

Lets make the King federal holiday a living day of struggle!

# BLACK LIBERATION MONTH NEWS 86

Peoples College • P.O. Box 7696 • Chicago, IL 60680 / FEBRUARY

## MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

### Christianity, Black Liberation, and the American Revolution



On the basis of struggle, mass widespread support resulted in Congress and President Reagan making the third Monday of every January the official federal holiday for marking Dr. Martin Luther King's birth. (He was actually born January 15, 1929.) This is an excellent opportunity to remember the great activities, victories and defeats, of the 1950's and 1960's. King was a great religious leader, a great Black leader, and the source of inspiration for many of us to think about revolution. The greatest opportunity is for all of us to act today as King would have acted, to find injustice and protest about it, to find someone to help, to make evil uncomfortable wherever it sticks its ugly head.

#### THE DANGERS OF COMPLACENCY

But while we have to praise Stevie Wonder and the many others who worked so hard for this recognition, we have to be wary of this federally sponsored act. One might get suspicious from the signatures on the act, and yet the real story is revealed. The act was signed by Tip O'Neil, Strom Thurmond, and Ronald Reagan. This is one liberal, one hard core racist, and one cold blooded conservative rolling back all of the victories King fought so hard to make. We should not be fooled that King is now supported by these people, because if he was still alive he would be fighting these very people today.

### WHY BLACK LIBERATION MONTH

Black Liberation Month is our attempt to unite with the founders and supporters of Negro History Week, and join their emphasis on study with our emphasis on struggle. Moreover, the concept of Black Liberation Month more accurately reflects the needs of our movement, particularly the need to build on the massive participation of people in the upsurge of struggle during the 1960's.

Carter G. Woodson, noted Afro-American nationalist historian, founded Negro History Week in 1926. In addition to the newspaper column of J.A. Rodgers, this was the major source of information that Black people had about their history. Every year in schools, churches, civic and political organizations, Negro History Week has been a time for historical reading and discussion.

We believe that Negro History Week has made a great contribution to mass awareness of Black History. Moreover, the recognition of Negro History Week has caught on, and has become an intellectual tradition in the 20th century Afro-American experience. However, times have changed considerably since 1926. In political and cultural terms, the time has come to transform our orientation: from Negro to **BLACK**, from History to **LIBERATION**, from Week to **MONTH**.

The revolutionary upsurge of the 1960's is our most recent historical experience of massive militant protest. It continues to be a rich source of lessons for current and future struggles. **BLACK LIBERATION MONTH** unites with Woodson's effort, but does so by raising it to a higher level based on the lessons of the 1960's.

In sum, our study of history must be linked with the revolutionary history of the Black liberation movement. Our goal is not simply to symbolically institutionalize a change in our yearly calendar of events, but to use this month as one more way to raise the consciousness of the masses of people about the historical nature of exploitation and oppression, to unite people around a correct political line, and to mobilize people to actively take up the struggle for Black liberation.

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### BLM QUIZ

Who was Martin Luther King, Jr?  
Why was he killed?  
Was he our greatest leader?  
What does the King holiday mean?  
How can we keep moving forward?  
When should we act?

### MARTIN LUTHER KING JR



STUDY GUIDE / COURSE OUTLINE  
Cooperative Research Network in Black Studies

### MLK Study Guide AVAILABLE NOW

A full study guide to five books by Martin Luther King, Jr., including study questions, and a supplemental bibliography is available. This guide is essential for all serious students.

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#### LET RESISTANCE BE OUR MOTTO!

Everyone should study King's life and the lessons of the civil rights struggle. In no case should we let the white racist government, and the media define our movement. We have to fight being lazy, pick up some material and **READ FOR OURSELVES**. If you stay lazy then you will be ignorant and the system that killed King physically dead will simply keep you mentally dead.

The second thing is that everyone should be actively supporting at least one local community struggle to make the world a better place. With your block club, PTA, church, etc. fight to make the local merchants give better service, cheaper goods and hire local residents, fight against slum housing, inferior schools, etc. These are the kinds of actions to get with right now. Frederick Douglass said it clearly: "Without struggle there is no progress." Remember, God helps those who help themselves!

Lastly, now that we have a holiday for King, it is time that we begin the fight to make Malcolms birthday a federal holiday. The federal government, the Black middle class, and Black politicians must be willing to support that hero, that great leader of ours. Without Malcolm, King is only one side of our story. The federal act encourages people "to reflect on the principles of racial equality and nonviolent social change" from a government waging war all over the world. Congress set up a Commission for one year but failed to appropriate any funds at all. Are they serious? Are we suppose to believe that something substantial has been done?

Perhaps the greatest danger is that people will begin to take King for granted and forget that he was an important part of the struggle. When the beast which preys upon the meek issues a holiday for all, complacency is likely to set in. But when we put the strengths of Martin and Malcolm together we shall overcome the beast as did the Conquering Lamb.

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# MARTIN

King became a great leader. This was an obvious and logical development of his life: 1. his name, a combination of church (Martin Luther) and state (King) deeply rooted in western tradition and guiding his intellectual development and ego strength; 2. Black tradition, a church based nationality of great collective commitment, loyalty to leadership, and oratorical skill; 3. Black movement, a massive political mobilization of Black people to end all racial obstacles to full democracy; and 4. this era of world history, a century of great revolutionary change in which

some leaders are recognized for their leadership into socialism (e.g., Lenin, Mao, Castro, etc.), some for their leadership of national liberation struggles (e.g. Amilcar Cabral, Maurice Bishop, Nelson Mandela, etc.), and some for their leadership within the imperialist system (e.g. Malcolm X, Fred Hampton, and Ralph Featherstone). King's life gives us greater insight into the following: (1) the Talented Tenth put forward by DuBois, (2) spontaneous mass protest, (3) confronting white racist terror, and (4) building Black unity.

## THE TALENTED TENTH

Martin Luther King is the model of excellence for the Black middle class. He was born into the family of a preacher and a preacher's daughter, and was groomed for leadership of the major Baptist church in Atlanta, Georgia. He went to major educational institutions and mastered the basic ideas of Black people and world history, especially the philosophical and theological traditions of the west. King took the best family background, Black education, and white education as the basis for his life. This represents a great example of Noblesse Oblige, where the privileges of birth and education are translated into community service and participation in political struggle for civil rights. DuBois called for the *Talented Tenth* of college educated Black people to serve the Black community through their leadership. King is our best example of this 20th century prophecy of middle class leadership.

The youth of the Black middle class continued this revolt against hedonism and seeking personal gain by developing into SNCC militants in a broad movement for social change, a movement that shook the country to its very foundation. However, this has been turned into its opposite. Most of the Black middle class has turned inward to protect self interest, and has become self-indulgent and hedonistic again, alienated from the traditions of Black social protest. King is a viable model for middle class youth to turn away from a life of privilege and find the kingdom of God in a life of service to Black people. He worshiped in the temple of mass struggle, for there is no more holy place than in the battle for Black liberation.



## SPONTANEOUS MASS PROTEST

Mass protest by Blacks in the 1960's burst through the paralysis of the 1950's and caught everyone off guard. The mainstream social scientists didn't see it coming, the government was not ready for it, and most Black people thought that economic progress was moving North and you had to be happy with what you found there. But this was all turned around by massive protests at the grass roots level, beginning especially with the 1955-1956 Bus Boycott of Montgomery Alabama. King was at the right place at the right time. At the time, King was pastor of the most powerful Black church, hadn't been in town long so he didn't have any enemies, and he had powerful contacts coming from his father and grandfather-in-law.

King was swept into leadership of the spontaneous protests, but was supported by the solid core of churches and leaders from the resistance (especially the NAACP, trade unions, and the Black colleges). Aldon Morris sums up this trend: "In this context movement centers, strategic planning, organizing, charisma, and preexisting institutions were central to the civil rights movement in that they enabled the Black community effectively to confront an entrenched opposition dedicated to keeping them subservient." What King provided was charisma, a necessary but not sufficient quality of leadership. The great lesson of this campaign is that change is more a result of leadership by organization than leadership by charisma.

## BUILDING THE BLACK UNITED FRONT

King was at the center of the greatest publicity given to any Black leader ever before. He was given great awards, and called to private talks with heads of state and world religious leaders. But, he always based his motion on building Black unity within the Black community, and the Black movement. More than the leaders of the NAACP and the Urban League, King was always in a dialogue with the various tendencies (from militant Black nationalists to communists). In fact, he helped us think about these issues through his writings. A Black nationalist or a communist should study King's discussion because he reflects the thinking of so many Black people. King is the Black theological reflection of the Black middle class, and this vision is shared by a dominant minority in the Black community. King would sit and talk with the militant leadership of SNCC as it moved from the sit ins to Black revolutionary

nationalism, as well as Elijah Muhammad of the Nation of Islam.

King, at the very end of his life began to make a decisive turn. He began to turn the civil rights movement into a poor peoples movement. At this stage he was assassinated. The greatest lesson is that Black people must unite with poor and oppressed people of all nationalities to challenge a common enemy, the racist ruling class and government of the United States of America. Our angel of light was struck down by the demon of our day. We must avenge this fallen angel and fight for revolutionary change that will bring genuine economic, political and social equality to Black people and all exploited and oppressed people in the United States of America.



## CONFRONTING RACIST TERROR

After the mass outbursts of Montgomery, sit ins, freedom rides, and massive local demonstrations throughout the South, racism retaliated with terror through murder and intimidation. There was the selective assassination of progressive leaders (e.g., Kennedy, Medgar Evers, and Malcolm X, etc.), rank and file Black activists (Chaney in Mississippi), the murder of white movement participants (Goodman and Schwerner of SNCC in Mississippi, Ms. Liuzzo in Alabama, etc.), and mass murder of four Black girls through bombing a church during services in Birmingham.

King made a great contribution to this because he was always associated with continuing the struggle. Our response to hard times was to struggle harder. King defied fear of racism, he stared the devil in the eye and called for all of us to put "our bodies on the line" in our fight for freedom. But King also limited our orientation to that of nonviolence, when the USA has laws that far exceed this limitation. It is lawful and just to protect yourself from annihilation with sufficient arms to deter your assailant. King was correct in his general posture that our best defense against racist violence is massive social protest, but he was incorrect in limiting our tactics. In any case, nonviolence has never been and will never be the only tactic that Black people use in their fight for freedom. The Black community has a lot of experience with white man oppressors, whether in the USA or in South Africa, and will follow Malcolm's mandate to fight for our freedom **BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY**.

# On the shoulders of Martin Luther King, Jr.

## WE CAN ADVANCE THE CAUSE OF BLACK LIBERATION IN THE 1980'S

It is essential that people of good will, particularly Black people interested in fighting all forms of injustice, make definite efforts to understand the work and historical significance of Martin Luther King, Jr. His work must be carefully evaluated so that his successes can be built upon while avoiding the pitfalls

he encountered. Judicious criticism will help us identify those lessons that we can use to build our movement. We must avoid past errors and discard strategies and tactics which are not applicable to the present.

### THE CONTEMPORARY SITUATION

This is a dynamic period, reforms are being swept away and the *moral high ground* has been captured by the conservative forces. Conversely, the more to the right mainstream politics swings, the more relevant the rebirth of civil rights activism becomes. This requires us to understand the civil rights movement of the 1960s even more. All past and current leaders must be critically reevaluated as the basis for future struggle.

One of the difficulties in dealing with the work of Martin Luther King, Jr. is that several forces have intentionally manufactured myths for their own ideological and political purposes rather than for the purpose of Black liberation.

### THE ROLE OF KING

Although the end of the Civil War brought the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments, constitutional guarantees that established Black people's rights to first class citizenship, a century later Black people were still segregated and discriminated against in every state. King struggled against this oppression and became the *foremost 20th century spokesperson for the ideals of American democracy*. King fought for full constitutional rights for Black people. He provided internationally recognized intellectual leadership on the issue of human rights. His strategy was based on a creative synthesis of the thought of Henry David Thoreau (a USA philosopher), Mahatma Gandhi (an Indian philosopher), the major western liberal theologians and the protest tradition of Black people and Black institutions, particularly the Black church. In recognition of this achievement he received many honors, most notably the Nobel Peace Prize (1964). His work to complete the democratic task begun before the Civil War of providing full citizenship for Black people made King the leader of the largest reform movement in American history.

King used his *exceptional oratorical skills to penetrate deep into the hearts and minds of ordinary Black people*. He helped them to identify previously unrecognized inner strengths. On this basis the potential for mass mobilization and protest became manifest. In addition King was a leader through which liberals, intellectuals and progressives of the protest tradition could reestablish links with the broad diversity of local community struggles.

King is a *Black cultural hero par excellence*. He came to recognize the value of Black consciousness and Black power. As a Black leader King was an extension of the central institution of the church. He was trained in the social and cultural skills necessary for leadership there. Mainly he had rhetorical resources of great depth and breadth. King could sermonize as if he had inherited the wisdom of Moses, the courage of Daniel, the knowledge of DuBois, and the intimacy of a Black Baptist neighborhood preacher. His gift was a third generation legacy developed through the same church for over half a century. King was the heir to a tradition of leadership, and his leadership was based on core Black cultural values.

King was president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference founded in 1956. This organization was the militant activist wing of the Black church. It was alienated from the old establishment leadership. Its main historic function has been to enhance the political relevancy of the Black church. When SCLC was one of the really prominent organizations, Black churches were the main infrastructure of the civil rights movement. This spread the influence and prestige of the Black church, and was a source of new recruitment. It organized an ecumenical united front by which Blacks could meet with white religious forces on equal terms toward some goals of benefit to Black people.

As a Black cultural symbol, rooted deeply in the folk traditions of the Black Baptist church, King is a *link between the broad masses of Black people and the overall united front of progressive forces* and people of good will to fight in united fashion, a united front. In essence King was the greatest example of leadership from the Black middle class. He articulated a consensus, militant, demanding, and radical when compared to the policy of the status quo.

### MASS PROTEST

### IS THE REAL KING LEGACY

### MASS PROTEST IS THE REAL KING LEGACY

The essence of the King legacy is *fighting for change through mass protests*, incorporating militant demands into a broad movement consensus. Nevertheless much of King's activity was based on naive reformist commitment to the continuation of this system. King confronted strong opposition in the movement from the revolutionary nationalist forces under the influence of Malcolm X, the militants of SNCC from within the civil rights movement in the south, and the street force of the cities who rejected nonviolence in favor of urban insurrection. In response to this opposition *King began to make the self-criticism that he had failed to make an adequate analysis of power*, and that the cost for change would be greater as economic inequality increasingly became the target of the movement.

King could not deal with the full implications of the mass motion that was underway. More and more the revolutionary potential was becoming manifest. The creative violence of the movement was something hard for King to come to terms with and so increasingly his ideas came to break with the objective motion of the masses. *He never understood the dual character of violence* — that of the oppressor and that of the oppressed. Bishop Tutu and other religious leaders are being transformed in the liberation struggle of South Africa, and have been moved to admit that violence is inevitable — the only question is how much! The oppressor should be opposed and the oppressed supported, because they do so in self defense. For Black people to use violence against racist terror has been self defense since the slave trade.

In many cases it was SNCC who initiated militant action (e.g., in Albany, Selma, Chicago, the focus on power, and opposition to the Vietnam War). King and SCLC would move in (usually being asked by the church leadership) and give general leadership of mass mobilization, media coverage, negotiations, and settlement. King would then depart, leaving the tasks of implementation and follow through to the local leadership. The movement was operating on two different levels, the local level of concrete and tangible problems, and the national level of media visibility and symbolic policy formation. King was more successful on the national level. Local Black leadership was not given sustained national support. This was a glaring failure. Protest action led to national action and a symbolic victory. However such policy was usually not implemented so local areas would not experience much concrete change.

In keeping with evaluating the leadership of Black organizations, King can be evaluated also by the directions taken by his former close associates. There is no unifying focus now by King's lieutenants to build a mass resistance movement. Their main common approach is to work within the system. Some have become Black democrats (Jesse Jackson and Andrew Young), and others Black republicans (James Bevel, and Ralph Abernathy). Few major institutions of struggle have been developed, with the notable exceptions of C. T. Vivian and the Anti-Klan Network, and Jackson's Operation PUSH.

In sum, the Black middle class has exhausted its leadership potential. This class has proven unwilling to maintain mass political mobilization, and go beyond reform to revolutionary goals. When King moved past the middle class norm he was killed for it. Today, our best case of Black middle class leadership is the Black mayor. Compared to King, Black mayors cling to reform goals even though sometimes expressed with militant rhetoric. Even then, the only real material gain from a Black mayor is more income and prestige for middle class Blacks.

There are many who would aspire to King's role. They continue to intervene in local struggles when sufficient press coverage is available. The would-be-Kings are not the problem as much as the media. At the early stages of a movement the media is more of a danger than an asset. But, once the basic movement is organized and politically prepared for struggle, then using the media effectively is essential for national and international recognition and support.

Ultimately King fell short of what we need. No one has yet emerged to give the leadership that is

needed. The new leadership will not appear spontaneously as if from heaven, because it will be made right here on earth by us. What is needed is a new leadership to be the vanguard of the struggle. The spirit of SNCC, The Black Panther Party, and The African Liberation Support Committee, must be reborn in a new organization with its mass base in the churches and trade unions. Only an independent vanguard of the Black liberation struggle is in a position to define and articulate a new vision of a new society, and to be truly revolutionary in giving leadership to making this vision concrete.

### REFORM AND REVOLUTION

King was a great American and was killed for it. This is proof that the system is rotten to the core and must be replaced by a new system. The critical relationship is between reform and revolution. Reform is concerned with the immediate problems while revolution is about the source of all problems. The road to revolution goes through the reform struggles. Our future will be forged in battle, the fight for survival. Mass mobilization is our only power base, and this will occur best in struggles over the major issues facing us at this time.

**Economic Exploitation and Poverty:** The capitalist class in the USA is cold blooded in its rip-off rape of the majority of people in the USA. *People of all nationalities get ripped off*. On the political level we have to fight on all fronts, especially the issues of jobs, unemployment benefits, health benefits and the cost of medical care, housing costs and availability in the public and private sectors, child care, transportation costs and access, quality of food and cost of a balanced diet, and availability and cost of communications including telephones and cable television. But, we have to go beyond this to evaluate the fundamental soundness of the capitalist system. The economic crisis of the late 20th century forces us to discuss alternatives, especially socialism. By socialism, we mean a system in which all power rests fully and completely in the hands of the masses of people—including Black people—and not in the hands of politicians whose first loyalty is to protecting the profits of capitalists. Socialism means a system in which all wealth and the means of producing wealth (factories, banks, communication and transportation systems, etc.) are collectively owned by the people. All exploitation is ended and the surplus that is produced by the working masses goes to meet the needs of people (e.g., keeping the schools and hospitals open, lower rents and gas prices, etc.) and not into the bank accounts of a few wealthy capitalists. Finally, socialism means putting all of the resources of the society and the full political power of the government behind ending all forms of oppression—especially racism and male supremacy. King was becoming more and more critical of capitalism and what he called the “gulf between superfluous wealth and abject poverty” which it perpetuates.

**Political Repression and Powerlessness:** Only in some parts of the country Black people have achieved proportionate representation in the political system, while virtually everywhere Black people get a raw deal. This means police brutality, more frequent arrests, more frequent convictions, longer sentences, and general tolerance of violent crime that forces the majority of Black poor people to live in a constant state of fear. There is a sinister pattern of severe political repression against militants of the Black liberation struggle, and the full operation of COINTELPRO seems to be in high gear. This degenerate political system has failed to produce adequate explanations of who assassinated Martin Luther King, or Malcolm, or John F. Kennedy. It also fails to explain why Black people are always on the bottom. Therefore, we have to take things into our own hands and do the explaining and the changing of the situation ourselves, Martin Luther King, Jr. was moving toward this position. We must keep moving our community forward.

(continued on page 6)

BLACK LIBERATION MONTH

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THEOLOGIAN OF BLACK LIBERATION

Religion has best served Black people when it has strengthened not weakened the people through positive identity. Jesus was a Black Man—and the encouragement of mass united protest—Jesus was a revolutionary. The essence of the Black religious experience is based on God's mandate to fight against sin. The greatest sins facing Black people are white racism and capitalist economic exploitation. Religion should be in the street inspiring mass struggle against all forms of evil. These four great preachers are among those who have made religion relevant to Black people.

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HENRY HIGHLAND GARNET  
(1815-1882)  
Presbyterian Pastor, Orator at National Negro Conventions



GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER  
(1854-1933)  
Pastor, Mt. Zion Baptist Church, Iowa  
Socialist Party Candidate for Vice President

2

1969: Eduardo Mondlane, first president of Frelimo, was assassinated by a mail bomb. Frelimo led the victorious national liberation struggle of the people of Mozambique against the Portuguese.

3

1965: The Selma-to-Montgomery March dramatized the fight for Black voting rights. It ended with a rally of 25,000 people in front of the state capital.

4

1913: Rosa Parks, the Black worker who sparked the Montgomery Bus Boycott, was born.

1968: There was a riot in Orangeburg, South Carolina, which ended segregation in that city, resulted in an assault on a Black man, and the wounding of 50.

9

1943: 4,000 Black and white youth led by the American Youth Congress march in Washington D.C. to protest government discrimination against Black servicemen and the U.S. war policy.

10

"While it was true a thousand years ago, that human toil and energy was unable to feed, clothe and shelter all mankind, this has not been the case since the beginning of the nineteenth century; and today, with what we know of natural forces; with the land and labor at our disposal, with the known techniques of processing materials and transporting goods, there is no adequate reason why a single human being on earth should not have sufficient food, clothing and shelter for healthy life."  
W.E.B. DuBois

11

1933: The first Black library was founded in Philadelphia. This is one of the many examples of Black peoples' struggle to build institutions and to develop culturally.

1909: The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was founded at New York.  
1793: The Fugitive Slave Act was passed which required that escaped slaves be returned to their owners and protect an escapee.

16

1937: The National Negro Congress was founded in Chicago. It organized workers in the C.I.O.

17

1865: The Ku Klux Klan, a racist organization that promotes white supremacy, organized in Pulaski, Tennessee.

18

1688: Quakers of Germantown, Pennsylvania made the first formal protest against slavery in the western hemisphere.

1909: W.E.B. DuBois was elected to the American Congress in Paris, France.

23

1868: W.E.B. DuBois was born. He was a writer, an educator, and Fisk graduate, as well as key architect of Pan Africanism, Secretary of the London Pan African Conference in 1900, and participated until 1945 bringing the case against colonialism before the world.

24




"Modern imperialism and modern industrialism are one in the same system; root and branch of the same tree. The race problem is the other side of the labor problem; and the Black man's burden is the white man's burden."  
W.E.B. DuBois

25

1877: The Hayes-Tilden Betrayal was announced.

1885: At the Berlin Conference, Europe began the division of Africa.

# CALENDAR FEBRUARY 1986

WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
 <b>CARTER G. WOODSON</b> (1875 - 1955) Historian, author, and founder of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History. He is known for his book "The Negro in American History" and for coining the term "Negro History Week".	 <b>GEORGE ALEXANDER MCGUIRE</b> (1866 - 1934) Bishop, founder, African Orthodox Church United Negro Improvement Association	 <b>EL HAJJ MALIK EL SHABAZZ</b> (1925 - 1965) Imam, Sunni Muslim, World Brotherhood of Islam Organization of Afro-American Unity	1  1960: The sit-in movement was launched by four students in Greensboro, N.C. This sparked a new phase of militant Black protest that exposed the national oppression of Black people in the U.S.A.
5  demonstration in South Carolina, to in bowling alleys resulting in a police brutality on February 8, brutally students and	6  1973: Native Americans unleashed armed resistance at Wounded Knee, South Dakota to protest government repression. Wounded Knee is a historic site of the 1890 massacre where federal troops killed over 300 Indians.	7  1974: Grenada Independence Day. 1926: Negro History Week was founded by Carter G. Woodson in honor of Frederick Douglass. 1865: Black Laws of Illinois were repealed.	8  1964: Malcolm X founded the Organization for Afro-American Unity.
12  Association for the Advancement of the Colored People was founded in 1909 in Niagara Falls, NY. Slave Law was made it illegal to rape a slave.	13  1817: Frederick Douglass, ex-slave, abolitionist, and organizer for Black freedom, was born.	14  1790: Richard Allen, founder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church was born in Philadelphia. The development of the independent Black church made a major contribution to the formation and development of the Afro-American people as a nationality.	15  1851: Black Abolitionists crashed a courtroom in Boston to rescue a fugitive slave.
19  organized the Pan African Congress which was held in London.	20  1895: Frederick Douglass died.	21  1965: Malcolm X was assassinated at age 39 in the Audubon Ballroom in New York City.	22  1983: Harold Washington wins Democratic mayoral primary in Chicago. 1872: The National United Front of farmers, workers and city folk, in which the Colored National Farmers Alliance played a prominent role, formed a Peoples Party in St. Louis and tried to establish itself as a national third political party.
26  Conference 1884-85, the "Scramble for Africa".	27  "Without struggle there is no progress." Frederick Douglass	28  ... Political work must be rooted among the masses and carried out on a professional level. What is required is that our feet march in the struggles waged by the masses, our hearts throb in empathy with their joys and sorrows, while our heads rationally use the science of revolution to develop our strategy and tactics. Peoples College Editorial for Marxism and Black Liberation	<b>WHAT IS PEOPLES COLLEGE?</b> Peoples College is an organization with 15 years experience fighting for Black liberation. The main approach has been to develop educational activities that expose people to the history and current suffering of Black people, and to build a commitment to fight for basic social change. Since the people of the USA are facing a crisis, and are likely to suffer much more in the near future, <i>UNITY</i> is more critical now than it has been in the last decade. Peoples College would like to join with all organizations willing to fight for Black liberation, and in the process build a lasting unity.

# ML KING

## A Biographical Sketch

### ORIGINS AND QUALIFICATIONS

- 1863** Reverend Adam Daniel Williams born, maternal grandfather of Martin Luther King, became pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church in 1894
- 1898** Reverend Martin Luther King Sr. born, became pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church in 1931
- 1929** Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. born, after his sister Willie Christine and before his brother Alfred Daniel
- 1944** Entered Morehouse College at the age of 15
- 1947** Ordained a Baptist minister by his father and became Assistant Pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church
- 1948** Graduated from Morehouse College, BA
- 1951** Graduated from Crozer Theological Seminary, BD
- 1953** Married Coretta Scott King, from Marion Alabama who graduated from Antioch College and the New England Conservatory of Music

### THE MAKING OF A NEW MINISTRY

- 1954** Installed as 20th pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama
- 1955** Birth of 1st child, Yolanda Denise  
Graduated from Boston University, PhD  
Rosa Parks begins the Montgomery Bus Boycott protest movement which lasts for almost a year

- 1956** Supreme Court Ruling mandates the integration of buses in Montgomery thus the bus boycott movement is victorious
- 1957** The Southern Christian Leadership Conference is formed and King is elected the first president  
Martin and Coretta attend independence celebration in Ghana as guest of the new President Kwame Nkrumah  
Birth of 2nd child, Martin Luther King III  
Doctor of Humane Letters (H), Morehouse College  
Doctor of Divinity (H), University of Chicago Theological Seminary  
Doctor of Humanities (H), Howard University
- 1958** First book, *Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story*, Harper and Row  
Doctor of Laws (H), Morgan State College
- 1959** *The Measure of A Man*, Christian Education Press  
Martin and Coretta travel to India and meet with Prime Minister Nehru

### THE AMERICAN TEST OF NONVIOLENCE

- 1960** King moves to Atlanta and becomes co-pastor with his father of Ebenezer Baptist Church  
The sit-in movement launched by four students in Greensboro, NC
- 1961** Birth of 3rd child, Dexter Scott  
The Albany campaign begins leading to mass arrests, but the goals of the protests were not attained  
Doctor of Laws (H), Lincoln University

- 1962** Doctor of Civil Laws (H), Bard College
- 1963** Birth of 4th child, Bernice Albertine  
Beginning of the Birmingham campaign, Black people experienced the most savage reign of terror during the entire 1960's  
Second book, *Strength to Love*, Harper and Row  
*I Have A Dream* speech delivered August 28th at the March on Washington  
The assassination of Medgar Evers, NAACP leader of Mississippi  
The assassination of John Kennedy, President of the U.S.A.
- 1964** Third book, *Why We Can't Wait*, Harper and Row  
Doctor of Laws (H), Yale University  
Doctor of Laws (H), Jewish Theological Seminary  
Nobel Peace Prize awarded in Oslo Norway

### THE CHALLENGE OF BLACK POWER

- 1965** The assassination of Malcolm X
- 1966** King expands his work to the north with a campaign to end slums in Chicago  
King joins Mississippi march after James Meredith was shot, and was confronted by the new SNCC slogan Black Power
- 1967** Fourth book, *Where Do We Go From Here*  
SCLC forms the Poor Peoples Campaign to unite poor whites and Blacks
- 1968** Fifth book, *Trumpet of Conscience*  
THE ASSASSINATION OF MARTIN LUTHER KING

(Continued from page 3)

**Freedom for South Africa:** The fight for South Africa is critical. Black people the world over must destroy all forms of white colonialism before the 21st century. South Africa is the key. Reagan and his moral majority cronies are firmly lined up with the racist white minority and British liberals against the Black and Indian communities. We must take up this fight and start a new mass form of protest:

# Free South Africa!

## Campaign For One Million Signs

Everyone should get cans of spray paint and make signs. For every Black murdered make 100 signs. Put the subject on everyone's mind. Every bench, bus stop, side walks, construction sites, boarded up buildings, and bill boards should have signs. The campaign for one million signs should involve everyone reading this.

**War and the Nuclear Threat:** Big countries with nuclear weapons continue the arms race and place all of humanity under the threat of annihilation. Nothing good can come out of this type of war. Today there are limited wars being fought all over the globe between imperialist powers and national liberation forces. This is particularly acute in Central America (especially Nicaragua and El Salvador), the Caribbean (Grenada, Puerto Rico, Haiti, Jamaica, Trinidad, and Antigua), the Middle East (the Palestinian Question), and Africa (South Africa, Namibia, and Eritrea). We must give total support to opposing nuclear war, and full support as well to forces fighting wars of national liberation against imperialism, the international system of economic exploitation, political domination and social oppression by capitalism.

### SUMMARY

The overall main aspect of King is that he is the personification of the mainstream of the Black community in opposition to oppression. He was mainly against racism, and he led the assault on segregation in the interest of all Black people. He grew with the movement, not as the vanguard, but as part of its critical consensus. The unity of Malcolm and Martin could have been the highest form of consensus, a critical consensus for Black resistance. We don't need King to come back, we can't have him back. We must carry on. He would have demanded we do so. And we must not mimic King. Rather we must stand on his shoulders and go beyond him.

King was a master preacher from a strong tradition. We have thousands of such great preachers. What we lack are local movements fighting against the system, and where our great voices can be an expression of our collective fight back. Otherwise its just a rap. The point is to change the world, not just talk about it. King would have wanted it that way.

Black people are in desperate need of King's message. These are the days when evil is reigning all over the world - Reagan, the devil, postures as a saint with one foot in heaven, while imperialism forces genocidal conditions on Black people everywhere in the world. Racism and greed are the two greatest sins in the world. King, as Jesus, and many others before him, gave his life so that we might live. Now, we have a lot of study and teaching to do. Our people are on the bottom! Let us begin our long march into a new world in the 21st century.

# In his own words

## From Race to Class

The practical cost of change for the nation up to this point has been cheap. The limit reforms have been obtained at bargain rates. There are no expenses, and no taxes are required, for Negroes to share lunch counters, libraries, parks, hotels and other facilities with whites. Even the psychological adjustment is far from formidable. Having exaggerated the emotional difficulties for decades, when demands for new conduct became inescapable, white Southerners may have trembled under the strain but they did not collapse.

Even the more significant changes involved in voter registration required neither large monetary nor psychological sacrifice. Spectacular and turbulent events that dramatized the demand created an erroneous impression that a heavy burden was involved.

The real cost lies ahead. The stiffening of white resistance is a recognition of that fact. The discount education given Negroes will in the future have to be purchased at full price if quality education is to be realized. Jobs are harder and costlier to create than voting rolls. The eradication of slums housing millions is complex far beyond integrating buses and lunch counters.

*Where Do We Go From Here?* (pp. 5-6)

## From Race to Class

Negroes have irrevocably undermined the foundations of Southern segregation; they have assembled the power through self-organization and coalition to place their demands on all significant national agendas. And beyond this, they have now accumulated the strength to change the quality and substance of their demands. From issues of personal dignity they are now advancing to programs that impinge upon the basic system of social and economic control. At this level Negro programs go beyond race and deal with economic inequality, wherever it exists. In the pursuit of these goals, the white poor become involved, and the potentiality emerges for a powerful new alliance.

*Where Do We Go From Here?* (p. 17)

## Black Identity

The tendency to ignore the Negro's contribution to American life and strip him of his personhood is as old as the earliest history books and as contemporary as the morning's newspaper. To offset this cultural homicide, the Negro must rise up with an affirmation of his own Olympian manhood. Any movement for the Negro's freedom that overlooks this necessity is only waiting to be buried. As long as the mind is enslaved the body can never be free. Psychological freedom, a firm sense of self-esteem, is the most powerful weapon against the long night of physical slavery. No Lincolnian Emancipation Proclamation or Kennedyan or Johnsonian civil rights bill can totally bring this kind of freedom. The Negro will only be truly free when he reaches down to the inner depths of his own being and signs with the pen and ink of assertive selfhood his own emancipation proclamation. With a spirit straining toward true self-esteem, the Negro must boldly throw off the manacles of self-abnegation and say to himself and the world: "I am somebody, I am a person. I am a man with dignity and honor. I have a rich and noble history, however painful and exploited that history has been. I am black and comely." This self-affirmation is the black man's need made compelling by the white man's crimes against him. This is positive and necessary power for black people.

*Where Do We Go From Here?* (pp. 43-44)

## Family Unity

A hundred times I have been asked why we have allowed little children to march in demonstrations, to freeze and suffer in jails, to be exposed to bullets and dynamite. The questions imply that we have revealed a want of family feeling or a recklessness toward family security. The answer is simple. Our children and our families are maimed a little every day of our lives. If we can end an incessant torture by a single climactic confrontation, the risks are acceptable. Moreover, our family life will be born anew if we fight together. Other families may be fortunate enough to be able to protect their young from danger. Our families, as we have seen, are different. Oppression has again and again divided and splintered them. We are a people torn apart from era to era. It is logical, moral and psychologically constructive for us to resist oppression united as families. Out of this unity, out of the bond of fighting together, forges will come. The inner strength and integrity will make us whole again.

*Where Do We Go From Here?* (p. 108)

## Black United Front

There are already structured forces in the Negro community that can serve as the basis for building a powerful united front—the Negro church, the Negro press, the Negro fraternities and sororities, and Negro professional associations. We must admit that these forces have never given their full resources to the cause of Negro liberation. There are still too many Negro churches that are so absorbed in a future good "over yonder" that they condition their members to adjust to the present evils "over here." Too many Negro newspapers have veered away from their traditional role as protest organs agitating for social change, and have turned to the sensational and the conservative in place of the substantive and the militant. Too many Negro social and professional groups have degenerated into snobbishness and a preoccupation with frivolities and trivial activity. But the failures of the past must not be an excuse for the inaction of the present and the future. These groups must be mobilized and motivated. This form of group unity can do infinitely more to liberate the Negro than any action of individuals. We have been oppressed as a group and we must overcome that oppression as a group.

*Where Do We Go From Here?* (pp. 124-125)

## Capitalism and Communism

Truth is found neither in traditional capitalism nor in classical Communism. Each represents a partial truth. Capitalism fails to see the truth in collectivism. Communism fails to see the truth in individualism. Capitalism fails to realize that life is social. Communism fails to realize that life is personal. The good and just society is neither the thesis of capitalism nor the antithesis of Communism, but a socially conscious democracy which reconciles the truths of individualism and collectivism.

*Where Do We Go From Here?* (p. 187)

## Now is the Time!

We are now faced with the fact that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of *now*. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history there is such a thing as being too late. Procrastination is still the thief of time. Life often leaves us standing bare, naked and dejected with a lost opportunity, the "tide in the affairs of men" does not remain at the flood; it ebbs. We may cry out desperately for time to pause in her passage, but time is deaf to every plea and rushes on. Over the bleached bones and jumbled residues of numerous civilizations are written the pathetic words: "Too late." There is an invisible book of life that faithfully records our vigilance or our neglect. "The moving finger writes, and having writ moves on. . . ." We still have a choice today: nonviolent coexistence or violent coannihilation. This may well be mankind's last chance to choose between chaos and community.

*Where Do We Go From Here?* (p. 191)

## Congressional Terrorism

The administration's only concrete response was to initiate a study and call for a day of prayer. As a minister, I take prayer too seriously to use it as an excuse for avoiding work and responsibility. When a government commands more wealth and power than has ever been known in the history of the world, and offers no more than this, it is worse than blind, it is provocative. It is paradoxical but fair to say that Negro terrorism is incited less on ghetto street corners than in the halls of Congress.

*Trumpet of Conscience* (p. 59)

## Revolution

The dispossessed of this nation—the poor, both white and Negro—live in a cruelly unjust society. They must organize a revolution against that injustice, not against the lives of the persons who are their fellow citizens, but against the structures through which the society is refusing to take means which have been called for, and which are at hand, to lift the load of poverty.

*Trumpet of Conscience* (pp. 59-60)

## Emergency

There is nothing wrong with a traffic law which says you have to stop for a red light. But when a fire is raging, the fire truck goes right through that red light, and normal traffic had better get out of its way. Or, when a man is bleeding to death, the ambulance goes through those red lights at top speed.

There is a fire raging now for the Negroes and the poor of this society. They are living in tragic conditions because of the terrible economic injustices that keep them locked in as an "underclass," as the sociologists are now calling it. Disinherited people all over the world are bleeding to death from deep social and economic wounds. They need brigades of ambulance drivers who will have to ignore the red lights of the present system until the emergency is solved.

*Trumpet of Conscience* (p. 53)

## Middle Class-ness

It is ironic that today so many educators and sociologists are seeking methods to instill middle-class values in Negro youth as the ideal in social development. It was precisely when young Negroes threw off their middle-class values that they made an historic social contribution. They abandoned those values when they put careers and wealth in a secondary role. When they cheerfully became jailbirds and troublemakers, when they took off their Brooks Brothers attire and put on overalls to work in the isolated rural South, they challenged and inspired white youth to emulate them.

*Trumpet of Conscience* (p. 46)

## Morality

The Negro freedom movement would have been historic and worthy even if it had only served the cause of civil rights. But its laurels are greater because it stimulated a broader social movement that elevated the moral level of the nation. In the struggle against the preponderant evils of the society, decent values were preserved. Moreover, a significant body of young people learned that in opposing the tyrannical forces that were crushing them they added stature and meaning to their lives. The Negro and white youth who in alliance fought bruising engagements with the status quo inspired each other with a sense of moral mission, and both gave the nation an example of self-sacrifice and dedication.

*Trumpet of Conscience* (p. 47)

## Spirit

The spirit is awake now; structures will follow, if we keep our ears open to the spirit. Perhaps the structural forms will emerge from other countries, propelled by another experience of the shaping of history.

But we do not have much time. The revolutionary spirit is already world-wide. If the anger of the peoples of the world at the injustice of things is to be channeled into a revolution of love and creativity, we must begin now to work, urgently, with all the peoples, to shape a new world.

*Trumpet of Conscience* (p. 50)

## Forms of Protest

In the South, a march was a social earthquake; in the North, it is a faint, brief exclamation of protest.

*Trumpet of Conscience* (p. 14)

## Revolutionary Times

These are revolutionary times; all over the globe men are revolting against old systems of exploitation and oppression. The shirtless and barefoot people of the land are rising up as never before. "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light." We in the West must support these revolutions.

*Trumpet of Conscience* (p. 33)

## Spontaneous Riots

Mass civil disobedience as a new stage of struggle can transmute the deep rage of the ghetto into a constructive and creative force. To dislocate the functioning of a city without destroying it can be more effective than a riot because it can be longer-lasting, costly to the larger society, but not wantonly destructive. Finally, it is a device of social action that is more difficult for the government to quell by superior force.

The limitation of riots, moral questions aside, is that they cannot win and their participants know it. Hence, rioting is not revolutionary but reactionary because it invites defeat. It involves an emotional catharsis, but it must be followed by a sense of futility.

*Trumpet of Conscience* (p. 15)

## Black Race/White Bigotry

The decade of 1955 to 1965 with its constructive elements misled us. Everyone underestimated the amount of violence and rage Negroes were suppressing and the amount of bigotry the white majority was disguising.

*Trumpet of Conscience* (p. 7)

## White Racism

The arresting of the limited forward progress by white resistance revealed the latent racism that was deeply rooted in U.S. society. The short era of widespread goodwill evaporated rapidly. As elation and expectations died, Negroes became more sharply aware that the goal of freedom was still distant and or immediate plight was substantially still an agony of deprivation. In the past decade little had been done for Northern ghettos. All the legislation was designed to remedy Southern conditions—and even these were only partially improved. A sense of futility and frustration spread and choked against the hardened white attitudes.

*Trumpet of Conscience* (p. 6)

## The White Man

Let us say it boldly, that if the total slum violations of law by the white man over the years were calculated and were compared with the lawbreaking of a few days of riots, the hardened criminal would be the white man.

In using the term "white man" I am seeking to describe in general terms the Negro's adversary. It is not meant to encompass all white people. There are millions who have morally risen above prevailing prejudices. They are willing to share power and to accept structural alterations of society even at the cost of traditional privilege. To deny their existence as some ultranationalists do is to deny an evident truth. More than that, it drives away allies who can strengthen our struggle. Their support not only serves to enhance our power, but in breaking from the attitudes of the larger society it splits and weakens our opposition. To develop a sense of black consciousness and peoplehood does not require that we scorn the white race as a whole. It is not the race per se that we fight but the policies and ideology that leaders of that race have formulated to perpetuate oppression.

*Trumpet of Conscience* (pp. 8-9)

## The Real Revolutionary

The only real revolutionary, people say, is a man who has nothing to lose. There are millions of poor people in this country who have very little, or even nothing, to lose. If they can be helped to take action together, they will do so with a freedom and a power that will be a new and unsettling force in our complacent national life.

*Trumpet of Conscience* (p. 60)

## Nonviolent Action

In a world facing the revolt of ragged and hungry masses of God's children; in a world torn between the tensions of East and West, white and colored, individualists and collectivists; in a world whose cultural and spiritual power lags so far behind her technological capabilities that we live each day on the verge of nuclear co-annihilation; in this world, nonviolence is no longer an option for intellectual analysis, it is an imperative for action.

*Trumpet of Conscience* (p. 64)

## World Community

It really boils down to this: that all life is interrelated. We are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied into a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. We are made to live together because of the interrelated structure of reality. Did you ever stop to think that you can't leave for your job in the morning without being dependent on most of the world? You get up in the morning and go to the bathroom and reach over for the sponge, and that's handed to by a Pacific islander. You reach for a bar of soap, and that's given to you at the hands of a Frenchman. And then you go into the kitchen to drink your coffee for the morning, and that's poured into your cup by a South American. And maybe you want tea: that's poured into your cup by a Chinese. Or maybe you're desirous of having cocoa for breakfast, and that's poured into your cup by a West African. And then you reach over for your toast, and that's given to you at the hands of an English-speaking farmer, not to mention the baker. And before you finish eating breakfast in the morning, you've depended on more than half of the world. This is the way our universe is structured, this is its interrelated quality. We aren't going to have peace on earth until we recognize this basic fact of the interrelated structure of all reality.

*Trumpet of Conscience* (pp. 69-70)



**Our course of action must lie neither in passively relying on persuasion nor in actively succumbing to violent rebellion, but in a higher synthesis that reconciles the truths of these two opposites while avoiding the inadequacies and ineffectiveness of both.**

*Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* p.129

# Martin Luther King, Jr.

1929 - 1968