



CIVICS IN REAL LIFE

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day

Civics is all around us. There is a lot to know about the government and how “We the People” interact with the government and each other. Let’s help each other expand our civic literacy.

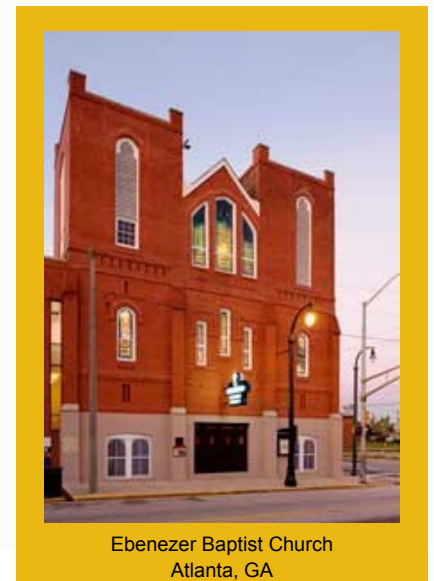
In the history of the world, there are few that are remembered in a single breath, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., is one of them. Dr. King is well known to students across the globe. Students as young as kindergarten learn the impact he had on civil rights and the nonviolence movement.

Annually, his life and work are celebrated on the third Monday in January close to his birthday on January 15th, emphasizing the importance of [service](#), where those wanting to help improve their communities might reflect upon Dr. King’s example of serving others.

He is perhaps best known for his legendary ‘[I have a dream](#)’ speech, delivered at the 1963 March on Washington. But we should also remember a sermon he once gave, discussing his own place within the Civil Rights Movement. In February of 1968, Dr. King delivered a sermon entitled the “[Drum Major Instinct](#)” at Atlanta’s Ebenezer Baptist Church, in which he imagined his own funeral and explained to his congregation how he would like to be remembered.

Even with all of his accomplishments - holding a doctorate in theology from Boston University, winning the [Nobel Peace Prize](#), helping to advance the [Civil Rights Act of 1964](#) and the [Voting Rights Act of 1965](#), and all of his other work to advance civil rights and liberties in the United States - Dr. King asked his congregation to remember him as someone who “tried to give his life serving others.” He wanted to be remembered for providing food, clothing, and spiritual comfort to those in need, and not for his life’s achievements.

To many, Dr. King was the “Drum Major” of the Civil Rights Movement, but that is not how he saw himself. He never “desired to be out front or to lead the parade.” He did what he did because it was the right thing to do, and said that if he were to be remembered as a drum major, let it be for justice, peace, and righteousness.



Ebenezer Baptist Church
Atlanta, GA

To Think and To Do: Dr. King said, “everybody can be great...because anybody can serve.” As you celebrate the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. this MLK Day, reflect on the importance of providing service to your community and the ways in which you can make it better. Participate in a service project of your choosing as a way of honoring Dr. King. View some examples from [AmeriCorp](#) to get started.



Learn MORE about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

- [The King Philosophy](#), from The King Center
- [King Resources Overview](#), from The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute
- [Martin Luther King Exhibit](#), from the National Archives



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