ominous clouds of inferiority beginning to form in her little mental sky, and see her beginning to distort her personality by developing an unconscious bitterness toward white people; when you have to concoct an answer for a five-year-old son who is asking: "Daddy, why do white people treat colored people so mean?"; when you take a cross-country drive and find it necessary to sleep night after night in the uncomfortable corners of

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We will reach the goal of freedom in Birmingham and all over the nation, because the goal of America is freedom.

your automobile because no motel will accept you; when you are humiliated day in and day out by nagging signs reading “white” and “colored”; when your first name becomes “nigger,” your middle name becomes “boy” (however old you are) and your last name becomes “John,” and your wife and mother are never given the respected title of “Mrs.”; when you are harried by day and haunted by night by the fact that you are a Negro, living constantly at tiptoe stance, never quite knowing what to expect next, and plagued with inner fears and outer resentments; when you are forever fighting a degenerating sense of “nobodiness”—then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait. There comes a time when the cup of endurance runs over, and men are no longer willing to be plunged into the abyss of despair. I hope, sirs, you can understand our legitimate and unavoidable impatience. . . .

In your statement you assert that our actions, even though peaceful, must be condemned because they precipitate violence. But is this a logical assertion? Isn’t this like condemning a robbed man because his possession of money precipitated the evil act of robbery? Isn’t this like condemning Socrates because his unswerving commitment to truth and his philosophical inquiries precipitated the act by the misguided populace in which they made him drink hemlock? Isn’t this like condemning Jesus because his unique God-consciousness and never-ceasing devotion to God’s will precipitated the evil act of crucifixion? We must come to see that, as the federal courts have consistently affirmed, it is wrong to urge an individual to cease his efforts to gain his basic constitutional rights because the quest may precipitate violence. Society must protect the robbed and punish the robber. . . .

I hope the church as a whole will meet the challenge of this decisive hour. But even if the church does not come to the aid of justice, I have no despair about the future. I have no fear about the outcome of our struggle in Birmingham, even if our motives are at present misunderstood. We will reach the goal of freedom in Birmingham and all over the nation, because the goal of America is freedom. Abused and scorned though we may be, our destiny is tied up with America’s destiny. Before the pilgrims landed at Plymouth, we were here. Before the pen of Jefferson etched the majestic words of the Declaration of Independence across the pages of history, we were here. For more than two centuries our forebears labored in this country without wages; they made cotton king; they built the homes of their masters while suffering gross injustice and shameful humiliation—and yet out of a bottomless vitality they continued to thrive and develop. If the inexpressible cruelties of slavery could not stop us, the opposition we now face will surely fail. We will win our freedom because the sacred heritage of our nation and the eternal will of God are embodied in our echoing demands.

Before closing I feel impelled to mention one other point in your statement that has troubled me profoundly. You warmly commended the Birmingham police force for keeping “order” and “preventing violence.” I doubt that you would have so warmly commended the police force if you had seen dogs sinking their teeth into unarmed, nonviolent Negroes. I doubt that you would so quickly commend the policemen if you were to observe their ugly and inhumane treatment of Negroes here in the city jail; if you were to watch them push and curse old Negro women and young Negro girls; if you were to see them slap and kick old Negro men and young boys; if you were to observe them, as they did on two occasions, refuse to give us food because we wanted to sing our grace together. I cannot join in your praise of the Birmingham police department.

It is true that the police have exercised a degree of discipline in handling the demonstrators. In this sense they have conducted themselves rather "nonviolently" in public. But for what purpose? To preserve the evil system of segregation. Over the past few years I have consistently preached that nonviolence demands that the means we use must be as pure as the ends we seek. I have tried to make clear that it is wrong to use immoral means to attain moral ends. But now I must affirm that it is just as wrong, or perhaps even more so, to use moral means to preserve immoral ends. . . .

Never before have I written so long a letter. I'm afraid it is much too long to take your precious time. I can assure you that it would have been much shorter if I had been writing from a comfortable desk, but what else can one do when he is alone in a narrow jail cell, other than write long letters, think long thoughts and pray long prayers?

If I have said anything in this letter that overstates the truth and indicates an unreasonable impatience, I beg you to forgive me. If I have said anything that understates the truth and indicates my having a patience that allows me to settle for anything less than brotherhood, I beg God to forgive me.

I hope this letter finds you strong in the faith. I also hope that circumstances will soon make it possible for me to meet each of you, not as an integrationist or a civil-rights leader but as a fellow clergyman and a Christian brother. Let us all hope that the dark clouds of racial prejudice will soon pass away and the deep fog of misunderstanding will be lifted from our fear-drenched communities, and in some not too distant tomorrow the radiant stars of love and brotherhood will shine over our great nation with all their scintillating beauty.

Yours for the cause of Peace and Brotherhood
Martin Luther King, Jr.

This letter is a response to a published statement by eight clergymen from Alabama. It was begun on the margins of the newspaper in which the statement appeared, continued on scraps of writing paper supplied by a friendly Negro trusty, and concluded on a pad attorneys were permitted to provide Dr. King.

*Let us all hope that
the dark clouds of
racial prejudice will
soon pass away.*

I Have a Dream

Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand, signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of captivity.

But one hundred years later, we must face the tragic fact that the Negro is still not free. One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination. One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. One hundred years later, the Negro still languishes in the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land. So we have come here today to dramatize an appalling condition.

In a sense we have come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check; a check which as come back marked "insufficient funds." But . . . we refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. So we have come to cash this check—a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice. We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of *now*. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism. *Now* is the time to make real the promises of democracy. *Now* is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. *Now* is the time to open the doors of opportunity to all of God's children. *Now* is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood.

It would be fatal for the nation to overlook the urgency of the moment and to underestimate the determination of the Negro. This sweltering summer of the Negro's legitimate discontent will not pass until there is an invigorating autumn of freedom and equality. Nineteen sixty-three is not an end, but a beginning. Those who hope that the Negro needed to blow off steam and will now be content will have a rude awakening if the nation returns to business as usual. There will be neither rest nor tranquillity in America until the Negro is granted his citizenship rights. The whirlwinds of revolt will continue to shake the foundations of our nation until the bright day of justice emerges.

But there is something that I must say to my people who stand on the warm threshold which leads into the palace of justice. In the process of gaining our rightful place we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds. Let us

Now is the time to open the doors of opportunity to all of God's children. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood.

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not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred. We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force. The marvelous new militancy which has engulfed the Negro community must not lead us to a distrust of all white people, for many of our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence here today, have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny and their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom. We cannot walk alone.

And as we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall march ahead. We cannot turn back. There are those who are asking the devotees of civil rights, "When will you be satisfied?" We can never be satisfied as long as the Negro is the victim of the unspeakable horrors of police brutality. We can never be satisfied as long as our bodies, heavy with the fatigue of travel, cannot gain lodging in the motels of the highways and the hotels of the cities. We cannot be satisfied as long as the Negro's basic mobility is from the smaller ghetto to a larger one. We can never be satisfied as long as a Negro in Mississippi cannot vote and a Negro in New York believes he has nothing for which to vote. No, no, we are not satisfied, and we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.

I am not unmindful that some of you have come here out of great trials and tribulations. Some of you have come fresh from narrow jail cells. Some of you have come from areas where your quest for freedom left you battered by the storms of persecution and staggered by the winds of police brutality. You have been the veterans of creative suffering. Continue to work with the faith that unearned suffering is redemptive.

Go back to Mississippi, go back to Alabama, go back to South Carolina, go back to Georgia, go back to Louisiana, go back to the slums and ghettos of our modern cities, knowing that somehow this situation can and will be changed. Let us not wallow in the valley of despair.

I say to you today, my friends, that in spite of the difficulties and frustrations of the moment I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal."

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slaveowners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a desert state sweltering with the heat of injustice and oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

I have a dream today.

I have a dream that one day the state of Alabama, whose governor's lips are presently dripping with the words of interposition and nullification, will be transformed into a situation where little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls and walk together as sisters and brothers.

I have a dream today.

Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred. We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline.

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plains, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.

This is our hope. This is the faith with which I return to the South. With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.

This will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with new meaning, "My country 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land where my fathers died, land of the pilgrim's pride, from every mountainside, let freedom ring."

And if America is to be a great nation this must become true. So let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire. Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York. Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania!

Let freedom ring from the snowcapped Rockies of Colorado!

Let freedom ring from the curvaceous peaks of California!

But not only that; let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia!

Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee!

Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill of Mississippi. From every mountainside, let freedom ring.

When we let freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, "Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!"

On August 28, 1963, more than 250,000 Americans participated in a March on Washington for jobs and freedom. It was the largest demonstration in the history of the nation's capital. The orderly procession moved from the Washington Monument to the Lincoln Memorial, where Dr. King gave this address.

This is our hope. This is the faith with which I return to the South. With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope.

The Nobel Peace Prize Acceptance Speech

Your Majesty, your Royal Highness, Mr. President, excellencies, ladies and gentlemen:

I accept the Nobel Prize for Peace at a moment when twenty-two million Negroes of the United States of America are engaged in a creative battle to end the long night of racial injustice. I accept this award in behalf of a civil rights movement which is moving with determination and a majestic scorn for risk and danger to establish a reign of freedom and a rule of justice.

I am mindful that only yesterday in Birmingham, Alabama, our children, crying out for brotherhood, were answered with fire hoses, snarling dogs, and even death. I am mindful that only yesterday in Philadelphia, Mississippi, young people seeking to secure the right to vote were brutalized and murdered.

I am mindful that debilitating and grinding poverty afflicts my people and chains them to the lowest rung of the economic ladder.

Therefore, I must ask why this prize is awarded to a movement which is beleaguered and committed to unrelenting struggle: to a movement which has not won the very peace and brotherhood which is the essence of the Nobel Prize.

After contemplation, I conclude that this award which I received on behalf of that movement is profound recognition that nonviolence is the answer to the crucial political and moral question of our time—the need for man to overcome oppression and violence without resorting to violence and oppression.

Civilization and violence are antithetical concepts. Negroes of the United States, following the people of India, have demonstrated that nonviolence is not sterile passivity, but a powerful moral force which makes for social transformation. Sooner or later, all the people of the world will have to discover a way to live together in peace, and thereby transform this pending cosmic elegy into a creative psalm of brotherhood.

If this is to be achieved, man must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love.

From the depths of my heart I am aware that this prize is much more than an honor to me personally.

Every time I take a flight, I am always mindful of the many people who make a successful journey possible, the known pilots and the unknown ground crew.

So you honor dedicated pilots of our struggle who have sat at the controls as the freedom movement soared into orbit. You honor, once again, Chief (Albert) Luthuli of South Africa, whose struggles with and for his people, are still met with the most brutal expression of man's inhumanity to man.

You honor the ground crew without whose labor and sacrifices the jet flights to freedom could never have left the earth.

After contemplation, I conclude that this award . . . is profound recognition that nonviolence is the answer to the crucial political and moral question of our time—the need for man to overcome oppression and violence without resorting to violence and oppression.

Most of these people will never make the headlines and their names will not appear in *Who's Who*. Yet the years have rolled past and when the blazing light of truth is focused on this marvelous age in which we live—men and women will know and children will be taught that we have a finer land, a better people, a more noble civilization—because these humble children of God were willing to suffer for righteousness' sake.

I think Alfred Nobel would know what I mean when I say that I accept this award in the spirit of a curator of some precious heirloom which he holds in trust for its true owners—all those to whom beauty is truth and truth beauty—and in whose eyes the beauty of genuine brotherhood and peace is more precious than diamonds or silver or gold.

The tortuous road which has led from Montgomery, Alabama, to Oslo bears witness to this truth. This is a road over which millions of Negroes are traveling to find a new sense of dignity. This same road has opened for all Americans a new era of progress and hope. It has led to a new civil rights bill, and it will, I am convinced, be widened and lengthened into a superhighway of justice as Negro and white men in increasing number create alliances to overcome their common problems.

I accept this award today with an abiding faith in America and an audacious faith in the future of mankind. I refuse to accept the idea that the "isness" of man's present nature makes him morally incapable of reaching up for the eternal "oughtness" that forever confronts him.

I refuse to accept the idea that man is mere flotsam and jetsam in the river of life which surrounds him. I refuse to accept the view that mankind is so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become a reality.

I refuse to accept the cynical notion that nation after nation must spiral down a militaristic stairway into the hell of thermonuclear destruction. I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word in reality. This is why right temporarily defeated is stronger than evil triumphant.

I believe that even amid today's mortar bursts and whining bullets, there is still hope for a brighter tomorrow. I believe that wounded justice, lying prostrate on the blood-flowing streets of our nations, can be lifted from this dust of shame to reign supreme among the children of men.

I have the audacity to believe that peoples everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity, equality and freedom for their spirits. I believe that what self-centered men have torn down men other-centered can build up. I still believe that one day mankind will bow before the altars of God and be crowned triumphant over war and bloodshed, and nonviolent redemptive goodwill will proclaim the rule of the land. "And the lion and the lamb shall lie down together and every man shall sit under his own vine and fig tree and none shall be afraid." I still believe that we shall overcome.

This faith can give us courage to face the uncertainties of the future. It will give our tired feet new strength as we continue our forward stride toward the city of freedom. When our days become dreary with low-hovering clouds and our nights become darker than a thousand midnights, we will know that we are living in a creative turmoil of a genuine civilization struggling to be born.

Today I come to Oslo as a trustee, inspired with renewed dedication to humanity. I accept this prize on behalf of all men who love peace and brotherhood.

Man must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love.

Part 3

Teacher's Guide

Integrating Concepts from the Resource Guide into the Instructional Program

This guide offers practical suggestions for planning instruction that will enable students to meet the “Students’ Objectives” listed at the beginning of this publication. The suggested activities reflect guidelines from the *English–Language Arts Framework* and *History–Social Science Framework*. The activities can be adapted to fit the experiences and needs of students, and they provide opportunities for extending the study of the life and achievements of Martin Luther King, Jr., throughout the school year.

The extensive selection of references includes those that were used to prepare the material in this publication. Students as well as teachers will find many of the references helpful for research and background reading. The information in the Appendix, “Mahatma Ghandi and Nonviolent Resistance,” was included to enhance students’ understanding of the philosophy of nonviolence.

Suggested Activities: Primary School and Intermediate School Students

These activities for primary school and intermediate school students may be used in a variety of ways in the classroom. Examples are activities for groups or individuals, class or panel discussions, dramatization or role-playing, various forms of written or oral presentations, and single-subject or interdisciplinary topics.

1. Discuss experiences in Dr. King's childhood that influenced his desire to work for social change. Write a story about those experiences.
2. Make a picture collage that depicts the life of Dr. King.
3. Role-play the experience of Martin Luther King, Jr., when he was six years old and was told that he could no longer play with his best friend, a little white boy.
4. Draw a picture or write a story about breaking up the friendship.
5. Role-play the experience of approaching a soda fountain with your friend Martin Luther King, Jr., to get a soft drink and being refused service.
6. Draw a picture or write a story about the experience at the soda fountain.
7. Pretend that your friend Martin Luther King, Jr., calls you on the telephone and tells you that a clerk slapped him and called him "nigger." Role-play your response to your friend.
8. Write a poem or story about how Martin Luther King, Jr., felt as a little boy who was forced to ride in the back of the bus.
9. Write a poem that you think Martin Luther King, Jr., would have written when he was in elementary school.
10. Write a report on the history of the Nobel Peace Prize. Who started it and why?
11. Write your own "I Have a Dream" speech.
12. Write a song titled "I Have a Dream."
13. Put yourself in Rosa Parks's place and describe how you think you would have reacted in her situation.
14. Discuss whether Rosa Parks was a good citizen.
15. Role-play the arrest of Rosa Parks.
16. Write a story or draw a picture about the arrest of Rosa Parks.
17. Write a story that describes what you think would have happened if Rosa Parks had given up her seat on the Montgomery bus.
18. Read excerpts from the "Letter from Birmingham Jail." Write an essay that compares some of the experiences children had in 1963 with your own experiences.
19. Write a letter to Dr. King that tells how you feel about his being in Birmingham jail.
20. Pretend that you visited Dr. King in Birmingham jail and talked to him about his decision to be arrested. Write an article for your school newspaper.

21. Pretend that you were one of the children chased by police dogs during a Birmingham demonstration. Write in your journal about why you participated and how you felt.
22. Draw a picture of the Birmingham demonstration.
23. Role-play a discussion between Martin Luther King, Jr., and Birmingham Police Commissioner Eugene "Bull" Connor about the treatment of demonstrators.
24. Dr. King was criticized for involving elementary school students in the Birmingham demonstrations. Write a letter to Dr. King that states your opinion about the involvement of students.
25. Pretend that you were arrested for participating in a Birmingham demonstration. Write in your journal about how it felt to spend the night in jail.
26. Write a story about spending the night in Birmingham jail.
27. Sheriff James Clarke of Selma worked to keep black citizens from exercising their right to vote. Role-play a conversation between Sheriff Clarke and Dr. King about the voting rights of black citizens.
28. Pretend that you are a reporter covering the voting rights march from Selma to Montgomery. Write an article for your school newspaper.
29. Identify an issue that is causing conflict in your town. Write an essay that explains how you think the conflict should be resolved.
30. According to Dr. King, black citizens had a right to disobey an unjust law. Do you agree or disagree? Write a paragraph that states your opinion.
31. Discuss the values of Dr. King. How did they influence his behavior?
32. Pretend that you are in a department store on a very hot day and you want a cool drink of water. You are told to drink from the "colored" water fountain. Write in your journal about how this restriction made you feel.

Suggested Activities:

Secondary School Students

These activities for secondary school students may be used in a variety of ways in the classroom. Examples are activities for groups or individuals, class or panel discussions, dramatization or role-playing, various forms of written or oral presentations, and single-subject or interdisciplinary topics.

1. Discuss Dr. King's childhood experiences that influenced his desire to work for social change.
2. Use pictures to make a collage depicting the life of Dr. King.
3. Role-play approaching a soda fountain with your friend Martin Luther King, Jr., to get a soft drink and being refused service.
4. Write a letter of application to Morehouse College that Martin Luther King, Jr., might have written when he was fifteen years old.
5. Read Dr. King's "Nobel Peace Prize Acceptance Speech." Write a letter to Dr. King describing how the world has changed since he made that speech. Refer to people, events, and the quest for freedom.
6. Analyze the "I Have a Dream" speech and discuss the following:
 - a. Figurative language
 - b. Places and geography referred to in the speech
 - c. References to lyrics and music
 - d. Portions of the dream that have come true
 - e. How the American creed is included
7. Write a report on the history of the Nobel Peace Prize. Who began the tradition and why?
8. Write either a speech or a song titled "I Have a Dream."
9. Discuss segregated seating in buses in Montgomery, Alabama. What was its impact on the rights of black and white citizens? Why was it necessary to resolve the controversy in the courts?
10. A principle of our constitutional heritage is that democratic government exists for the people. Discuss how this principle was or was not applied during the Montgomery bus conflict.
11. Discuss whether Rosa Parks was a responsible citizen. From her behavior, what conclusions can be drawn about her values and beliefs?
12. Role-play the arrest and booking of Rosa Parks.
13. Write an essay describing what would have happened if Rosa Parks had given up her seat on the Montgomery bus.
14. Read the "Letter from Birmingham Jail." Discuss whether the criticism was justified. Was the letter a good response?
15. Write a letter of response to Dr. King's letter.
16. Write an essay that compares and contrasts the discrimination Dr. King described in his letter with the status of civil rights today.
17. Interview Dr. King in Birmingham jail. Ask him why he is there and how he feels about his decision to go to jail. Write an article for your school newspaper.
18. Dr. King was criticized for involving students in the Birmingham demonstrations. Write a letter to Dr. King that expresses your opinion about his decision.

19. Birmingham's Police Commissioner Eugene "Bull" Connor gave the command for police dogs and fire hoses to be used against schoolchildren who were demonstrating. Discuss his decision and actions. What did he believe about citizenship rights?
20. Pretend that you were one of the children chased by police dogs during a Birmingham demonstration. Write in your journal about why you participated and how you felt.
21. Role-play a disagreement between Martin Luther King, Jr., and Eugene Connor regarding the treatment of demonstrators.
22. Pretend that you were arrested for participating in a Birmingham demonstration. Write in your journal about how it felt to spend the night in jail.
23. Write a letter to a relative that describes how it felt to be knocked down by a water hose during a demonstration.
24. The Fifteenth Amendment was ratified in 1870, ensuring that male citizens would not be denied the right to vote because of race, color, or former status as slaves. Discuss why it was necessary in 1965 for Dr. King to lead a march from Selma to Montgomery to gain voting rights for black citizens.
25. Sheriff James Clarke of Selma worked to prevent black citizens from exercising their right to vote. Discuss his choice of actions. What did he believe about citizenship rights?
26. Role-play a debate between Martin Luther King, Jr., and James Clarke about black citizens' voting rights.
27. Write an essay that describes what would have happened in Alabama if the voting rights controversy had been resolved according to the desires of Sheriff Clarke.
28. Pretend that you are a reporter covering the voting rights march from Selma to Montgomery. Write an article for your school newspaper.
29. Interview a member of your family or someone else who remembers the 1963 March on Washington and get that person's reaction to the event. Write an article for your school newspaper.
30. Discuss why Dr. King should or should not have launched the Poor People's Campaign.
31. Identify a social issue that is causing conflict between groups in a society. Write an essay explaining how the conflict should be resolved.
32. Pretend you are in a department store on a hot day and you want a cool drink of water. You are told to drink from the "colored" water fountain. Write in your journal about how this restriction made you feel.
33. Find out about social conditions that existed in your town or city during 1955. Write an essay that explains why you think an incident like the Montgomery bus boycott would or would not have happened where you live.
34. Discuss why some citizens violently opposed the 1954 Supreme Court decision outlawing segregation in public schools.
35. Discuss how the beliefs of Martin Luther King, Jr., reflect the influence of the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi.
36. Write an essay that compares and contrasts the experiences of Martin Luther King, Jr., with those of Mahatma Gandhi.
37. Read the article "Love, Struggle and Excellence: Dr. King's Message to Black Youths" in the January, 1992, issue of *Ebony*. Discuss your agreement or disagreement with his views on various topics.

Appendix

Mahatma Gandhi and Nonviolent Resistance

Appendix

Mahatma Gandhi and Nonviolent Resistance

When Mohandas Gandhi was born in 1869, India was a colony of the British Empire. The Gandhi family lived in a region of India that had not been greatly influenced by Western culture. People of that region followed the same customs and traditions as their ancestors had for generations. The life of young Mohandas centered on his mother, who taught him about the Hindu doctrine of *ahimsa*, the refusal to do harm and the duty to do good. This belief was the foundation for the bold and courageous acts that led to Gandhi's fame as a proponent of nonviolent resistance.

Gandhi's first significant encounter with discrimination based on color occurred, not in his native India but in South Africa. In 1893 Gandhi, a young attorney, accepted an offer to work for one year for an Indian firm as a legal adviser to Indians living and working in South Africa. On the night of his arrival in that country, he had to travel by train to Pretoria, where he was to work. He bought a ticket to travel first class, as was the custom for lawyers. His pleasant journey was interrupted because a white passenger objected to his presence in the first-class compartment.

When a conductor asked Gandhi to move to the luggage compartment, Gandhi refused, stating that he had a first-class ticket. The conductor called a policeman, who pulled him out of the first-class compartment and ordered him to go to the rear compartment. Gandhi again refused and was dumped off the train along with his luggage; he was forced to sit all night in a cold waiting room. This incident painfully introduced Gandhi to the indignities that Indians in South Africa endured.

Generally, Indians quietly accepted discrimination because of skin color, a system that subjected them to insults and injustices. Gandhi believed that laws enacting discrimination should be challenged. Therefore, he became actively involved in organized opposition to such laws. What began as a one-year stay lasted several years because the movement took on momentum. The leadership of Gandhi was so important to the Indian people in South Africa that they prevailed on him to stay.

For 13 years the Indians' only weapons were petitions and propaganda. During 1903–04 Gandhi established a weekly magazine, *Indian Opinion*, in which he explained the Indians' fight for freedom.

The government continued to discriminate against the Indians with a proposed ordinance requiring them to carry identification cards at all times. In response to the proposed law, members of the Indian community held a mass meeting to decide what action to take. They agreed to wage a campaign of deliberate disobedience. Gandhi was concerned about whether the crowd was prepared to accept the consequences of such action. He warned the members about the violent response they could expect; however, his warning did not change their mind. They vowed unanimously to resist the proposed law.

Gandhi believed that laws enacting discrimination should be challenged.

Gandhi decided to name the protest *satyagraha*, which means the “force contained in truth and love,” or “nonviolent resistance.” The philosophy of satyagraha required that a person who decided to break a law considered unjust must accept the consequences of that decision. As expected, the movement met with resistance from the government; eventually, however, the Indians gained a partial victory. During the long struggle Gandhi was jailed, an experience that helped to prepare him for the challenges he would face when he returned to India.

British repression of Indian civil rights increased in India after World War I, giving rise to a nonviolent resistance campaign that stopped activity in cities and villages throughout the country. The initial success of the resistance movement startled the British; however, that success was followed by a long struggle marked by violence and setbacks.

In 1920 a determined Gandhi launched a campaign of deliberate noncooperation to free India from British rule. During that campaign thousands of Indians were jailed. Despite the violence and beatings, Gandhi insisted that the correct response was love for the opposition. His ability to maintain the loyalty of followers from the diverse segments of Indian society won him deep respect. When he spoke, they listened with reverence, especially the poor, who sensed that he understood their poverty. Over his objections his followers gave him the name “Mahatma,” which means “Great Soul.”

In 1922 Gandhi was brought to trial and found guilty of inciting disobedience to British laws. The evidence used against him was three articles published in his newspaper, *Young India*. He accepted his jail sentence calmly in the belief that he should go to jail for breaking an unjust law.

During Gandhi’s imprisonment the nonviolent resistance movement was halted; still, a demand was growing for unconditional self-rule. The return to civil disobedience resulted from the levying of a salt tax. The British government held a monopoly on the manufacture of salt and imposed a heavy tax on the commodity. The tax was especially burdensome for the Indian peasants; for them salt was a necessity, not a luxury.

At the age of sixty-one, Gandhi led a 200-mile march that lasted 24 days and gained worldwide attention; the march ended at the seacoast village of Dandi. There Gandhi and his followers waded into the water and picked up some of the salt that had washed ashore. In his statement to the press, he urged Indians to begin manufacturing their own salt, a practice that he knew would be illegal. In addition, he urged them to prepare themselves for nonviolent resistance to harassment from the police.

The Indians began their illegal manufacture of salt, inciting mass arrests and police brutality. Generally, the protests were restrained and nonviolent. Gandhi made plans to lead a raid on a government salt mine. Not long before the scheduled raid, he was arrested; but his followers carried out his plans. The raid, which resulted in much violence and bloodshed, proved to be a turning point in the movement. The British government realized that no amount of force was going to wipe out completely the acts of civil disobedience.

World opinion brought pressure on the government to release Gandhi from jail. A series of meetings between him and the British Viceroy led to a treaty that required compromises on both sides. All Indian political prisoners would be released, and Indians would be permitted to manufacture salt. Gandhi, in turn, agreed to suspend civil disobedience. The treaty was a significant first step toward the ultimate goal of complete independence for India.

For over a decade Gandhi and his followers waged an unrelenting struggle for independence, often in the face of violent opposition from the British

Despite the violence and beatings, Gandhi insisted that the correct response was love for the opposition.

government. Failing health and numerous jail terms did not deter the courageous efforts of Mahatma Gandhi. India's long struggle for freedom ended in 1947, when independence was granted. The achievement of independence was hailed as a victory for nonviolent resistance.

On January 13, 1948, Gandhi was assassinated by Nathuram Godse, who fired three shots point blank at Gandhi. Godse, a young Brahman extremist, believed that Gandhi had weakened India by befriending Muslims.

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