



## K-12 Civic Learning Opportunities Martin Luther King Day (and through the year)

### I HAVE A DREAM

*Martin Luther King, Jr. worked to advance civil rights in the United States and around the world. A minister, King became a civil rights activist at an early age. At the 1963 March on Washington, King delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech, where he outlined his vision, or dream, for our country. In 1964, King became the youngest person to receive the Nobel Peace Prize for his work to end racial inequality.*

In this activity, students will envision their “dreams” and consider how to make their dreams and wishes a reality. Students will then share this information with others.

Modify this activity based on your grade level or subject area. For example, you can focus students on the community, North Carolina, the United States or another country. Or, they might role-play a character in history, literature or in a global community.

Students can write about their dream, work in small groups or share with the class. The activity aligns with several core standards. Skills include:

- Persuasion
- Critical thinking
- Analysis
- Reading Informational Text
- Founding documents
- Active listening
- Writing
- Civic literacy
- Planning
- Collaboration
- Civic leadership
- Government
- Problem-solving
- Effective communication
- Connecting historic events, personal knowledge, current events or global life

## DO YOU HAVE A DREAM, TOO?

- What does it mean to have a vision, idea, wish or dream for your country? Can you have a dream for your neighborhood? School? City? State? World?
- Think of something that is important to you. Here are some general topics:

Animals	Education	Laws and rules	Sidewalks/streets
Children/youth	Environment	Poverty	Sports
College	Health	Recycling	Technology
Crime	Housing	Safety	Transportation
Economy	Jobs	Schools	Other

## IDENTIFY THE PROBLEM

What do you see that needs to change about your topic (animals, schools, the environment, etc.)? Identify the problem.

*Example: Kids do not have a safe place to play after school.*

## DO YOU HAVE A DREAM?

You have identified the problem. Now, think a little harder. What is your wish to make it better or different?

*Example: I wish kids in our neighborhood had a playground or park.*

## WHAT'S THE SOLUTION?

How can your wish become possible? Sometimes the solution is pretty easy!

*Example: My wish is possible if we work with neighborhood leaders to build a playground or a park.*

## BE THE LEADER

Many people complain about problems. It takes a problem-solver and leader to find solutions to make things better. Often the most important step is the first one: having a dream and deciding that you are going to work to make a difference.

Are there examples of other people who have been working to make a dream come true? How did they do it? Did that make them a leader and problem-solver?

## SHARE YOUR DREAMS, WISHES, IDEAS AND SOLUTIONS

Take the first step, and share your ideas and solutions!

- Use the Wish for America/My Community activity to write your dreams and solutions.
- Find out who does what in local government, and share your idea. (In Charlotte, GenerationNation can help you!)

- Be a citizen journalist, and share photos or blog about the problem, and your solution.

In the Learn More section, you can find resources for these activities. Or, you can start to create a plan of action and make it happen.

## **MAKE IT HAPPEN**

Think about the problem, and your solution.

### **1. Who do you need to talk to, or influence, to make your dream happen?**

- Make a list. It could include community leaders, kids, adults, teachers, parents, school principals, the mayor, school board, city government, state government, news media, President, global leaders or others.
- As appropriate to the grade level, be specific about the levels of government that oversee your topic area – for example, the school board oversees public schools and the schools receive funding from the county, state and federal governments.

### **2. How will you communicate about your dream?**

- *Why* is your idea and solution, and *why* will their support make a difference? Tell them!
- Do you need special skills to tell others about your dream or wish? Think about how many times an official hears complaints from adults. As a student problem-solver, your interest will stand out. You may have extra influence!

### **3. What needs to happen to make your dream possible? When? Where?**

- Outline the general steps it will take. Sometimes it is helpful to start at the end and work backwards. It is OK not to know all of the details now.
- Now, think again about your dream – what’s the first step you can take to make it happen? Share your idea? Do it!

## **DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. (MLK)**

Follow the same steps, and analyze MLK’s dream.

- Did MLK focus on neighborhood, city, state, national or global issues?
- Which problem(s) did he identify?
- What was his dream?
- What did he do to solve the problem?
- Did MLK’s dream happen?

## Web resources

### MY WISH FOR AMERICA AND MY COMMUNITY

[http://www.generationnation.org/documents/MyWish\\_andIdeas%201.pdf](http://www.generationnation.org/documents/MyWish_andIdeas%201.pdf)

### TALKING WITH OFFICIALS

<http://generationnation.org/index.php/learn/entry/local-government-who-does-what>

### STUDENT REPORTERS AND CITIZEN JOURNALISTS

[http://www.generationnation.org/documents/Citizen\\_journalist.pdf](http://www.generationnation.org/documents/Citizen_journalist.pdf)

### I HAVE A DREAM – CIVIC LEARNING OPPORTUNITY (THIS DOCUMENT AND COMMON CORE/NC SOCIAL STUDIES CORRELATIONS including links for Founding Documents)

<http://generationnation.org/index.php/learn/entry/i-have-a-dream>

### MLK on Wikipedia

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin\\_Luther\\_King,\\_Jr.](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Luther_King,_Jr.)

Nobel Prize biography [http://nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/peace/laureates/1964/king-bio.html](http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1964/king-bio.html)

### DocsTeach/National Archives

[http://docsteach.org/documents/search?menu=open&mode=search&sortBy=relevance&q=civil+rights&commit=Go&era\[\]=postwar-united-states](http://docsteach.org/documents/search?menu=open&mode=search&sortBy=relevance&q=civil+rights&commit=Go&era[]=postwar-united-states)

### MLK Center

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

### MLK Documents and Research at Stanford University

<http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/>

### I Have a Dream Speech (Audio)

[http://kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/documententry/doc\\_august\\_28\\_1963\\_i\\_have\\_a\\_dream/](http://kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/documententry/doc_august_28_1963_i_have_a_dream/)

### I Have a Dream Speech (Video)

The video of the speech is owned by the estate of MLK (copyright for 70 years, or until 2038) and has been removed from most websites. Some unofficial YouTube videos are available – be aware that they could contain inappropriate content and commentary.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3vDWWy4CMhE>

### I Have a Dream Speech (Text) (also in this packet)

<http://generationnation.org/index.php/learn/entry/do-you-have-a-dream-too>

### Literary Critique of I Have a Dream Speech

[http://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/12/03/text-to-text-i-have-a-dream-and-the-lasting-power-of-dr-kings-dream-speech/?nl=learning&emc=edit\\_In\\_20131205&r=1&](http://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/12/03/text-to-text-i-have-a-dream-and-the-lasting-power-of-dr-kings-dream-speech/?nl=learning&emc=edit_In_20131205&r=1&)

## Text of Martin Luther King, Jr. Speech – transcribed from audio recordings (via web)

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I am happy to join with you today in what will go down in history as the greatest demonstration for freedom in the history of our nation.

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

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

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

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

It would be fatal for the nation to overlook the urgency of the moment. This sweltering summer of the

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

But there is something that I must say to my people who stand on the warm threshold which leads into the palace of justice. In the process of gaining our rightful place we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds. Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred.

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

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

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

Go back to Mississippi, go back to Alabama, go back to South Carolina, go back to Georgia, go back to

Louisiana, go back to the slums and ghettos of our northern cities, knowing that somehow this situation can and will be changed. Let us not wallow in the valley of despair.

I say to you today, my friends, 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."

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

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

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

I have a dream today.

I have a dream that one day, down in Alabama, with its vicious racists, with its governor having his lips dripping with the words of interposition and nullification; one day right there in Alabama, little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers.

I have a dream today.

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

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

This will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with a new meaning, "My country, 'tis

of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land where my fathers died, land of the pilgrim's pride,  
from every mountainside, let freedom ring."

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

Let freedom ring from the snowcapped Rockies of Colorado!

Let freedom ring from the curvaceous slopes of California!

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

Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee!

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

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