

Hidden in Plain Sight: Martin Luther King Jr.'s Radical Vision

Lesson Materials and Ideas for Middle and High School Classes

First, a cautionary note and a suggestion: As I've heard Clayborne Carson, director of the Martin Luther King Jr. Papers Project say, Martin Luther King Jr. did not produce the Black Freedom movement; it produced him. Dr. King wasn't even the leader of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, but was chosen to be its main spokesperson by those others in the forefront of that fight.

So when teaching anything about Martin Luther King, there is a danger of reinforcing a "great man" view of history, and obscuring the countless women, men, and children who risked and gave their lives to that struggle. That is less likely to happen if, prior to focusing on MLK, students have learned, in some depth, about the development of the Civil Rights movement over decades prior to 1955. But King's exalted status in history presents a special opportunity to teach and learn ideas that are nearly always dismissed and/or demonized. A powerful critique of capitalism and its linkage to racism and militarism may suddenly become credible when one learns that MLK passionately expressed such a view. Furthermore, the realization that King advocated these ideas publicly and frequently, especially during his final year of life can lead one to ask, "What else is left out of history and of our picture of the world today by textbooks and the corporate media?"

This unit attempts to help students penetrate the curtain of clichés and lies the corporate media have erected around Martin Luther King, Jr., in order to make him "safe" for public consumption. My objectives for students who participate in these lessons are that they will:

1. Explicitly identify the ways in which Martin Luther King, Jr. is portrayed in the mass media, and specifically, which of his ideas are communicated to the public.
2. Read and discuss a range of King's ideas almost completely unknown to most of the public today.
3. Reflect upon why many of King's ideas introduced in this lesson are almost never referenced in the mass media or in U.S. History textbooks and to consider what else may be left out of the dominant narrative of current events and history.
4. Consider ways in which King's analysis of the world and his strategy for radical change applies to the world today and movements for social and economic justice.

Like many people, I went through most of my life knowing little more than what the corporate media and high school textbooks told us about Martin Luther King Jr: He "had a dream," led the civil rights movement for racial equality, believed in nonviolence, and was assassinated in 1968. Though I had considered myself a socialist since the early 1970s, I had no idea that Dr. King had frequently and explicitly identified capitalism, militarism, and racism as deeply interconnected evils that must be eliminated in order to achieve social justice. I wasn't even particularly aware, or did not recall, that he had fiercely opposed the Vietnam War, and that he had been vilified for taking that stand.

I learned of all this during a workshop given by the aforementioned Clayborne Carson (of the King Papers Project), as part of an Oakland Unified School District project called Urban Dreams. After reading King's "Beyond Vietnam" speech, delivered April 4, 1967, it struck me that my students might be as surprised as I was to learn how much more there was to King than the "I have a dream" speech replayed by the corporate media ad nauseam on MLK Day each year. And maybe they would be inspired to consider some radical ideas when they learned that the historical figure many students admire most—whose birthday is a national holiday—has been sanitized for public consumption. King is, as historian and civil rights activist Vincent Harding said, an "inconvenient hero," but only as long as his conveniently and deliberately distorted image remains unchallenged.

Therefore, I hope that you will find the materials in this packet useful for introducing students to many ideas King expressed that have been "hidden in plain sight." These materials are a streamlined and updated version of the unit I wrote and taught in 2002. You can still access that unit, which includes [additional activities](#) and information, at <http://urbandreams.ousd.k12.ca.us/lessonplans/mlk2/index.html> (It was not available for nearly eight months in 2014. In April, OUSD took the entire Urban Dreams website down after the Fraternal Order of Police complained to Fox News about one of the extension lessons in the MLK unit regarding Mumia Abu Jamal. Concerted protest and the demand to repost Urban Dreams in its entirety eventually prevailed. Some materials related to that episode of police censorship are at the end of this packet.)

The most important resource here, I think, is the collection of Dr. King quotes in Handout B. Depending on what and how you teach, and on time limitations, you might choose to do something completely different with these quotes than what I've suggested. Handout A is one way to tap into what students already know—and don't know—about King and provides a framework for interacting with his words in the main lesson. But it may be more useful to select just a few quotes for reading and discussion, so that students can delve much more deeply into their meaning and their relevance to issues in their lives and the world today. Feel free to cut and paste, mix and match in any way that works for you and your students.

In any event, I hope you will find something useful here. I would love to hear your feedback about what happens in your classes when you teach anything related to this material, or just your thoughts about any of it. You can reach me at cbgord@aol.com

Craig Gordon
OUSD High/Middle School Teacher, 1990-2014

Handout A

What would Martin Luther King Jr. say about today's problems and struggles for justice?

Today we often hear about Martin Luther King Jr.'s belief in peaceful change and racial equality. But what else did Dr. King say about other issues that many people are concerned about today, such as war, corporate greed, workers' rights, education, housing, and health care, police brutality, and poverty in the U.S. and around the world?

Next to each of the statements listed below, check whether you think Martin Luther King had a strong belief about the subject.

<i>Belief</i>	Yes	No	Don't Know
1. We should work to achieve racial equality.			
2. The U.S. war in Vietnam is wrong, because our military is committing terrible acts of violence against innocent people.			
3. The Vietnam war hurts poor Americans, because the government cuts money from programs to help poor people in order to pay for the war.			
4. Labor unions (workers' organizations that fight for better pay and working conditions) are good for most people, including African Americans.			
5. People should disrupt society and businesses until the government does more to support poor people of all colors (and stops keeping them down).			
6. The government should make sure that every American receives a decent income each year.			
7. You can't get rid of racism without also getting rid of economic inequality and militarism (war), because all of these problems are connected.			
8. Protests should be nonviolent.			
9. Our society cares more about letting businesses make money than taking care of people.			
10. Our government should spend much more money on housing, education, and health care for poor people and much less money on war.			
11. Our government should take money from the rich and give it to the poor.			
12. U.S. businesses get rich off of the labor done by poor and hungry people around the world.			

Handout B

King's Words Your Textbook Never Quotes

1. **Read the quotes** from Martin Luther King, Jr. on these four pages.
2. **As you read**, check the list of beliefs on Handout A. In the left column next to each quote, write the number or numbers (1-11) of the belief(s) listed in Handout A that you think are expressed in that quote.
3. **Write a summary** of twenty words or less in the box to the right of each quote.
4. **Underline, highlight, or circle five sentences** on this handout that are most surprising or meaningful to you.

Belief(s) #	Martin Luther King Jr.'s Ideas	Summarize this idea in 20 words or less.
ex. 5	<p><u>On Nonviolent Direct Action</u>, Letter from Birmingham Jail, April 16, 1963:</p> <p>The purpose of our direct-action program is to create a situation so crisis-packed that it will inevitably open the door to negotiation... ...We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed.</p>	<p>Example: <i>Powerful people listen to us only after we disrupt things enough to cause problems for them.</i></p>
ex. 2, 7	<p><u>On Being Told to Stay Focused on Civil Rights</u> <i>National Labor Leadership Assembly for Peace, November 1967,</i></p> <p>When I first decided to take a firm stand against the war in Vietnam, I was subjected to the most bitter criticism, by the press, by individuals, and even by some fellow civil rights leaders. There were those who said that I should stay in my place, that these two issues did not mix and I should stick with civil rights....And I made it very clear that I recognized that justice was indivisible. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.</p>	<p>Example: <i>King opposed the Vietnam War, because he felt it was wrong and that all injustices are connected.</i></p>
	<p><u>The War in Vietnam – The Costs of the War Comes Home</u> <i>"Beyond Vietnam," Address," Riverside Church, New York, April 4, 1967:</i></p> <p>I knew that America would never invest the necessary funds or energies in [helping] its poor so long as adventures like Vietnam continued to draw men and skills and money like some demonic, destructive suction tube. So I was increasingly compelled to see the war as an enemy of the poor and to attack it as such.</p>	
	<p><u>The War in Vietnam – The Costs of the War Comes Home</u> <i>"The Casualties of War in Vietnam" Los Angeles, February 25, 1967</i></p> <p>[T]he promises of the Great Society [anti-poverty program] have been shot down on the battlefield of Vietnam. The pursuit of this widened war [make] the poor, white and Negro, bear the heaviest burdens both at the [war] front and at home. ...The security we profess to seek in foreign [wars] we will lose in our decaying cities. The bombs in Vietnam explode at home. They destroy the hopes and possibilities for a decent America.</p>	
	<p><u>The Greatest Source of Violence in the World</u> <i>"Beyond Vietnam" Address, Riverside Church, New York, April 4, 1967:</i></p> <p>[I've told our young men that] social change comes most meaningfully through nonviolent action. But they asked, and rightly so, "What about Vietnam?" They asked if our own nation wasn't using massive doses of violence to solve its problems, to bring about the changes it wanted. Their questions hit home, and I knew that I could never again raise my voice against the violence of the oppressed in the ghettos without having first spoken clearly to the greatest [source] of violence in the world today: my own government.</p>	

	<p><u>The War in Vietnam – Inflicting Suffering, Sowing Hatred</u> <i>"Beyond Vietnam," Address, Riverside Church, New York, April 4, 1967:</i></p> <p>Now [the Vietnamese people suffer] under our bombs and consider us, not their fellow Vietnamese, the real enemy...They watch as we poison their water, as we kill a million acres of their crops. They must weep as the bulldozers roar through their areas preparing to destroy the precious trees. ... So far we may have killed a million of them, mostly children.</p>	
	<p><u>Calling for a Revolution of Values</u> <i>"Beyond Vietnam," Address, Riverside Church, New York, April 4, 1967:</i></p> <p>I am convinced that ... we as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values. We must rapidly begin the shift from a thing-oriented society to a person-oriented society. When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights, are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, extreme materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered.</p>	
	<p><u>Revolution of Values Worldwide</u> <i>"Beyond Vietnam," Address, Riverside Church, New York, April 4, 1967:</i></p> <p>...A true revolution of values will soon look uneasily on the glaring contrast of poverty and wealth. With righteous indignation, it will look across the seas and see individual capitalists of the West investing huge sums of money in Asia, Africa, and South America, only to take the profits out with no concern for the social betterment of the countries, and say: "This is not just."</p>	
	<p><u>The Need to Equalize Wealth and Power</u> <i>May 1967:</i></p> <p>We must recognize that we can't solve our problem until there is a radical redistribution of economic and political power... This means a revolution of values and other things. We must see now that the evils of racism, economic exploitation [abuse], and militarism [building up military power] are all tied together. ... You can't really get rid of one without getting rid of the others... the whole structure of American life must be changed.</p>	
	<p><u>Questioning Capitalism</u> <i>From <u>Where Do We Go From Here?</u> 1967:</i></p> <p>There are forty million poor people here, and one day we must ask the question, "Why are there forty million poor people in America?" And when you begin to ask that question, you are raising a question about the economic system, about a broader distribution of wealth. When you ask that question, you begin to question the capitalistic economy.</p> <p>...And I'm simply saying that more and more, we've got to begin to ask questions about the whole society. We are called upon to help the discouraged beggars in life's marketplace. But one day we must come to see that an edifice [structure] which produces beggars needs restructuring. It means that questions must be raised. And ...when you deal with this you begin to ask the question[s], "Who owns the oil?" ... "Who owns the iron ore?" ... "Why is it that people have to pay water bills in a world that's two-thirds water?" These are words that must be said.</p>	

	<p>Considering Socialism From <i>I May Not Get There With You</i>, by Michael Eric Dyson Dyson quotes a recording made of King speaking to his staff in 1966</p> <p>We are now making demands that will cost the nation something. You can't talk about solving the economic problem of the Negro without talking about billions of dollars. You can't talk about ending slums without first saying profit must be taken out of slums. You're really tampering and getting on dangerous ground because you are messing with folk then. You are messing with the captains of industry... Now this means that we are treading in difficult waters, because it really means that we are saying that something is wrong., with capitalism.... There must be a better distribution of wealth and maybe America must move toward a Democratic Socialism.*</p> <p>* Dyson adds, "This statement is remarkable since King rarely allowed his positive response to democratic socialism to be recorded. His usual practice, according to one of his aides, was to [warn]... 'I can't say this publicly, and if you say I said it I'm not gonna admit to it.' "</p>	
	<p><u>Abolishing Poverty</u> <i>Teamsters and Allied Trade Councils, New York City, May 1967:</i></p> <p>The limited reforms we have won have been at bargain rates for the power structure. ... To enable the Negro to catch up, to repair the damage of centuries of denial and oppression means [spending money] to create jobs and job training; it means the outlay of billions for decent housing and equal education... ... The real cost lies ahead.</p>	
	<p><u>Abolishing Poverty Directly</u> <i>Teamsters and Allied Trade Councils, New York City, May 1967</i></p> <p>The solution to poverty is to abolish it directly by a now widely discussed measure: the guaranteed annual income. We are likely to find that the problems of housing and education...will themselves be affected if poverty is first abolished.</p>	
	<p><u>The Importance of Labor Unions</u> <i>Speech in 1965:</i></p> <p>The labor movement was the principal force that transformed misery and despair into hope and progress. Out of its bold struggles, economic and social reform gave birth to unemployment insurance, old age pensions, government relief for the destitute [poor], and above all new wage levels that meant not mere survival, but a tolerable life.</p>	
	<p><u>More on Labor Unions</u> <i>Teamsters and Allied Trade Councils, New York City, May 1967:</i></p> <p>Today Negroes want above all else to abolish poverty in their lives, and in the lives of the white poor. ...To end humiliation was a start, but to end poverty is a bigger task. It is natural for Negroes to turn to the Labor movement because it was the first and pioneer anti-poverty program.</p>	
	<p><u>The Right to Health Care</u> <i>From a speech to the Medical Committee for Human Rights Committee, 1966:</i> Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health is the most shocking and most inhumane.</p>	

	<p>Police Brutality – from “I have a dream” speech, August 28, 1963</p> <p>We can never be satisfied as long as the Negro is the victim of the unspeakable horrors of police brutality.</p>	
	<p>Riots</p> <p>“The Other America” speech at Grosse Pointe High School - March 14, 1968</p> <p>... it is not enough for me to stand before you tonight and condemn riots. It would be morally irresponsible for me to do that without, at the same time, condemning the ...intolerable conditions that exist in our society. These conditions are the things that cause individuals to feel that they have no other alternative than to engage in violent rebellions to get attention. And I must say tonight that a riot is the language of the unheard. And what is it America has failed to hear? It has failed to hear that the plight of the negro poor has worsened over the last twelve or fifteen years. It has failed to hear that the promises of freedom and justice have not been met. And it has failed to hear that large segments of white society are more concerned about tranquility and the status quo than about justice and humanity.</p>	
	<p><u>Planning Massive Disruption to Force the Government to Help the Poor</u> <i>From <u>I May Not Get There With You</u>, by Michael Eric Dyson.</i></p> <p>Dyson describes King’s plan for a Poor People’s Campaign to go Washington D.C. to force the federal government to end poverty. King planned to “use aggressive nonviolence” and massive civil disobedience, tying up traffic, staging sit-ins in Congress and government buildings, and shutting down business in the capital.</p>	
	<p><u>Occupy Washington, DC (and other cities)</u> <i>From <u>Inconvenient Hero</u> (1997), by Vincent Harding</i></p> <p><i>Harding writes about the Poor People’s Campaign that King planned for the Spring of 1968. King planned “to mobilize and train thousands of the poor and their allies to come to the nation’s capital and ‘just camp here and stay’ until the country’s elected leaders approved ‘a massive program on the part of the federal government that will make jobs or income a reality for every American citizen...’ King planned to lead the poor of all colors to disrupt businesses and the government in order to win their demands.</i></p> <p><i>Harding quotes King’s description of the plan: “We’ve got to find a method that will disrupt our cities if necessary, create the crisis that will force the nation to look at the situation, dramatize it, and yet at the same time not destroy life or property... We’ve got to make it known that until our problem is solved, America may have many, many days, but they will be full of trouble.”</i></p>	
	<p><u>Mass Civil Disobedience - Speech to SCLC Conference, Frogmore, S.C., 1968</u></p> <p>Non-violent protest must now mature to a new level to correspond to heightened black impatience and stiffened white resistance. The higher level is <i>mass civil disobedience</i>. ...There must be more than a statement to the larger society—there must be a force that interrupts its functioning at some key point. ...Mass civil disobedience as a new stage of struggle can [transform] the deep anger of the ghetto into a creative force.</p>	

Handout C

Reflecting on Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Ideas and Applying Them Today

Answer the following questions on a separate paper. (in groups, pairs, or individually)

Read through the chart in Handout A again. Explain how your knowledge about some of the subjects and ideas that King spoke about has changed after reading Handout B. Which ideas quoted in Handout B did you find most surprising, interesting, or powerful? Why?

1. What may be some reasons why the public almost never hears or reads that King said these things?
2. Now apply King's words to the issues we face today. For each answer, cite at least one King quote and explain reasons for your conclusion.



a. **The Effects of U.S. wars and military actions today:** Look for quotes in Handout B where you have written 2 or 3 (in the column left of the quote), and then imagine what King would say today about the U.S. wars against ISIS (Islamic State) in the Middle East, continuing involvement in Afghanistan, and drone strikes in various countries? How do King's ideas about U.S. policies in other countries and apply to those actions today? Give specific examples.

b. **The Cost of War to Social Programs in the U.S.:** Look for quotes in Handout B where you have written 3 or 10 (to the left of the quote), and then imagine what King would say about the situation today. How do King's ideas about spending money on war instead of programs for poor and working people apply now? Give specific examples.

c. **Protests against police violence and racism:** Look for quotes in Handout B where you have written 5 (to the left). Then imagine what King might have said about the various kinds of actions people have taken to protest since the police killing of Michael Brown, an unarmed young black man, in Ferguson, Missouri. How do King's ideas about the police violence, riots, protests that disrupt government and business apply to these actions? Also, consider the increased use by police departments of military tactics and equipment and solidarity shown between protestors in the U.S. and those under military attack in other countries. Do any of King's words suggest that he would have agreed with such a connection? Explain.



Open Mic #NYC2Palestine: Oppression Anywhere is a Threat to Justice Everywhere



d. **Demands By Many People Today that Government Should Help Poor and Working Class People Instead of Bailing Out Banks:** Look for quotes in Handout B where you have written 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, or 11. Considering those words, what do you think King would say about the causes of poor people's problems in the U.S. and around the world or what needs to be done about these problems today?

Handout C (continued)

4. Would Martin Luther King Jr. have supported the Occupy movement?

A. Read the two short articles below. B. On a separate paper, list two or three reasons that each of these writers give to support the view that MLK would or wouldn't have supported the Occupy movement. (C) Write a 3-paragraph essay supporting your thesis on this question with quotes King and these articles.

<p>http://www.theuptake.org/2012/01/17/martin-luther-king-would-have-occupied-wall-street/</p> <h2>Martin Luther King Would Have Occupied Wall Street</h2> <p>by Jacob Wheeler - January 17, 2012</p> <p>Martin Luther King — if he were alive today — would have embraced the Occupy Wall Street and Occupy Homes movement and spoken out against the current exploitative economic system, members of Occupy the Hood articulated during a spirited MLK Day march in Minneapolis.</p> <p>Nearly 200 activists from a diverse coalition of community organizing groups marched from the Salvation Army Harbor Light building to City Hall...and heard speeches and hip-hop performances. Their chants echoed the Occupy movement, and their speeches echoed the words of Dr. King — not just the well-known “I have a dream” speech on the National Mall in 1963, but King’s actions against poverty, inequality, and the Vietnam War.</p> <p>“There are deep divides and disparities [inequalities] within our population. There’s unemployment of 22 percent among the African-American community in Minnesota. And home ownership is less than 25 percent for black and brown communities.”</p> <p>Crystal Porter, a local Occupy Homes activist, offered a parallel between the current economic inequality affecting communities of color and slavery.</p> <p>She said that our nation would be very different today if our parents, their parents, and generations before them had not been treated so terribly by people with power.</p> <p>“We need to cut the strings that have been attached to our parents’ parents since slavery. If it weren’t for the destruction of Native Americans and the stolen labor of African Americans, these puppet-masters [the powerful people controlling us] would not be [super rich] today. If every slave was paid for their services and every tribe was paid the true worth for their land, America would look very different today.” Porter said.</p>	<p>http://thehill.com/blogs/blog-briefing-room/news/188519-rep-west-occupy-wall-street-protests-not-divinely-inspired?tmpl=component&print=1&page=</p> <h3><u>The Hill’s Blog Briefing Room</u></h3> <h2>West counters Obama: MLK would not have backed Wall Street protests</h2> <p>By Alicia M. Cohn - 10/19/11 12:15 PM ET</p> <p>Rep. Allen West (R-Fla.) rejected President Obama’s comparison between Martin Luther King Jr. and what he called the “Occupy Wall Street gangs.”</p> <p>“Martin Luther King Jr. would not have backed these types of protesters,” West said, noting that he was born and raised in King’s neighborhood. “First of all, Martin Luther King, Jr. had a focus, a message. He was divinely inspired. I don’t know what the inspiration is for these individuals.”</p> <p>Obama last weekend suggested the civil-rights leader would have sympathized with the ongoing demonstrations against Wall Street, indicating both movements sought justice.</p> <p>West slammed the protest movement as hypocritical and unfocused in comparison to the Tea Party movement in an interview with <i>Newsmax</i> published Tuesday evening.</p> <p>“I think the hypocrisy of this movement is somewhat laughable,” he said. “[Unemployment] has nothing to do with Wall Street. It has everything to do with the failed policies coming out of the Obama administration.”</p> <p>West said he is wary of the movement because it seems to want to end capitalism and replace it with something else.</p> <p>"This progressive movement is really what communists were called back in the 19th, beginning of the 20th century. We're starting to really see the face of who liberal progressives are," West said. "I think there is a danger in the people on Capitol Hill starting to embrace this movement."</p>
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5. Read the story below about actions carried out during the Martin Luther King Day weekend in 2015. In your group discuss these questions, and then write your response for each one.

- a. For many years, MLK Holiday events called on people to “Keep the Dream alive” and most major news stories focused on “how far we’ve come” in achieving a greater equality since Dr. King’s “I have a dream” speech in 1963. Compare that message about MLK’s message and legacy to the statement here by the Anti Police-Terror Project (AFTP). Which of King’s ideas do they emphasize? What lessons do they suggest we can learn from his words and actions? Do you agree or disagree with AFTP’s perspective? Explain.
- b. Imagine that you are planning events for next year’s Martin Luther King Day weekend. What current issues affecting you and others in your community might you choose to address in these events? What words and actions by Dr. King and others who were part of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements might you remind people of? In this spirit, what kinds of actions could you plan that might be part of a movement to address specific examples of racial injustice and economic inequality today?

Massive March & Concert Planned For MLK Holiday to Culminate 96 hours of Bay Area Direct Action to “Reclaim King’s Legacy”

The Anti Police-Terror Project organizes weekend of action to honor MLK’s radical stance against poverty and all forms of violence.

by Anti Police-Terror Project
Monday Jan 19th, 2015

(Oakland, CA) - A weekend of direct actions, teach-ins, politically charged cultural events and marches throughout the Bay Area will culminate at a Jobs and Economy March for the People on Monday, Jan. 19, beginning at 11 a.m. at Fruitvale BART. The march will end at the Coliseum City development site for a politically charged concert.

Since sunrise on Friday, hundreds of people from more than two dozen groupings responded to the Anti Police-Terror Project’s call to come together for 96 hours of direct action over the Martin Luther King Day weekend, January 16 – 19, 2015. The Bay Area joined thousands across the country responding to a call from Ferguson Action to reclaim Dr. King’s legacy of militant direct action in opposition to economic violence as well as police violence and discrimination.

Today’s march and concert, will connect the dots between police violence and economic violence. The march will begin at 11 am from Fruitvale Station - an infamous site of police terror where Oscar Grant III was murdered by BART police - in solidarity with Ferguson, New York, Cleveland, Sanford, Salt Lake City, and countless others who too have lost young Black men to police terror. We know well the grief that comes when brothers, sisters, sons, daughters, mothers and fathers are gunned down by those who are supposed to “protect and serve.” We march to reclaim King’s legacy and demand an immediate end to the war being waged on Black people in America.

“Actually, we who engage in nonviolent direct action are not the creators of tension. We merely bring to the surface the hidden tension that is already alive. We bring it out in the open, where it can be seen and dealt with.” - (1963) Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Our march concludes at a site of economic terror for the Black, Brown, working class and poor

people of Oakland: the Coliseum City project in East Oakland. Already, half of Oakland's Black population has been displaced, as the city seeks to continue the trend of economic violence that has plagued this part of Oakland for decades. What began as redlining, and continued through a lack of outside investment and predatory lending ultimately has decimated our neighborhoods. This redevelopment's projected outcome does little to serve the immediate communities of color in East Oakland, but does much to serve football fans and entertainment seekers. We march to demand an end to economic violence, police violence, educational violence and psychological violence that is perpetrated without consequence in our communities...

The Anti Police-Terror Project has released a long list of demands that were formally presented to Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf this past Friday. Specific demands around Coliseum City include:

- A local hiring policy that ensures 50% of the jobs go to Black people and the disenfranchised who are on probation and parole
- A Health Impact Assessment that lays out how many Oakland residents will be displaced as a result of this development and other undesirable outcomes
- A commitment to providing living-wage jobs with benefits to all employees of the Coliseum City project from the janitor to the retail clerk.

“We must rapidly begin the shift from a thing-oriented society to a person-oriented society. When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights, are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, extreme materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered.” - (1967) Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

The upcoming 96 hours of direct action across the Bay Area highlighted the unjust economic and political structures that King fought fiercely to defeat. Thousands unified, regardless of skin color, religion, or creed, as we reclaimed King's legacy and act, in tandem, against police and economic violence; two primary tools of white supremacy.

Actions took place throughout the Bay, and successfully shut down BART stations, the Federal Building in Oakland, the State Supreme Courthouse in San Francisco, traffic intersections, an auction on foreclosed houses and political meetings. In addition to direct actions, guerrilla theater, creative retail disruptions, teach-ins and marches also took place throughout the weekend.

“This weekend was just the beginning,” said ONYX co-chair Cat Brooks. “Clearly the people of the Bay Area, the nation and the world are declaring Black Power Matters. And we are going to continue to speak up and connect the dots and be militant. Happy Birthday Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King! I'm sure if MLK were here today, he would shut it down.”

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The Anti-Police Terror Project is a project of the ONYX Organizing Committee that in coalition with other organizations like the Community Ready Corps, the Alan Blueford Center for Justice, Workers World, Healthy Hoodz, and the Idriss Stelley Foundation is working to develop a replicable and sustainable model to end police terrorism in this country. We are a group of concerned and committed institutions, organizations and individuals committed to ending state sanctioned murder of Black, Brown & Poor People. We are led by the most impacted communities but are a multi-racial, multi-generational coalition. We meet every 3rd Thursday of every month at Eastside Arts Alliance at 7:30 p.m.

<https://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2015/01/19/18767196.php>

Addendum:
**How the Right Wing and Police Censored Social Justice Lessons in OUSD
and How They Were Defeated This Time**

<http://www.foxnews.com/us/2014/04/14/lesson-plan-asking-students-to-compare-mlk-mumia-abu-jamal-blasted-as-disgrace/>

FoxNews.com

[first appeared 4/10/14]

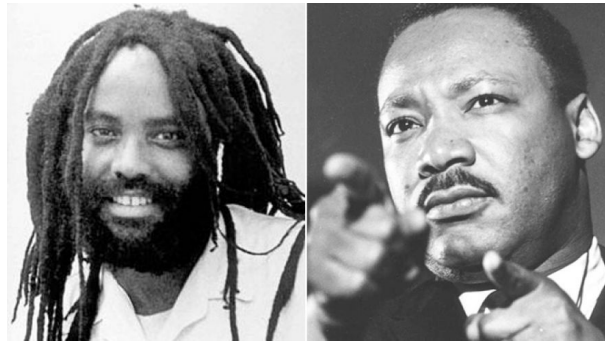
EDUCATION

Lesson has schoolkids comparing Martin Luther King to cop killer Mumia Abu-Jamal

By **Joshua Rhett Miller**

April 14, 2014 FoxNews.com

A lesson plan asking students to draw parallels between late civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. and convicted cop-killer Mumia Abu-Jamal is an “absolute disgrace,” the widow of the fallen officer told FoxNews.com.



Maureen Faulkner, whose husband Daniel was gunned down in Philadelphia on Dec. 9, 1981, said the latest effort to glorify Abu-Jamal’s past using a [lesson plan](#) posted on the Oakland (Calif.) Unified School District’s website is akin to advocating violence to young students.

“It’s an absolute disgrace that they’re trying to make any comparison.

Maureen Faulkner

“It’s a travesty,” Faulkner told FoxNews.com by phone early Thursday. “You’re going to teach children about a man who murdered a police officer? That’s not a good lesson to be teaching children. He was a radical, a militant. My question is: Are our tax dollars paying for this?”

The lesson plan, which was authored by teacher Craig Gordon for 11th-graders within the 37,000-student district, suggests to “critically examine a possible parallel” between King and “someone else many believe is currently targeted by the U.S. government, Mumia Abu-Jamal.”

It also asks students to consider the following statement: “The media, prison system and law enforcement organizations have censored Mumia Abu-Jamal. On one hand, there have been occasional stories in print and broadcast media about Mumia Abu-Jamal. On the other, despite the widespread support for Abu-Jamal that has made his case the most renown and controversial of death penalty cases in the world today, these stories are extremely rare and always refer to him as a ‘convicted cop-killer.’”

Despite Abu-Jamal’s “prolific writings” in several books, none of his work can be found in mainstream media, according to the lesson plan.

“My first take on this was: There’s a lot more educational things you could be teaching children about than a cold-blooded murderer,” Faulkner told FoxNews.com. “It’s an absolute disgrace that they’re trying to make any comparison.”

Faulkner noted that Abu-Jamal — a former Black Panther who has garnered worldwide support by some who believe he was victimized by a biased judicial system — will turn 60 later this month while imprisoned in Pennsylvania. Faulkner’s late husband, however, won’t be so fortunate.

“What about my husband’s 60th birthday? He’s been in the ground for the past 32 years,” Faulkner said. “My husband has missed 32 birthdays, 32 Christmases and 32 anniversaries. It’s an abomination.”

Troy Flint, director of public relations for the Oakland Unified School District, said the lesson plan is no longer part of the district's curriculum and was funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education.

"The fact that a website documenting Urban Dreams remains accessible is an oversight related to technology management; it does not speak to current instructional practice in OUSD," Flint wrote FoxNews.com in an e-mail. "To avoid any confusion in the future, we will conduct an inventory of the numerous websites created to support learning districtwide to ensure they conform with our present academic philosophy and do not inadvertently misrepresent Oakland schools."

Some academics contacted by FoxNews.com, however, said King and Abu-Jamal are “fundamentally similar” since both have committed their lives to challenging systemic racism in the United States.

Mark Lewis Taylor, a professor of theology and culture at the Princeton Theological Seminary and a longtime Mumia supporter, identified two major differences between Abu-Jamal and King, saying the former radio journalist has worked more obviously than the assassinated civil rights leader within an “international framework of justice struggle.”

Abu-Jamal, according to Taylor, also worked more than King to “mobilize grassroots organizations” and movements. King had a tendency, Taylor said, to privilege black church organizations and, at times, espouse a certain sense of black middle-class advantage and leadership.

“But what King and Abu-Jamal shared should not be overlooked,” Taylor wrote FoxNews.com in an email. “One shouldn’t juxtapose a respectable ‘cuddly’ Martin Luther King over and against a more radical and supposedly ‘villainous’ Abu-Jamal — as the media hype often has it when they relentlessly misrepresent him as a ‘cop-killer.’ In fact, authorities have had the wrong man on death row and in prison these 32 years, not the man who actually shot Officer Faulkner.”

In 2011, Philadelphia’s district attorney announced that prosecutors would no longer pursue the death penalty against Abu-Jamal. Instead, he will spend the rest of his life in prison for killing Faulkner, a 25-year-old patrolman who scuffled with Abu-Jamal’s brother during an early morning traffic stop. Abu-Jamal, whose real name is Wesley Cook, was wounded by a round from Faulkner’s gun and a .38-caliber revolver registered to Abu-Jamal was found at the scene with five spent shell casings, according to trial testimony.

In 1995, Abu-Jamal authored “Live From Death Row” and has been the subject of numerous documentaries and books. The onetime journalist has also enjoyed support from, among others, actor Tim Robbins and from as far away as France, where a street bears his name in a Paris suburb.

Most recently, Abu-Jamal appeared in national headlines in February when his link to President Obama's nominee for a top Justice Department post, Debo Adebile, was revealed. Adebile faced criticism for his role in getting Abu-Jamal's death sentence overturned during his time as acting director of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund. Adebile's confirmation was blocked in early March.

King’s niece, Alveda, said she wasn’t very familiar with Abu-Jamal’s case, but said any comparison to her uncle should begin with a thorough understanding of his nonviolent philosophy.

“Students should be required to know Martin Luther King, Jr., before comparing anyone to him,” she told FoxNews.com by phone. “I believe that law enforcement officials, those who find themselves at odds with the law, and anyone who has a conflict for any reason would be best served by embracing the nonviolent philosophy of Martin Luther King, Jr.”

The Fox News article above quotes Martin Luther King Jr.'s niece, who was asked about Mumia Abu Jamal and his relevance to Dr. King's legacy. Here is what one of Martin Luther King Jr.'s son's said on this subject:

Martin Luther King III says Mumia Abu-Jamal and the MOVE 9 are unjustly incarcerated
speech by MLK III | 01.21.2008

My father's words that, "Freedom only comes through persistent agitation, through persistent rising up", were true in 1982 when Mumia Abu Jamal was unjustly convicted for the death of a Philadelphia policeman because he dared to use national air-waves to agitate for the rights of MOVE and for racial and economic justice. They are true today as we continue to fight for his freedom....

We live in a society shrouded in hypocrisy, a nation that expects its children to abhor violence but takes every opportunity to promote the "might is right" philosophy.... While we promote the notion throughout the world that America's system of justice is colorblind, we live with the reality that racism is inherent in every single facet of our criminal justice system....From the aerial bombing of MOVE to the unjust incarceration of MOVE members, Mumia Abu-Jamal and countless others; to the unjustified and unpunished killings and beatings of people of color; to the "blue mentality" pervading police forces across the country that rewards brutal behavior; to the increasing incidents of police abuse and harassment of even white Americans, we understand the need to continue and remain steadfast in our struggle for freedom.

Martin Luther King, Jr.'s journey began in Montgomery with civil rights and ended in Memphis with human rights. SCLC's current support of human rights around the world is consistent with our support of the rights of MOVE.

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**PULITZER PRIZE WINNER ALICE WALKER OPPOSES POLICE CENSORSHIP
OF OAKLAND SCHOOLS CURRICULUM**

November 8, 2014

I am dismayed to learn that the Oakland School Board has dismantled a website of Social Justice lesson plans because the police objected to it. The Board has a duty to defend students' right to learn against police interference. I am asking the Oakland School District to repost the Urban Dreams website.

The police attack on Urban Dreams is part of a long campaign to injure and defame political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, a brilliant journalist and author who is innocent of all charges against him. In October the police obtained a state gag law in Pennsylvania specifically intended to silence Mumia Abu-Jamal. One lesson on the Urban Dreams website in Oakland asked students to compare media suppression of Mumia's writings with suppression of the radical thoughts of Martin Luther King, and the police call for censorship was meant to shut out the words of both these defenders of freedom.

I hope that the educators of the Oakland School Board will defend free speech and academic freedom by restoring the Urban Dreams website.

In Peace,
Alice Walker

CC: Antwan Wilson, Superintendent; David Kakishiba, School Board President; Oakland;
Teachers for Mumia; Oakland Tribune; San Francisco Chronicle

NEWS & OPINION » OPINION

Police Censorship Defeated — for Now

The decision in Oakland to reinstate the Urban Dreams curriculum was a victory for social justice and a defeat for censorship.

By *Craig Gordon*

How often do corporate media mention that Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "Dream" speech called out "the unspeakable horrors of police brutality?" Never. But Ferguson and Staten Island call to mind those words and others by MLK, such as, "Riot is the language of the unheard" and his naming "[his] own government ... the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today."

Today's police use militarized force to "protect and serve" the One Percent and intimidation to silence critics. St. Louis cops last week demanded that five black NFL players on the hometown Rams be disciplined for publicly showing solidarity with Ferguson protestors. And, for the past seven months, police pressured the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) into eliminating a lesson about MLK's deepest critique of American injustice. But persistent protest defeated this censorship.

Last April, Fox News reported that the national Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) objected to a history unit on MLK's little-known radical ideas posted on the OUSD website. The unit included a lesson asking students to consider a parallel between textbooks' exclusion of King's radical ideas and media censorship of the most controversial death-penalty case of our time: the 1982 conviction of ex-Black Panther Mumia Abu-Jamal for killing a Philadelphia cop.

OUSD submitted to police pressure by taking the MLK unit offline, along with 26 other social justice lessons collectively called Urban Dreams. This ensured that students wouldn't learn about MLK's ideas challenging American society's core values or about Abu-Jamal, the nation's best-known critic of police violence.

The FOP professed reverence for MLK and outrage that a lesson connected him to Abu-Jamal. But police also spied on, abused, and threatened King. In his final year, King consistently opposed the Vietnam War, US aggression worldwide, and a system in which "profit motives and property rights are considered more important than people." He was murdered weeks before he was to lead a multiracial Poor People's campaign to occupy Washington, DC.

OUSD's decision to repost Urban Dreams shows that police censorship can be defeated. Persistent pressure from community supporters, teacher unions, the county labor council, Ed Asner, and Alice Walker prevailed. But the forces of "law and order" won't relent. It took activism by millions to win Civil Rights movement demands and end the Vietnam War. It will take more to achieve what King and Abu-Jamal both have advocated: a society with jobs, housing, food, education, medical care, and a healthy environment for all.

Craig Gordon is an OUSD teacher.

The Urban Dreams website was reposted in December 2014 at

<http://urbandreams.ousd.k12.ca.us>

The original version of the unit, "Hidden in Plain Sight: Martin Luther King Jr.'s Radical Vision," is at <http://urbandreams.ousd.k12.ca.us/lessonplans/mlk2/index.html>

2017 UPDATE: The website has apparently been taken down again!

2017 Update

<https://www.commondreams.org/views/2017/05/16/america-needs-new-poor-peoples-campaign#>

Tuesday, May 16, 2017

by [ThinkProgress](#)

America Needs a New Poor People's Campaign

The future of our democracy depends on us completing the work of a Third Reconstruction.

by [Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II](#)

In a spectacle of religious hypocrisy last week, preachers who say so much about what God says so little — and so little about what God says so much — stood in the Rose Garden as a backdrop for [President Donald Trump's executive order on "religious liberty."](#) As they celebrated this administration's willingness to let them use religious freedom as an excuse to force their "values" on someone else, Trump pointed to the legacy of the African-American church as an example of faith in public life.

In every con, there's a grain of truth, whether the person who is speaking knows it or now.

I know the prophetic African American church tradition that grew up on the edges of plantations and spoke clearly for the first time into this nation's public life when Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass first escaped from slavery to freedom. On my mother and father's side of our family tree combined, I count more than eight hundred years of public ministry in that tradition. We do not know how to preach without engaging the powers in the public square. Whenever I open the Scriptures, I read about a God who hears the cry of the suffering and stands on the side of the oppressed for justice.

As I have prayed and read the Scriptures this year, I hear a resounding call to the very soul of this nation: We need a new Poor People's Campaign for a Moral Revival in America.

"In the end, love is the greatest power to sustain a fight for what is right."

In response to this deeply spiritual call, I announced last week that I am stepping down from leadership of the North Carolina Chapter of the NAACP to respond to an invitation from impacted people, activists, and moral leaders across the nation to serve with them in leading a new Poor People's Campaign. On Monday, May 15th at 10am Eastern, we are inviting members of the Resistance across the nation to join us by [livestream](#) for a press conference where we will outline plans for the campaign in 2017/18.

Fifty years ago, Dr. Martin Luther King called for a "revolution of values" in America, inviting people who had been divided to stand together against the "triplets of evil" — militarism, racism, and economic injustice — to insist that people need not die from poverty in the richest nation to ever exist. Poor people in communities across America — black, white, brown and Native — responded by building a Poor People's Campaign that would demand a Marshall Plan for America's poor.

This is the true legacy of religious freedom in America.

Dr. King, along with many other impacted people and moral leaders in the Poor People's Campaign of 1967/68, began an effort to build a broad, fusion coalition that would audit America, demanding an accounting of promissory notes that had been returned marked "insufficient funds." We have not finished their work. Though Trump's presidency is the culmination of a violent backlash against the Second Reconstruction that Dr. King and many others led, the future of our democracy depends on us completing the work of [a Third Reconstruction](#) today.

This is why I hear the Spirit calling us to build a new Poor People's Campaign.

The fights for racial and economic equality are as inseparable today as they were half a century ago. Make no mistake about it: We face a crisis in America. The twin forces of white supremacy and unchecked corporate greed have gained newfound power and influence, both in statehouses across this nation and at the highest levels of our federal government. Sixty-four million Americans make less than a living wage, while millions of children and adults continue to live without access to healthcare, even as extremist Republicans in Congress threaten to strip access away from millions more. As our social fabric is stretched thin by widening income inequality, politicians criminalize the poor, fan the flames of racism and xenophobia to divide the poor, and steal from the poor to give tax breaks to our richest neighbors and budget increases to a bloated military.

Americans across the country are crying out in defiance — and for change. Bringing this cry into the public square, a Resistance has emerged: The Fight for \$15, the Movement for Black Lives, Moral Mondays, the Women's March, The People's Climate March and No Ban/No Wall protesters have taken to the streets. We are, indeed, The Majority, crying out against the hijacking of democracy by the richest cabinet in U.S. history and a Congressional leadership that does its bidding.

At such a time as this, we need a new Poor People's Campaign for Moral Revival to help us become the nation we've not yet been. I don't just know this because the river of resistance in my tradition echoes its truth down through the centuries. I know it because I have seen it in North Carolina.

Four years ago, when extremist forces took over all three branches of government in my home state, people cried out in resistance. "Moral Mondays" protests drew tens of thousands to our state house in 2013 and inspired the largest state-government-focused civil disobedience campaign in U.S. history. Through sustained moral fusion organizing, we were able to push back against extremism for four long years; to see political change in the defeat of an extremist Republican governor, the election of a progressive majority to our state Supreme Court, a federal court order for special elections to address racial gerrymandering in state legislature districts, and the overturning of a monster voter suppression law that targeted African-Americans, according to a federal court, "with almost surgical precision."

What began with an outcry in North Carolina became a sustained movement for political change through moral, fusion organizing, led by poor and impacted people. Throughout America's history — from abolition, to women's suffrage, to labor and civil rights — real social change has come when impacted people have joined hands with allies of good will to stand together against injustice. These movements did not simply stand against partisan foes. They stood for the deep moral center of our Constitutional and faith traditions. Those deep wells sustained poor and impacted people who knew in their bones both that power concedes nothing without a fight and that, in the end, love is the greatest power to sustain a fight for

what is right.

This moment requires us to push into the national consciousness a deep moral analysis that is rooted in an agenda to combat systemic poverty and racism, war mongering, economic injustice, voter suppression, and other attacks on the most vulnerable. We need a long term, sustained movement led by the people who are directly impacted by extremism.

I am grateful for my sister, Dr. Liz Theoharis, and many friends at the [Kairos Center](#) who have laid the foundation for this campaign over the past decade. Much like Septima Clark and the Highlander Center's Citizenship Schools in the 1950s and 60s, they have identified and connected grassroots leaders across the nation who are ready to join hands with new allies for sustained direct action that can fundamentally shift the narrative about who we are and who we want to be in this land.

To share this story about the America that can and shall be, I am joining my brother, Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, and others to produce "**The Gathering: A Time for Reflection, Revival and Resistance**" (<http://www.breachrepairers.org>), a monthly program, beginning June 4th, 2017, that will bring together Movement music, interviews with impacted people in the Poor People's Campaign, a timely sermon for the public square and an "altar call" to action as we continue to build this movement. We hope you'll join us and invite others to come along as we commit to go forward together, not one step back!

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The Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II is the architect of the Forward Together Moral Monday Movement, president of the North Carolina NAACP and pastor of the Greenleaf Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Goldsboro.