Martin Luther King, Jr. Issue

Brown Quarterly

A Newsletter for Classroom Teachers

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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.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

1929 - 1968

BROWN
FOUNDATION
for Educational Equality,
Excellence
and Research

The Brown Foundation is pleased to publish this newsletter for classroom teachers through which we will share educational resources available from national parks and museums.

Established to maintain the legacy of the Brown v. Board of Education decision, our organization plays an exciting role as a park partner. We were also instrumental in the development of the Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site in Topeka, Kansas. We hope you enjoy the *Brown Quarterly* and we are always interested in comments from our readers.

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Why We Celebrate Martin Luther King, Jr.

I would sometimes call Dr. King and ask him to come over to the Dorchester Center at McIntosh, Georgia and meet and greet the forty or fifty people who had been studying with us all week. Especially, I wanted him to be there on the last day when the group would set up our large gathering room for a closing banquet. The group could be very creative, scouring the area for decorative greens and local flowers and planning a program that would reveal to Dr. King something of what they had experienced and learned during their five days with us. They were encouraged to plan skits, and share with the group how they had grown in confidence and skills to enhance the social change work in which they were already engaged back in their home towns. Martin's joining us for the closing was great fun for him. And of course he knew we expected him to give the group a big send-off with a rousing speech of encouragement. I will never forget one powerful statement he used to cheer them on with their work on this last evening. He told them "Nobody can ride your back if your back's not bent"!

I was always especially pleased when he could come over. One reason was that when I was asked to give a report to the full staff and board of directors of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, I would always say to them that the Citizenship Education Program was the best program our organization had going. It was the most effective and the most needed, as these were the people who would go back to their hometowns fulfilling expectations that they would use their experience with us to encourage and inspire others. As they would get others to join in efforts to break down laws and patterns of segregation in their hometowns, these would be the places where protest movements would grow and where we would eventually follow them home, to help in their local organizing. These towns, large and small would become the hotbeds of movement activity: Albany and Savannah, Georgia; Saint Augustine, Florida, Birmingham and Mobile, Alabama; many towns in the delta of Mississippi; North and South Carolina; and towns in Tennessee and Virginia. Actually none of the Southern and border states were untouched by our CEP recruitment efforts. And once we had participants from an area, these "graduates" would become the recruiters for the next month's training session. They delighted in returning to their hometowns and telling friends, neighbors, and fellow church members the fun and rewarding time they had at our training center. They always included enjoying Mrs. Evette's great meals,

From 1960 to 1968, Dr. Dorothy Cotton was the Education Director for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). In that capacity, she worked closely with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. directing the Citizenship Education Program (CEP). The now-famous CEP was designed to train and empower disenfranchised citizens while developing local leadership in the deep South and promoting nonviolent social change. Later, Dr. Cotton served as the Vice President for Field Operations for the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change in Atlanta, Georgia where she was a leader and senior trainer for the Center in the areas of nonviolence and empowerment for leadership.

Dr. Cotton is currently a freelance motivational speaker and trainer and is writing her first book focusing on the major lessons of the Citizenship Education Program of the 1960s and inviting readers to seek out new ways to implement the lessons of the civil rights movement in the 21st century.

Her words for "Personal Perspective" are from her upcoming book If Your Back's Not Bent *and may not be copied or used in any other formats. All applicable copyrights Simon & Schuster, Inc. Dr. Cotton's graciousness in sharing this important text with The Brown Foundation is greatly appreciated.*

the joy of meeting people doing the same protest and organizing work they were doing, the singing, the laughter and sometimes the tears. And having this close-up time with Dr. King in this informal setting – feeling his pleasure in being with them, even seeing him hitting a few balls over the volleyball nets – all these experiences contributed to the joy of coming together in a citizenship education program workshop week.

I still smile when I remember what fun Martin was; the laughs we had together. He could be really funny, even joking about some of the ridiculous ways that racism showed itself. For example once when we were driving on a "people to people tour," four or five of us in the car, he said, laughing heartily, "I know how we can solve the race problem; we should get a law passed requiring everybody to marry someone of a different race!" I could see he was in his element when he was hanging out with a group of ordinary folk. He was very gregarious, obviously enjoying the relaxing atmosphere, the play times we always scheduled in the afternoons. He could hit a pretty mean volleyball one of the men told him during one of our afternoon breaks.

People worldwide know of his oratorical skill, how he could hold audiences spellbound as he articulated his vision. No one was untouched by his powerful and poetic expressions. We saw and felt his commitment to the struggle for the more noble values both for individuals and nations. Yet, he could be so playful, the life of the party. When he was named "Man of the Year" by *Time Magazine*, the article included a reference to their assessment that he was humorless. Nothing could be further from the truth! I enjoyed how gregarious he could be. He loved to be with us, both as we worked with him as a part of his energetic and creative team – if I do say so myself! – and as we found space for down time. As a part of his "inner circle," as many like to refer to those of us who worked closely with him every day, we had great comraderie, almost like a family. These were not just jobs; our work was a total life commitment. And I think I can safely say that this was not even a conscious decision on the part of any of us; it just was the nature of the work, a life-fulfilling work. It was work that gave our lives richer meaning,

"Dora, I flunked!"

One rather frustrating thing we had to deal with was having to move Dr. King along if we had a schedule we needed to keep. And we almost always did. We use to tell him–only half joking–that "even with all the threats, we think if the end comes for you and us, it won't be because of any of those threats you're always getting, it will be because we're driving too fast trying to catch our scheduled flight!" One maddening thing was that he always had to make phone calls once we were in the airport! There was always something he just had to take care of before we got on our flight, and in those days there were no cell phones. Even in some degree of exasperation, we were energized and happy being and working together.

Reading this, many may not remember when airline tickets had to be written out by hand. Once, arriving too late for our flight again, the exasperated ticket agent flung the stack of six or eight tickets in the waste basket. He was clearly annoyed at our constant late arrival. That ticket agent had to start all over again writing out by hand tickets for the group of us. Whatever Martin was taking care of that caused us to be late for our flight clearly would not impress the ticket agent.

Once when I was not getting the same plane as he, he called Dora McDonald, whom he always referred to as his "very competent Administrative Assistant," and using one of his favorite phrases said "Dora, I flunked! I got off at an interim stop to make a phone call and watched my plane take off without me. And I left my coat on the plane." Dora had to get busy to tell the folk who were waiting for him to speak that he would be on a later plane.

As much as some of us who were close to him knew how fun he was, we were still impressed with how he was always ready when the time came for him to shift gears, to go before crowds both large and small. I only heard him complain once – once when I knew he was really tired. (I cry as I write this memory down.) Once when even we, his closest team members and friends, were angling to get him to our special project, I remember his saying "You all don't have to make all these public speeches every day!" These days, so many years after our time with him, I still wish I could do it over again, to be better with and for him. But then I guess we feel that way about all of our family, friends, and relatives who have passed on – we wish that we could have been better with them. But I also know that we do what we know at any given moment in our lives and in history.

Still, Martin could always rise to the occasion – except once when, after a speech in Petersburg, Virginia, Wyatt Walker said "That was a big flunk." And it was. And I think I know why. This is the city from which I had moved. I told my husband I would work with them for five or six months in Atlanta, but instead I stayed 23 years! George Cotton was in the audience! Martin talked with George before and after, but I think there were some "guilties."

Still, the powerful oration, the visionary speeches and observation he could make so readily are what the world knows of him. So do we!

I found myself saying to Andy Young recently "Andy, are you conscious of the fact that Martin had such great recall. He must have; because he could spontaneously quote philosophers

"Dorothy Cotton's bravery, insight and steadfastness have been invaluable to the Movement."

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
Southern Christian Leadership Conference 1967

and theologians, calling up ideas that had impressed him, sprinkling his speeches with quotes from many. Most of his more powerful speeches he made were without a manuscript, but sometimes he had a little scribbled note on a scrap of paper.

On the eve of his death, about 10 or 12 of us were sprawled around his room in a very informal but important meeting to explore how we would go about organizing a peaceful demonstration with the Memphis sanitation workers. Martin had not even planned to go to the church (where the striking laborers were meeting), but he responded to the call when Ralph Abernathy told him that the crowd was expecting him. This was one of his most memorable speeches. "I may not get there with you, but my people will get to the promised land." He had no notes for that powerful speech. The next day was April 4th in 1968, the day he was killed.

The birth of a non-violent movement

Dr. King was a dedicated student of philosophy and theology. He was especially influenced by proponents of nonviolence, both visitors to his campus as well as professors who had a deep sympathy for pacifism. Those who had a passion for social justice were the most impressive. I was excited to discover how intensely he delved into the teaching and the philosophies of such a wide array of influential teachers – theologians and philosophers, scholars and speakers –-wherever he came across them. He read Plato and Aristole; he read Walter Rauschenbusch's *Christianity and Social Crisis*. He learned of the pacifist position of Dr. A. J. Muste. He was exposed to the philosophy of Nietzche who he saw as glorifying power. He read the works of Reinhold Niebuhr and was caught up in his understanding of social ethics. At Boston University Dr. King would be exposed to many proponents of nonviolence. In fact the dean of the School of Theology at Boston University Dr. Walter Muelder and Professor Allen Chalmers as Martin said, had a passion for social justice. He noted that they "became coworkers with God" to create the beloved community. Ultimately, there was a wide array of great thinkers, theologians and philosophers, some with whom Dr. King had profound disagreements. By studying such a diverse group of these thinkers and developing the skill to dialogue with them—and of course realizing which ones made the most sense to him given his own deepening passion for social justice—Martin Luther King, Jr., unbeknownst even to himself, was preparing to play a pivotal role in December of 1955 when Rosa Parks was arrested for not standing and giving a white man her seat on a bus. His intense study prepared Martin to accept a call to provide leadership in an action that would inspire people in this country and – we know now – in many countries around the world.

I shudder to think what might have happened if this new preacher in town might have been steeped in a different philosophy, one that espoused taking up arms or use of some form of violence in an attempt to rectify an unjust situation.

One Sunday, he left his campus and went down to Philadelphia to hear Dr. Mordecai Johnson, the president of Howard University, give a speech. What he heard in that speech would set him firmly on the path that would prepare him to emerge as one of the greatest orators, speakers and visionary leaders of the 20th century. Dr. Johnson's sermon was "electrifying," Martin said. Dr. Johnson had recently returned from India and spoke of the work of Mahatma Gandhi and his movement that was energizing and leading the people of India in a movement that freed India from the yoke of British rule.

Our civil rights movement in the United States would be influenced and patterned after Gandhi's massive campaigns, which were grounded in Gandhi's understanding and teaching of nonviolent resistance. Martin's fascination with Gandhi's work would later motivate him to visit India to be in the environment where such a powerful philosophy and social change movement occurred. More importantly, his intense studying at Crozier Seminary and at Boston University, coupled with his fascination with Gandhi's work, would prepare him as he accepted the call to pastor the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama.

I find it almost mystical–and certainly fascinating–when I ponder how it all happened for him: studying, going to Montgomery, Alabama to pastor a church, and being called on to offer leadership in a protest effort which, as Martin himself said "I neither started the protest nor suggested it" (*Stride Toward Freedom*; p. 101). Being called on to offer leadership in this protest of the mistreatment of Negroes (as we were called then) on the busses of Montgomery, Alabama would catapult Martin into the role for which the world now honors him. I shudder to think what might have happened if this new preacher in town might have been steeped in a different philosophy, one that espoused taking up arms or use of some form of violence in an attempt to rectify an unjust situation. After all, a highly respected woman, Rosa Parks, had now been subjected to the insult to which many black people had been subjected on the busses of Montgomery, Alabama, as well as all across the southern states. But this time, perhaps especially because it was Rosa, a quiet dignified woman who was a respected member of the community and an officer of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the community responded with righteous indignation.

The story of the Montgomery Bus Boycott is well known, so it is not my purpose here to detail that historic and surprising event. I would only highlight here that when Martin Luther King, Jr. was asked to provide leadership in the protest, we see a classic example of how profoundly prepared he was, being steeped in a philosophy that would readily provide him the spiritual and the philosophical message he could bring forth that would interpret, motivate, and encourage people. Many of us believe that had it not been for Rosa Parks' refusing to move to the back of the bus to give a white man her seat, there might not have been the Martin Luther King, Jr. that we know today. Additionally, the people of Montgomery – now walking instead of riding busses in indignity – just might not have continued to "hold on" for 381 days in a massive nonviolent protest action had it not been for this young preacher putting into eloquent words what they were feeling and interpreting the deeper and broader meaning of our struggle.

Just as sitting in at a lunch counter to try to buy a meal was not just about lunch, coffee or a hamburger; and just as the first active protest in which I was involved (that of protesting the exclusion of black people from real use of the public library) was not merely about books; we know very well that the bus boycott in Montgomery was not just about the seating policy on the busses. These were symbols of a pervasive system of segregation, insult, and oppression: our American-style apartheid. Martin Luther King, Jr. emerged out of protests both small and large on the part of humble black people and our white allies.

Once traveling with Mrs. King when we were working to garner support for the King Holiday, I was slated to introduce her. The white speaker immediately preceding me felt a need to establish with the audience that there was no need to create another national holiday. He spoke of what it would cost businesses and stated that we mostly had national holidays for presidents. This motivated me to spend some time focusing on specific reasons why Martin Luther King Jr. deserves to be honored. The farther we get from the day he was so brutally taken away from us, and as I continue to travel around the country and in other countries, the more I am convinced that when and if we "heed the call," as so many of us did when he was physically with us, we will move more intentionally toward the kind of world he dreamed of and envisioned.

I want to summarize here what I came to realize as the reason it is right that we honor Martin Luther King, Jr. with a national holiday. Our citizenship education trainees – several thousand over a six-year period – created the base from which so much of the civil rights movement occurred. The CEP experiment is an incredibly important story in the larger story of the movement that changed America. Had it not been for what these simple people did, I wonder if we would have had the same movement from which Martin arose. The larger movement and the Citizenship Education Program are inexorably tied together.

To the white man who questioned our honoring Martin with a national holiday, I offer just a few reasons. I believe these reasons become stronger and more valid as time passes – especially in these days as the country agonizes over the violent mess in which we find ourselves in Iraq, and the violence in so many other places.

• First, Martin Luther King, Jr. saw the suffering and the pervasive injustice in all its deep ramifications – that of dehumanizing a people embedded in a system of segregation under which black people were forced to live. He realized its connectedness to society and how our institutions perpetrated the evil system. Social and economic injustice was rampant.

• Second, he could articulate what people were feeling, what they knew in their hearts was being accurately and even poetically described. "America, be true to what you said on paper!" Those "papers" became the foundation of our Citizenship Education training: the Constitution of the United States, the Bill of Rights, the Declaration of Independence, and more.

• Third, he provided the tool with which we could struggle for justice. That "tool" was nonviolence which brought a special kind of clarity, understanding, and knowledge; a tool everyone could use for it didn't require physical strength but moral strength.

• He pointed the direction we needed to go. It's often easy and even habit-forming to exclaim what's wrong; but often in complaining there is no sense of direction.

• He inspired hope. From the message in the old blues song "Been down so long, down don't bother me no more," Martin Luther King replied "Nobody can ride your back if your back's not bent!"

• By his words and work he called people to action. By his voice and his message and his spirit, people readily related and answered the call.

The Legacy

Martin Luther King, Jr. was born on January 15, 1929 at his parents' home in Atlanta, Georgia. His father was a Baptist minister and his mother was a musician. The second of three children, his childhood was typical: he was raised in a predominantly black neighborhood and attended segregated schools. At 19, he graduated from Morehouse College in Atlanta. By his 27th birthday, he had earned a degree from Crozer Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania and a doctorate in systematic theology from Boston University.

His historic role in American history began to take shape in 1954 when he and his wife, Coretta Scott King, moved to Montgomery, Alabama, to accept the pastorate of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church.

Rosa Parks takes a seat, King speaks to the nation

Soon after, a well-respected local woman named Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to give up her seat on a public transportation bus to a white man. The black community rallied to her defense and declared a boycott of Montgomery's bus system. Organizing themselves as the Montgomery Improvement Association, they chose the new, young minister in town as their leader. Martin Luther King, Jr. stepped into the local spotlight. Soon his eloquent voice would speak to the nation.

His interest in the principles of non-violence was cemented with a 1957 trip to India and visit with Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, a protege of Mohatma Ghandi. With his resolve for racial equality strengthened, King published *Stride Toward Freedom*, an account of the successful Montgomery bus boycott.

As the civil rights movement grew, King's activities increasingly pulled him away from his pastoral duties, so he resigned in 1960 and returned to Atlanta to become president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and co-pastor with his father at Ebenezer Baptist Church. He also worked with the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).

Civil disobedience meets violence

King advocated and practiced civil disobedience, but paid a hefty price. As a young author, he had been stabbed by a woman at a book-signing, the blade pressing against his aorta and leaving a cross-shaped scar on his chest. In 1960 he was sentenced to four months in prison for allegedly trespassing at an Atlanta department store and for violating probation for a previous traffic ticket.

In the early 1960s, King stepped up his crusade for equal rights, staging major boycotts in Albany, Georgia in 1961-62, and in Birmingham, Alabama in the spring of 1963. Despite King's commitment to non-violence, segments of the public and even local police officers responded with terrible violence. Homes and churches were bombed. Civil rights workers were murdered. King was again jailed. It was during this jail term that he wrote many empassioned letters, later published in *Letters from Birmingham Jail*. He eloquently responded to criticism of civil disobedience, writing "An individual who breaks the law that conscience tells him is unjust and who willingly accepts the penalty of imprisonment in order to arouse the conscience of the community over its injustice is in reality expressing the highest respect for the law."

250,000 march in Washington

On August 28, 1963, King led more than 250,000 people of every race and creed in the March on Washington, sponsored by the Urban League, the American Negro Labor Council, the National Council of Churches, the National Catholic Conference, and American Jewish Council, the SCLC, SNCC, and other groups. After meeting with President John F. Kennedy, King electrified the crowds with words that will forever be linked to him: "I have a dream."

Dorothy I. Height, president of the National Council of Negro Women from 1957 until 1993, summarized that moment: "We listened to him as if he were speaking to each of us individually. I'm sure the applause and shouts

MARCH ON WASHINGTON FOR JOBS AND FREEDOM

AUGUST 28, 1963

LINCOLN MEMORIAL PROGRAM

1.	The National Anthem	*Led by* Marian Anderson.
2.	Invocation	The Very Rev. Patrick O'Boyle, *Archbishop of Washington.*
3.	Opening Remarks	A. Philip Randolph, *Director March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.*
4.	Remarks	Dr. Eugene Carson Blake, *Stated Clerk, United Presbyterian Church of the U.S.A.; Vice Chairman, Commission on Race Relations of the National Council of Churches of Christ in America.*
5.	Tribute to Negro Women Fighters for Freedom Daisy Bates Diane Nash Bevel Mrs. Medgar Evers Mrs. Herbert Lee Rosa Parks Gloria Richardson	Mrs. Medgar Evers
6.	Remarks	
7.	Remarks	John Lewis, *National Chairman, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.*
8.	Remarks	Walter Reuther, *President, United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America, AFL-CIO; Chairman, Industrial Union Department, AFL-CIO.*
9.	Selection	James Farmer, *National Director, Congress of Racial Equality.*
10.	Prayer	Eva Jessye Choir
11.	Remarks	Rabbi Uri Miller, *President Synagogue Council of America.*
12.	Remarks	Whitney M. Young, Jr., *Executive Director, National Urban League.*
13.	Remarks	Matthew Ahmann, *Executive Director, National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice.*
14.	Selection	Roy Wilkins, *Executive Secretary, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.*
15.	Remarks	Miss Mahalia Jackson
16.	Remarks	Rabbi Joachim Prinz, *President American Jewish Congress.*
17.	The Pledge	The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., *President, Southern Christian Leadership Conference.*
18.	Benediction	A Philip Randolph Dr. Benjamin E. Mays, *President, Morehouse College.*

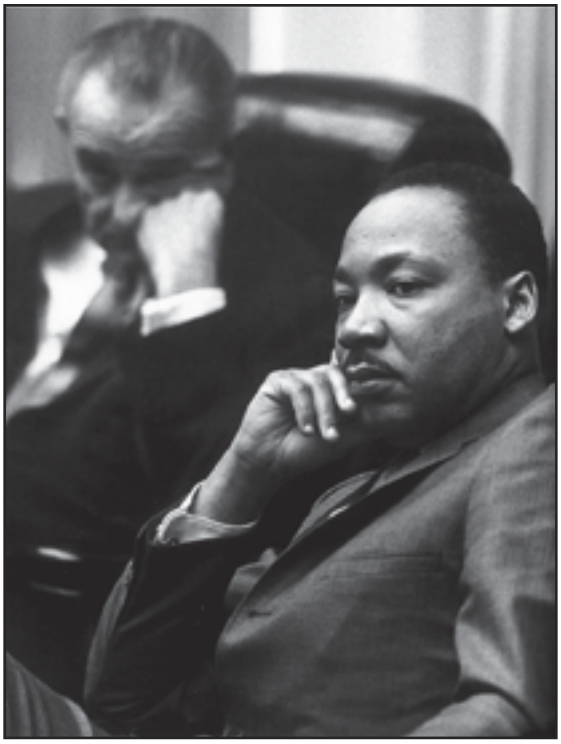
"WE SHALL OVERCOME"

By 1963, the country had broken faith and conditions were getting worse, rather than better. Together with A. Philip Randolph and other movement leaders, King put forth the call for a march that would not be ignored. A quarter of a million people answered that call, converging in Washington D.C. on August 28, 1963. Departing from his notes, King instead spoke from the heart, rousing not only the asembled crowd, but an entire generation with his immortal words "I have a dream."

and cheers that greeted his words could be heard for miles. It was a deeply spiritual experience. ... When I looked over the crowd as Dr. King finished his speech, I felt that, at last, we were all united in creating a new society. He had done more than deliver a speech. He had sent out a challenge to the world." (*A Call to Conscience*, "I Have a Dream" introduction © 2000 Dr. Dorothy I. Height.)

A few months later, King was named *Time Magazine's* Man of the Year. Momentum continued when Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the first substantial civil rights bill in nearly a century. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 brought more success.

In autumn of that year, at the age of 35, Martin Luther King, Jr. became the youngest person to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. On the wave of these successes, King published his third book, *Why We Can't Wait*.



King meets with President Lyndon B. Johnson.

The struggle to overcome setbacks

Despite these milestones, the civil rights movement suffered substantial setbacks in 1965. Faced every day with violence against themselves and against the black community, King's own followers began to doubt the concept of non-violence.

King struggled to convey the importance of action at the voting booth, summarizing in a speech that year that "The Civil Rights Act of 1964 gave Negroes some part of their dignity, but without the vote, it was dignity without strength."

Only two percent of African Americans were registered to vote. Those who dared to encourage others to vote were met with arrests, beaten, jailed, and even killed. Others were evicted from their homes and fired from their jobs for having the audacity to register to vote. Tensions came to a head in Selma, Alabama, on March 7, 1965. (See article below.)

In 1967, King surprised many by denouncing the Vietnam War. Confident that his position in the civil rights movement would be compromised if he did not speak out against the war, he used the topic of the war to examine the interconnections between himself, his own people, the government, economics, politics, and international relations. His fourth book, *Where Do We Go from Here?*, expressed his introspection.

Through the turmoil of the mid- to late-1960s, King hon-

John Lewis first risked his life participating in the Freedom Rides and sit-ins at segregated lunch counters. During the height of the Movement, from 1963 to 1966, Lewis was chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), which he helped form. At age 23, he was a keynote speaker at the historic March on Washington in August 1963. In 1965, he helped spearhead the March from Selma to Montgomery.

Lewis was elected to Congress in 1986 and has served as U.S. Representative of Georgia's Fifth Congressional District since then. His autobiography is titled Walking With The Wind: A Memoir of the Movement.

Bloodshed in Selma

"About 600 of us–mostly elderly black men and women and a few young people–tried to dramatize to the nation and to the world that we wanted to become participants in the democratic process. Crossing the Alabama River over the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, we were brutally attacked by members of the Alabama State Troopers. They came beating us with bullwhips and nightsticks. They trampled us with horses. That Sunday became known as 'Bloody Sunday.'

"King arrived the next day and issued a plea for religious leaders to come to Selma to walk the path that protestors had begun on Bloody Sunday. More than a thousand priests, rabbis, nuns, and ministers lined up on Tuesday, March 9 and marched quietly through Selma to the Edmund Pettus Bridge where, faced with yet another barricade of troopers, they knelt and prayed on the bridge, then turned back and awaited a court order allowing the march to procede from Selma to Montgomery.

"I will never forget as long as I live when more than ten thousand of us began our march from Selma to Montgomery two weeks later on a Sunday afternoon, March 21. The march led that day by Dr. King, it seemed like the Heavenly Host was walking with us. We sang. We prayed. One day the rain came down. The skies opened up. The rain could not stop us. We were not afraid. We truly were, as the Negro spiritual goes, 'wadin' in the water.' We were God's children, wadin' in the water.

"We had been warned that we would never make it from Selma to Montgomery. When we made it across the Alabama River into the city of Montgomery, it was almost like crossing our own Red Sea, our own River of Jordan. We made it to the steps of the state capitol on Thursday, March 25, 1965, and yet people said we would never get there. We weren't supposed to be there. Dr. King put it best in this address: 'Our feet are tired, but our souls are rested.'"

Excerpt from *A Call to Conscience*,
"Address at the Conclusion of the Selma to Montgomery March" introduction © John Lewis 2000.

ored his commitment to support those who were attempting to improve their condition–a commitment that led him to Memphis, Tennessee in the spring of 1968 in support of striking sanitation workers.

"I may not get there with you..."

King had not expected to speak in Memphis on April 3, 1968, and had, in fact, been feeling ill. Ralph Abernathy agreed to speak in his place; however, when Abernathy and Andrew Young arrived that evening at the Bishop Charles Mason Temple Church of God in Christ, they sent a colleague back to the hotel to encourage King to make a even a brief appearance to aid the morale of the striking sanitation workers. Answering the plea, King arrived and mustered the strength to speak before eleven thousand packed into the church. Having not prepared a speech, or even notes, King spoke his final public words from his heart. Though King was accustomed to constant threats and refused to live in fear, his conclusion was eerily prophetic.

"We don't know what will happen now, we've got some difficult days ahead. But it really doesn't matter now, because I have been to the mountaintop. And I don't mind. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life–longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. He has allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over, and I've seen the Promised Land. And so I'm happy tonight; I'm not worried about anything; I'm not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord."

As he and several other leaders left his motel room the following day, April 4, King was fatally shot on the motel balcony. News of the assassination sparked worldwide mourning and, unfortunately, days of rioting in some cities.

Martin Luther King was not only the most eloquent spokesman for racial justice of his time; he was also the most successful. He raised the discussion of human rights to a new level, and he developed techniques and approaches that made activism in civil rights a viable policy for achieving goals. He discovered, however, that it was far easier to secure basic civil and voting rights–as difficult as that was–than to remove from society the racial prejudices and discriminatory practices that had lived for centuries. But by his teachings and example, King infused his own and succeeding generations with a commitment to racial equality and a zeal to work diligently for it. That legacy was second in importance only to the goals that he achieved in his own time.

Brown v. Board's Pivotal Role in the Civil Rights Movement

Dr. King and the NAACP celebrated the third anniversary of the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* Supreme Court decision that struck down the policy of racial segregation in our nation's public schools with a Prayer Pilgrimage for Freedom at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C.

Though three years had passed since the decision, several states openly defied desegregation. Dr. King realized that disciminatory public policy in these states would never change while millions of African American citizens were blatantly and brutally denied the right to vote. Urging passage of voters' rights legislation and active participation by African American's in the democratic process, King also urged cooperation and understanding in bringing an end to school segregation.

"But we must not, however, remain satisfied with a court victory over our white brothers. We must respond to every decision with an understanding of those who have opposed us and with an appreciation of the difficult adjustments that the court orders pose for them. We must act in such a way as to make possible a coming together of white people and colored people on the basis of a real harmony of interest and understanding. We must seek an integration based on mutual respect." (*A Call to Conscience*, "Give Us the Ballot" speach © 2000 The Heirs of Martin Luther King, Jr.)

Bring King's Life into Your Classroom

Provide your students with hands-on information about the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his "Sweet Auburn" community by participating in the Traveling Trunk Exhibit of the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site. Photos with captions of historic buildings, background information about the area, videos, reading material, and speeches made by Dr. King are all included.

This traveling exhibit is available throughout the year for two-week loan periods. The school/organization is responsible for the cost of returning the trunk and all exhibit materials. For more information, contact Linda Byers at linda_byers@nps.gov.

Download these lesson plans at www.nps.gov/malu/forteachers/lesson_plans_and_teacher_guides.htm.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Legacy of Racial and Social Justice: A Curriculum for Empowerment (Grades K-8)

Dr. King's Life and Words Associated with Him (Grades Pre-K-1)

Names, Names, Names (Grades Pre-K - 1)

Dr. King's Leadership and Character (Grades 2-3)

Picturing Nonviolence or Nonexistence (Grades 4 -5)

People of Peace (Grades 4-5)

If It Is To Be, It Is Up To Me (Grades 4-5)

The March on Washington (Grades 6-8)

Portraying the Dream (Grades 6-8)

Peace Studies: Where in the World is Peace (Grades 6-8)

A Time to Break the Silence (Grades 6-8)

The Next Generation (Grades 6-8)

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Me (Grade 8)

A Problem-Solving Project (Grades 4-8)

Resources for the Classroom (Grades Pre-K - 8)

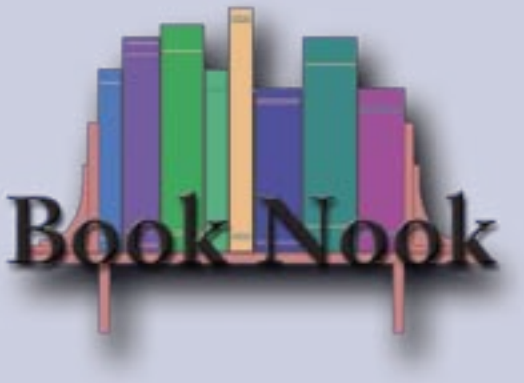
Free Stuff

The following educational kits are available through the Teaching Tolerance program of the Southern Poverty Law Center. Visit teachingtolerance.org for more information or to receive kits for use in your classroom.

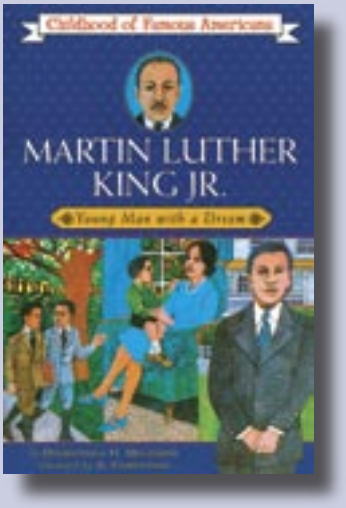
The Emmy Award-winning *Mighty Times: The Legacy of Rosa Parks* and the Academy Award-winning *Mighty Times: The Children's March* both recount struggles against segregation and oppression in the American South.

America's Civil Rights Movement features the Academy Award-winning film *A Time for Justice* and a 104-page historical text recounting many who lost their lives in the struggle for civil rights.

The January issue of *Teaching Tolerance* magazine will include an essay by Congressman John Lewis about King's "Dream Deferred." Subscribers will also receive a commemorative poster. The essay and poster will come with lesson plans. To subscribe to this free publication for teachers, visit teachingtolerance.org.



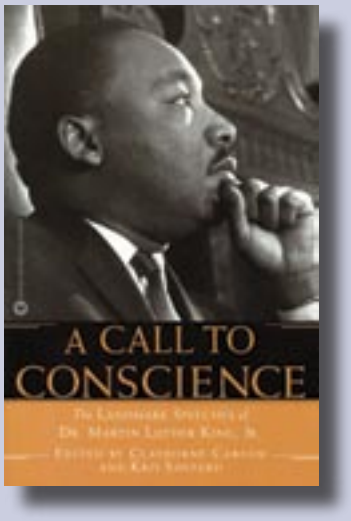
Martin Luther King, Jr. Young Man with a Dream



Childhood of Famous Americans Series
By Dharathula H. Millender
Book 192 pages, published by Aladdin Paperbacks, 1986

One of the most popular series ever published for young Americans, these classics have been praised by parents, teachers, and librarieans. With these lively, inspiring, fictionalized biographies–easily read by children of eight and up–today's youngster is swept right into history.

A Call to Conscience, The Landmark Speeches of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.



Edited by Clayborne Carson and Kris Shepard
Book 225 pages, published by Intellectual Properties Management, Inc. in association with Warner Books, 2002

His words stirred a generation to change–and outlined a timeless, practical way to economic freedom and true democracy. Compiled by Dr. Clayborne Carson, director of the King Papers Project, and editor Kris Shepard, this is a milestone collection of Dr. King's most influential, best-known speeches...from the words that ignited the modern civil rights movement to the last transcendent speech the night before Dr. King's assassination. Filled with world-renowned leaders' priceless firsthand testimony of the events that inspired these speeches, *A Call to Conscience* is a living, unforgettable record of the words that even today shape our deepest hopes and dreams for the future.

The Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site provides the following list of recommended reading:

Crisis at Central High, Little Rock 1957-58. Elizabeth Huckaby

Everybody Says Freedom. Pete Seeger and Bob Reiser

Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years, 1954-1965. Juan Williams

Free at Last: A History of the Civil Rights Movement and Those Who Died in the Struggle. Sara Bullard

Freedom's Children: Young Civil Rights Activists Tell Their Own Stories. Ellen Levine, ed.

...If You Lived at the Time of Martin Luther King. Ellen Levine

Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movement. Cobblestone Publications

Martin Luther King, Jr.: A Documentary...Montgomery to Memphis. Flip Schulke, ed.

My Life with Martin Luther King, Jr. Coretta Scott King

Rosa Parks: My Story. Rosa Parks

Selma, Lord, Selma. Sheyanne Webb and Rachel West Nelson

The Civil Rights Movement: An Illustrated History. Brenda Wilkinson

The Story of Ruby Bridges. Robert Coles

Through My Eyes. Ruby Bridges

Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s Through the 1980s. Henry Hampton and Steve Fayer

Walking with the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement. John Lewis

Warriors Don't Cry. Melba Patillo-Beals

Weary Feet, Rested Souls: A Guided History of the Civil Rights Movement. Townsend Davis

Witnesses to Freedom: Young People Who Fought for Civil Rights. Belinda Rochelle

Spring 2008 Events and Exhibits

The following events are sponsored by the Brown Foundation in partnership with the Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site. All events are held at the Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site at 1515 S.E. Monroe, Topeka, Kansas 66612 unless otherwise noted.

Lincoln University Choir

Lincoln University Vocal Performance
February 8, 2008, 7:30 p.m.

This choir of young people comes to us from Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri, one of the nation's historically Black colleges.

Sadie and Bessie Delany from the cover of *Having Our Say: The Delany Sisters' First 100 Years*.
(Photo by Brian Douglas used with permission of Amy Hill Hearth/copyright Amy Hill Hearth (www.amyhillhearth.com).

Having Our Say: The Delany Sisters' First 100 Years
March 9, 2008, 2:30 p.m.

Kansas City Metropolitan Theatre production of the Tony Award-nominated *Having Our Say* tells the story of the venerable Delany sisters who, with intelligence and good humor, have stood witness to 100 years of American life. Truly women of the 1990's, Sadie and Bessie Delany remember the 1890's with a wit and insight borne of a hundred years of living, illuminating America as African American women, from ancestral emancipation to the third millennium, Jim Crow to Thurgood Marshall, Eleanor Roosevelt to Dr. Dorothy Height. *Having Our Say* is an invitation to the audience to "come into the kitchen" and visit with the Delany sisters as they relive their memories of the past, their secrets of the present, and their hopes for the future.

Buck O'Neil

"Right on Time" Buck O'Neil Exhibit
April 1 - 30, 2008

Buck O'Neil was a Kansas City legend and an American treaure. O'Neil was a former Negro League player, scout, and the first African American coach in Major League Baseball history, but his contributions span far greater than the field of play.

Brown Foundation 20th Anniversary & Brown v. Board of Education 54th Anniversary
May 17, 2008

For information about upcoming events and to browse past issues of *Brown Quarterly*, visit the Brown Foundation web site at
brownvboard.org.

BROWN FOUNDATION
for Educational Equality, Excellence and Research
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