

updated December 2019

An activity & resource guide to honor the life and work of

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.



Activities

All Hands Together

Students find a piece of construction paper that most matches their skin color then trace their handprints. The handprints can then be arranged symbolically and displayed.

Be a Drum Major for Justice

Stanford University has developed an extensive official collection of Dr. King's writings, sermons, letters, and other documents. The site contains downloadable text and audio clips of King's most famous speeches, information on King's life as well as a Liberation Curriculum. The Liberation Curriculum initiative provides teachers with educational materials that engage students in active learning and critical inquiry. This is an excellent resource for primary source material on King's life.

<https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/about-papers-project>

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Collection

Housed at Dr. King's alma mater, Morehouse college in Atlanta oversees the conservation and preservation of a large collection of photos, videos and documents of the civil rights leader's life and work. The program promotes teaching, research and scholarship, and development of campus-based programming and community outreach initiatives that highlight the teachings and philosophy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The Collection allows insight into King's thoughts, personality, ministerial preparation, organizational skills and strategic planning during the civil rights period.

<http://www.morehouse.edu/kingcollection/index.php>

Civil Rights Memorial

Architect Maya Lin carved 40 important moments of the Civil Rights Movement into a circle of black granite. Why these 40? Explore the answers through different mediums of art, discussion, drama and writing.

- About the Civil Rights Memorial:
<https://www.splcenter.org/news/2009/11/03/march-continues>
- The 40 Names:
<https://www.splcenter.org/what-we-do/civil-rights-memorial/civil-rights-martyrs>

2019 Day of Service Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. lived his life serving others. Following his example, millions of Americans serve on Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service. At our children's schools, at a local shelter, or lending a hand to help our neighbors – we join Dr. King as drum majors for justice, peace and righteousness. Points of Light offers two toolkits and a searchable database of volunteering opportunities for the Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service.

<https://www.pointsoflight.org/mlk-jr-day-of-service/>

Displays/Contests Art, essays, poems, original photography, songs, dramas, interpretive dances, quotes, timelines, stories, posters, collages and murals can all be displayed during the lead up to an assembly observance.

Drama of an Era Recreate scenes from the American Experience videos “Eyes on the Prize” that show the great fear of the participants in the Civil Rights Movement coupled with the innate feeling that what they were doing was right. Dramas can be adapted from history texts and oral history accounts of the era. Available on YouTube and other video sites.

Historical Research

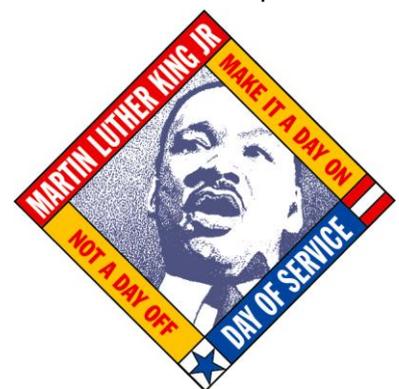
Students can find the roots of the Civil Rights Movement by studying the institutionalized system of slavery in the United States prior to the Civil War and the post-war segregated society enforced by Jim Crow Laws.

- [Amistad Case](#). The National Archives and Records Administration presents the Amistad Case, a Supreme Court case in 1839 that involved a group of illegally-captured Africans who had seized their captors' ship and killed the captain. The subject has taken on new interest after the release of the major Hollywood movie, “Amistad.” The site includes hand-written documents ([and a document review template](#)) from the case and teaching activities designed to correlate to national standards for history, civics and government.
- [The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow](#). Brought to you by PBS, the site presents teachers with historical resources and teaching ideas on the segregation of African-Americans from the 1860's through the 1950's. The site includes historical narratives, videos, pictures, a Century of Segregation time line, a geography section, and teacher resources with lesson plans and activities.

Living the Dream Pledge

Prior to an assembly, design a display and post pledges from students and staff. The King Federal Holiday Commission pledge reads as follows:

In honor of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s life and work, I pledge to do everything that I can to make America and the world a place where equality and justice, freedom, and peace will grow and flourish. I (your name) commit myself to living the dream by: Loving; not hating, Showing understanding; not anger, Making peace; not war.



MLK Day of Service: A day "on", not "off."

During the 1950s and '60s, civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. recognized the power of service to strengthen communities and achieve common goals. Initiated by Congress in 1994, King Day of Service builds on that that legacy by transforming the federal holiday honoring Dr. King into a national day of community service. The aim is to make the holiday a day ON, where people of all ages and backgrounds come together to improve lives, bridge social barriers, and move our nation closer to the "Beloved Community" that Dr. King envisioned. <http://mlkday.gov/>

Nobel Prizes/Peace Grams

Dr. King earned the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964. Send "Nobel Prizes" to people modeling justice, equality or fairness. A higher risk activity could be the idea of sending "Peace Grams" to seek resolutions, make amends or build bridges.

Songs of the Civil Rights Movement

Singing songs together bolstered the spirits of the Civil Rights workers during tumultuous times. A group sing-along can give students a glimpse of the history and drama of the Civil Rights Movement. Songs: *"We shall Overcome," "This Little Light of Mine," "Keep Your Eyes on the Prize," "Lift Every Voice and Sing," "Go Tell It on the Mountain," "Follow the Drinking Gourd," "Amazing Grace," "Free at Last," "Zion's Children."*

- **African American Spirituals (Library of Congress):** students understand the importance of the spiritual to the African American community during slavery and the civil rights movement.

<https://www.loc.gov/item/ihas.200197495/>

<https://www.loc.gov/item/ihas.200197396/>

Tiny Words, Big Messages

Place a concept, a quote, or artwork on buttons, stickers, T-shirts, posters, balloons, signs, book markers, etc., prior to an assembly to develop a theme or to convey a message. If time allows, have contests for the designs and artwork. The T-shirts can be made for those involved in the assembly.



What the World Wants Project from the World Game Institute

Over the past forty years, the complex problems facing humanity have been documented. A new effort through the What the World Wants Project is directed at learning what the world *should* look like, rather than documenting what it *is* like. More than 200,000 people have participated in this project from government leaders and corporate executives to university, high school and even elementary school students. They have been asked, "Given the present

situation of the world, what do you want the world to be like twenty years from now?" They were, in other words, asked to be visionaries like Martin Luther King Jr.

<http://www.geni.org/globalenergy/issues/global/qualityoflife/what-the-world-wants-project.shtml>

Web Activities The *Holidays on the Net* site offers web-based activities for the King Holiday. <http://www.holidays.net/mlk/index.htm>

RESOURCES:

Dr. King's 1964 Nobel Peace Prize Acceptance Speech

This is a good resource for a study on non-violence, civil rights, or government. The speech contains concepts relevant to today's world. From the Nobel Prize web site.

<http://nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/1964/king/lecture>

The King Center

Established in 1968 by Coretta Scott King, The King Center is the official, living memorial dedicated to the advancement of the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., leader of America's greatest nonviolent movement for justice, equality and peace. <http://www.thekingcenter.org>

Book: [*Death of a King: The Real Story of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s Final Year*](#)

By Tavis Smiley with David Ritz

Martin Luther King, Jr. died in one of the most shocking assassinations the world has known, but little is remembered about the life he led in his final year. This accessible book recounts the final 365 days of King's life, revealing the minister's trials and tribulations from denunciations by the press, rejection from the president, and his dismissal by the country's black middle class. He had to rise above all of this in order to lead and address the racism, poverty, and militarism that threatened to destroy our democracy.

Book: [*The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*](#)

by Michelle Alexander and Cornel West

Great books change the way we see the world and help fuel social change. The *New Jim Crow* is such a book; it directly challenges the notion that the election of Barack Obama signaled a new era of colorblindness. With candor, legal scholar Michelle Alexander argues that "we have not ended racial caste in America; we have merely redesigned it." By targeting black men through the War on Drugs and decimating communities of color, the U.S. criminal justice system functions as a contemporary system of racial control, relegating millions to a permanent second-class status. A study guide to the book as well as a guide to social movements and action based on the concepts in the book are also available.

The Martin Luther King You Don't See on TV

by Jeff Cohen and Norman Solomon in the January 1995 issue of Media Beat

This article speaks of King's mostly unnoted shift from civil rights issues to human rights issues during the last three years of his life, The article sites King's [*Beyond Vietnam Speech*](#) where he condemned the United States as the "the greatest purveyor of violence in the

world today... on the wrong side of a world revolution" as evidence that some of King's final messages are still being generally ignored by the media.

Race Relations

From slavery and segregation, to Black Lives Matter and the 2016 Presidential Election, a compendium of article to help understand race relations in America.

<https://www.thoughtco.com/race-relations-4132982>

The Seattle Times: Tribute to Martin Luther King, Jr.

This is a great site from our local *Seattle Times* that features documents, timelines, photos, lesson plans, comments from student readers, school project ideas, links, and an interactive quiz. <http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/mlk/>

Teaching Tolerance from the Southern Poverty Law Center

This web project of the Southern Poverty Law Center is designed for teachers, students and parents. It spirals around three themes: *Tolerance Watch*, *Do Something*, and *Dig Deeper*. Visitors find a variety of resources: links to current event articles, interactive surveys to explore your hidden biases, information bulletins regarding methods to deconstruct biased language, and a variety of practical "how to" guides—*10 ways to Fight Hate*, *101 Tools for Tolerance*, *Respond to Hate at School*, *Mix It Up at Lunch*.

<http://www.tolerance.org/>

TeachersFirst.com Remembering Martin Luther King, Jr.

TeachersFirst.com is a division of Network for Instructional TV, Inc., a not-for-profit learning technologies corporation. Searches can be conducted by grade level and topic.

<http://www.teachersfirst.com>

Birmingham Civil Rights Institute Resource Gallery

The [Birmingham Civil Rights Institute's Resource Gallery](#) provides several videos, photos, timelines, and interactive features documenting the civil rights movement as it played out in the City of Birmingham, the State of Alabama, and the United States. The BCRI is located just across the street from the famous 16th Street Baptist Church and provides a meaningful connection to Christopher Paul Curtis' 1963 book, [The Watson's Go to Birmingham](#).

Local MLK day celebrations

Seattle: <https://www.seattlemlkcoalition.org/>

Tacoma: <http://www.cityoftacoma.org/cms/one.aspx?objectId=40057>

Spokane: https://www.facebook.com/search/156098797818295/local_search?surface=tyah

Bellingham: <http://www.whrtf.org/>

Vancouver: <https://vancouverwatersheds.org/portfolio/mlk-day/>