

# MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY

*Third Monday of January*



“I SAY TO YOU TODAY, MY FRIENDS, SO EVEN THOUGH WE FACE THE DIFFICULTIES OF TODAY AND TOMORROW, 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.’”

*EXCERPT FROM REV. MARTIN LUTHER KING’S “I HAVE A DREAM” SPEECH  
AT THE MARCH ON WASHINGTON, 1963.*

# Origin of MLK Day

*“This is not a black holiday; it is a people’s holiday.”*

—Coretta Scott King

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day is an American federal holiday marking the birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr. It is observed on the third Monday of January each year. The campaign for a federal holiday in King’s honor began soon after his assassination in 1968. President Ronald Reagan signed the holiday into law in 1983, and its observation commenced in 1986. Sadly, it took another 14 years for all 50 states to celebrate it. In 1994, President Bill Clinton signed legislation challenging Americans to transform the King Holiday into a day of citizen action volunteer service in honor of Dr. King. Thousands of volunteers across the country donate their time to make a difference on this day each year. Martin Luther King, Jr. is the only non-president to have a national holiday dedicated in his honor.

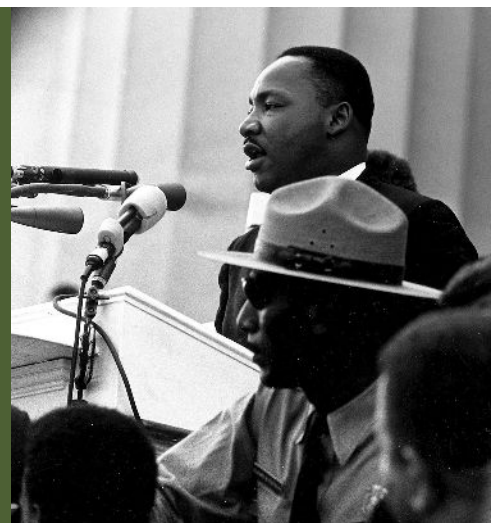


## Biography

Drawing inspiration from both his Christian faith and the peaceful teachings of Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. led a nonviolent movement in the 1950s and 60s to achieve legal equality for African-Americans in the United States. He used the power of words and acts of nonviolent resistance, such as protests, grassroots organizing, and civil disobedience to achieve seemingly impossible goals. He also led massive campaigns against poverty and international conflict. In every sermon and speech he delivered, he continually promoted his guiding principle that men and women everywhere, regardless of color or creed, are equal members of the human family. His orations and writings are among the most treasured words in the English language. His teachings continue to be powerfully relevant to the progress of humankind.

**“Life’s most persistent and urgent question is: *What are you doing for others?*”**

—Martin Luther King, Jr.  
“Conquering Self-centeredness” Sermon, 1957



# Timeline

1929

Martin Luther King, Jr. was born in Atlanta, Georgia. He was the child of a Baptist minister.

## fun fact:

Martin was actually born “Michael King”, named after his father; but, after a trip to Germany, the elder King changed his and his son’s names in honor of the German reformer, Martin Luther.

King led protests in the city of Birmingham, Alabama, which at the time was described as the most segregated city in America. It was during this campaign that Dr. King drafted his famous “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” which is required reading in universities worldwide.

King also participated in the organization of The March for Jobs and Freedom, more commonly known as The March on Washington, which drew over a quarter million people to the National Mall. Here, King delivered his great “I Have a Dream” speech.

King served as spokesman for the Montgomery Bus Boycott, which forced the city of Montgomery, Alabama to integrate its public transportation. After more than a year of nearly universal participation from the black community, many of whom had to walk miles to work each day as a result, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that racial segregation in transportation was unconstitutional.

***“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.”***

**—MLK’s Nobel acceptance speech in Oslo**

1955

1957

King was elected president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, which sought to provide leadership for the growing Civil Rights Movement.

At 35 years old, Martin became the youngest person to win the Nobel Peace Prize.

Congress also passed the Civil Rights Act, making it illegal to discriminate against black people in hiring, public accommodations, education, or transportation. This was largely a response to the March on Washington.

Congress passed the Voting Rights Act, due in large part to the Selma, AL to Montgomery, AL March for Voting Rights, led by Dr. King. Afterward, King shifted his focus toward economic justice and international peace, guiding communities around the country in nonviolent principles of social justice.

1963

1964

1965

1968

April 4, 1968 - Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was tragically and abruptly assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee. Later in 1968, Mrs. Coretta Scott King officially founded the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change, in order to continue her husband’s important social justice work.

# a small selection of books



SEE NEXT PAGE FOR DETAILS + MORE

# a small selection of books

## CONTINUED

	TITLE	AUTHOR	LEVEL
ABOUT MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.	<i>I Have a Dream (including CD of MLK's original speech)</i>	Illustrated by Kadir Nelson	All
	<i>Martin's Big Words: The Life of Martin Luther King, Jr.</i>	Doreen Rappaport	PreK- Int
	<i>Free At Last! The Story of Martin Luther King, Jr.</i>	Angela Bull	K-Int
	<i>Happy Birthday, Martin Luther King</i>	Jean Marzollo	K-Int
	<i>A Picture Book of Martin Luther King, Jr.</i>	David Adler	K-Int
	<i>This is the Dream</i>	Diane Z. Shore	K-LMS
	<i>If You Lived at the Time of Martin Luther King</i>	Ellen Levine	Pri-Int
	<i>My Brother Martin: A Sister Remembers Growing Up With the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.</i>	Christine King Farris	Pri-Int
	<i>Gandhi (Indian civil rights leader and inspiration to MLK)</i>	Demi	Pri-UMS
	<i>March On! The Day My Brother Martin Changed the World</i>	Christine King Farris	Pri-UMS
	<i>Who Was Martin Luther King, Jr.?</i>	Bonnie Bader	Int-LMS
	<i>Martin Luther King, Jr.</i>	Jean Darby	LMS-HS
	<i>A Time to Break Silence: The Essential Works of Martin Luther King, Jr. for Students (primary sources)</i>	Martin Luther King, Jr.	UMS-Adult
	<i>The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.</i>	Martin Luther King, Jr.	HS-Adult
	<i>Let the Trumpet Sound: The Life of Martin Luther King, Jr.</i>	Stephen B. Oates	HS-Adult
	<i>Freedom Summer</i>	Deborah Wiles	K-Pri
	<i>The Other Side</i>	Jacqueline Woodson	K-Pri
	<i>Back of the Bus</i>	Aaron Reynolds	K-Int
	<i>Boycott Blues: How Rosa Parks Inspired a Nation</i>	Andrea Davis Pinkney and Brian Pinkney	K-Int
	<i>Child of the Civil Rights Movement</i>	Paula Young Shelton	K-Int

# a small selection of books

## CONTINUED

	TITLE	AUTHOR	LEVEL
ABOUT CIVIL RIGHTS	<i>Freedom on the Menu: The Greensboro Sit-Ins</i>	Carole Boston Weatherford	K-Int
	<i>If a Bus Could Talk: The Story of Rosa Parks</i>	Faith Ringgold	K-Int
	<i>We March</i>	Shane Evans	K-Int
	<i>Ruth and the Green Book</i>	Calvin Alexander Ramsey	Pri-Int
	<i>A Sweet Smell of Roses</i>	Angela Johnson	Pri-Int
	<i>The Civil Rights Movement for Kids: A History with 21 Activities</i>	Mary Turck	Pri-Adult
	<i>Rosa Parks: My Story (Audio version recommended)</i>	Rosa Parks	Int
	<i>Rosa</i>	Nikki Giovanni	Int-LMS
	<i>Oh, Freedom!</i>	Casey King	Int-LMS
	<i>Sit-In: How Four Friends Stood Up By Sitting Down</i>	Andrea Davis Pinkney	Int-LMS
	<i>Ruby Bridges: Through My Eyes</i>	Ruby Bridges	Int-UMS
	<i>Linda Brown, You Are Not Alone: The Brown vs. Board of Education Decision</i>	Joyce Carol Thomas	LMS-UMS
	<i>The Watsons Go to Birmingham 1963 (great read-aloud)</i>	Christopher Paul Curtis	LMS-UMS
	<i>March (2-book graphic illustrated series)</i>	John Lewis	UMS-HS
	<i>Ready From Within: A First Person Narrative</i>	Septima Clark	UMS-Adult
	<i>The Autobiography of Malcolm X, As Told to Alex Haley</i>	Malcolm X/Alex Haley	HS-Adult
	<i>Parting the Waters: America in the King Years 1954-1963</i>	Taylor Branch	HS-Adult
	<i>Pillar of Fire: America in the King Years 1963-1965</i>	Taylor Branch	HS-Adult
	<i>Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story</i>	Martin Luther King, Jr.	HS-Adult
	<i>Walking With the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement</i>	John Lewis	HS-Adult

# a small selection of books

## CONTINUED

	TITLE	AUTHOR	LEVEL
ABOUT CIVIL RIGHTS	<i>Why We Can't Wait</i>	Martin Luther King, Jr.	HS-Adult
	<i>Gather at the Table: The Healing Journey of a Daughter of Slavery and a Son of the Slave Trade</i>	Thomas DeWolf and Sharon Morgan	HS-Adult
	<i>The Children</i>	David Halberstam	HS-Adult

*Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that.*

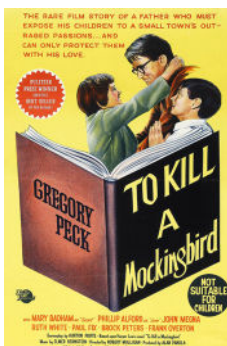
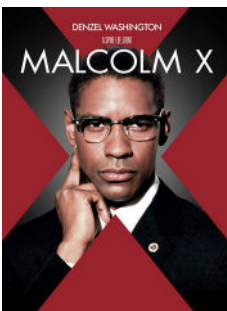
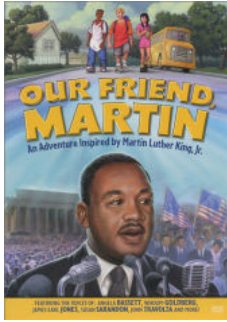
*parents + educators:*

**PLEASE PREVIEW ALL MATERIALS BEFORE SHARING WITH YOUR CHILD**

You are the best judge of what is appropriate for your child(ren) and what they will enjoy. Try checking [goodreads.com](http://goodreads.com) for reviews.

—Martin Luther King, Jr.  
"Loving Your Enemies"  
Sermon, Christmas 1957

# AUDIO + VIDEO



- Audio of the March on Washington and the “I Have a Dream” speech. (Appropriate for all ages, most meaningful for Intermediate +)
- *Our Friend, Martin (DVD)*. A wonderful animated introduction to MLK and ideas of racial justice. (Primary +)
- *Ruby Bridges (DVD)*. Ruby was a six year old girl who integrated her New Orleans elementary school. This dramatic retelling of a true story is a perfect way to bring the realities of racial inequality home for younger children. (Primary +)
- *Freedom On My Mind*. This is a documentary which chronicles the history of the Civil Rights Movement between 1961 and 1964. This is an incredible, award-winning film, and a must see for the entire family. (Lower middle school +)
- The History Channel’s collection of 49 short videos on MLK and his career. (Lower middle school +)
- *Roads to Memphis: The 1968 Hunt for Martin Luther King’s Killer*. (Lower middle school +)
- *Selma*. The most recent film here. This powerful drama focuses on the time period in 1965 when King led activists in their fight to achieve voting rights. Highly recommended. (Lower middle school +)
- *Gandhi (film)*. This is an excellent biographical film about Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi’s message of nonviolent social change was one of the most profound influences on Martin Luther King, Jr. (Middle school +)
- *King (miniseries)*. This is a great overview of his career, his family life, and his impact on the civil rights movement. It also shows a more vulnerable side of the civil rights leader. (Middle school +)
- *Malcolm X*. This film tells the story about another important, often misunderstood figure in the civil rights movement. After watching this powerful film with your family, do a little research into the relationship between X and King. (Upper middle school +)
- Highly recommended 14-hour film series about the African American experience. It covers 25 major events, from Emmett Till’s murder in 1955 to the election of Harold Washington as Chicago’s first black mayor in 1983. (Upper middle school +)
- *Four Little Girls (DVD)*. This documentary focuses on the murder of four little girls in a black Baptist church, an event that sparked outrage and helped fuel the civil rights movement. (Upper Middle School +)
- *To Kill a Mockingbird (film)*. A rare case in which the film is almost as good as the book! This classic story follows Southern lawyer, Atticus Finch, and his defense of a black man in a rape case. It is told from the perspective of Finch’s daughter, Scout. Read the book with your middle school student, and then watch the film. (Upper middle school +)
- *Mississippi Burning (film)*. This movie is a very intense, powerful drama highlighting some of the ugly, violent episodes in the South. Well worth watching with your older students. (High school +)

*parents + educators:*

Common Sense Media is a good online resource to see whether or not a movie is appropriate for your child(ren).



# links

## Preschool – Primary

Handprint Peace Day Craft. This simple craft project would be a good way to launch a discussion about one of MLK's guiding principles: peace.

Dove Garland. Another fun craft for young children that could coincide with a simple discussion about MLK and why he was such an important figure in our history.

Egg Color Activity. Here's a very simple activity about color differences, using brown and white eggs. We are all the same on the inside, but people have not always believed it.

Martin Luther King, Jr. for Preschoolers. This blog post includes a video clip and prompts for discussing Martin Luther King's Dream with small children. It also highlights some art project ideas.

MLK Day activity for students.

Complete lesson plans, including printables, for elementary-aged students.

Martin Luther King, Jr. And Me: A Journal of Pictures and Words. an activity to print and complete with your primary and intermediate aged student.

Blog post listing 40 activity ideas to celebrate the MLK holiday, appropriate for all ages.

## Intermediate – Middle School

Freedom's Ring is an interactive, animated version of MLK's I Have a Dream speech.

I Have a Dream: The Play is a wonderful idea for bringing King's words to life and action.

Interactive timeline activity.

Printable crossword puzzle.

March on Washington lesson plan for middle school students.

Teaching guide for the civil rights movement.

Opinion article from the Baltimore Sun about a year-long middle school Civil Rights history project.

## High School + Adult

Website with a thorough collection of many resources for teachers and parents.

A collection of African American History Digital Archives.

Search the NY Times archives for articles about Martin Luther King, Jr.

Resources for parents and teachers from the National Park Service.

The King Library and Archives in Atlanta is the largest repository of primary source materials on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. And the Civil Rights Movement in the world.

PBS biography of Martin Luther King, Jr.

The Department of Justice website is a great resource for the entire family. It even has an area for kids, helping them make connections between past and current struggles for social justice.

## LOCAL ACTIVITIES:

The Santa Maria Lompoc Branch of NAACP puts on a yearly King Day Celebration in Santa Maria. Visit their website or call (805) 733-3463 for more information.

This year, the San Luis Obispo NAACP chapter is also celebrating. For more information, visit their Facebook page or call (805) 619-5354.