

Pass It On: Continuing the Mission of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

In addition to planning the march and program, the MLK Coalition donates a portion of today's contributions to the library for the purchase of books about Dr. King and the civil rights movement. Each year, we share with you information about some of the books purchased with those funds or related to the on-going struggle to make our nation live up to its highest ideals and the mission of Dr. King. Whether you may read, read aloud to children, or read with a discussion group, you will find books to renew your inspiration in the months ahead. When we read about the struggle for civil rights, we build our understanding of the dedication it takes to make change happen. If these or other books inspire you, please consider coming to the MLK Coalition meetings and helping us in our work. Thanks to Martha Viehmann and staff of the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County for compiling the list and writing the descriptions.

Books for Adults

The King Years: Historic Moments in the Civil Rights Movement by Taylor Branch (2013). *The King Years* delivers riveting tales of everyday heroes who achieved miracles and yet poignantly fell short. This compact volume brings to life eighteen pivotal dramas, beginning with the impromptu speech that turned an untested, twenty-six-year-old Martin Luther King into a public figure on the first night of the 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott up to student leader Bob Moses mobilizing college volunteers for Mississippi's 1964 Freedom Summer, and the passage of the first of several landmark laws for equal rights

The Rebellious Life of Mrs. Rosa Parks by Jeanne Theoharis (2013). Rosa Parks did more than refuse to stand. Before she ignited and tirelessly supported the year-long Montgomery bus boycott, she was a defiant and dedicated activist. After receiving death threats, she and her family moved to Detroit, where Mrs. Parks continued her contributions to the struggle for freedom and justice. To understand this icon of the civil rights movement, her decades of activism, and all that it takes to promote social justice, read this book, the first full-length biography of Parks for adults.

The Warmth of Other Suns by Isabel Wilkerson (2010). This definitive history of the great migration of African Americans covers the conditions that pushed millions of blacks to leave the communities they knew throughout much of the 20th century, chronicles the lives of three representative migrants, and demonstrates the influence that the relocation of so many African Americans to the north and west had on the civil rights movement and our nation's culture. Dr. King receives only two brief references, but accounts of the dignified resistance of anonymous blacks and the stories of lesser-known civil rights activists like H. T. Moore of Florida reveal a few of the uncounted contributions of many determined individuals to the movement.

Before His Time: The Untold Story of Harry T. Moore, America's First Civil Rights Martyr by Ben Green (1999). Few outside of Florida know the story of NAACP Coordinator Harry T. Moore who organized for workers rights, justice, and an end to segregation in that state for over 15 years. He was fearless and dedicated, which drew the attention of powerful whites. He and his wife died when their home was bombed on Christmas Day, 1951.

Books for Teens

The Freedom Summer Murders by Don Mitchell (2014). The disappearance of Civil Rights volunteers James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner in 1964 caught the nation's attention. This book tells the story of their last days and the decades-long journey to justice and to the freedom and equality for which they gave their lives. This is an engaging and detailed account, although the overview of the Civil Rights movement up to Freedom Summer goes too quickly and may be confusing. Mitchell quotes the language Southern whites used in the 1960s and tells a grim story, so this is definitely a book for teens, ages 13 and up.

Martin Luther King, Jr.: Civil Rights Leader by Kristine Carlson Asselin (2014). This brief biography begins with the Montgomery bus boycott, the action that established King's leadership abilities. In short chapters, it then provides an overview of King's early life and of the key events that he led or inspired. Asselin also includes brief excerpts from some of King's works and examples of connections he forged, such as his telegram of support to Cesar Chavez, who advocated for migrant farm workers. A wealth of photographs enhances this short book, which is suitable for youth aged 10 and up.

A Time to Break Silence: The Essential Works of Martin Luther King, Jr., for Students (2013). Although I found this book in the Children's section, King's sermons, speeches, and writings were mainly written for adults, though middle and high school readers will find much inspiration in this collection. Eighteen selections, grouped by topics and followed by discussion questions, introduce youth to a wide variety of King's work, from the familiar "I Have a Dream" to a speech delivered to junior high students. A great resource for schools, orators, and anyone looking to "transform dark yesterdays of injustice into bright tomorrows."

Children's Books

Singing for Dr. King by Angela Shelf Medearis, illus. by Cornelius Van Wright and Ying-Hwa Hu (2004). An easy-reader. A true story about two girls from Selma, Alabama who joined in the 1965 march.

Child of the Civil Rights Movement by Paula Young Shelton and Raul Colón (2010). The daughter of civil rights leader Andrew Young writes from a child's perspective about the conditions in the South and the protests to end unfair laws. This story ends with the passing of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, "one battle" with "many more to come," and "the baton would pass to us...children of the civil rights movement." Lovely illustrations complement the text, which is appropriate for early elementary grades.

When Grandmama Sings by Margaree King Mitchell, illus. by James E. Ransome (2012). Vibrant water color paintings and an engrossing story about the power of music, faith, and love introduce children to life in the segregated South and the hope of ordinary people to change it. An engrossing story suitable for middle elementary grades and up. Mitchell and Ransome also collaborated on *Uncle Jed's Barbershop* and *Granddaddy's Gift*. After you read about Belle and her grandma on a singing tour from Biloxi to Atlanta, you'll want to read the other books! Ms. Mitchell encourages children to aim high through her Everybody Has a Dream Program.

The Girl from the Tar Paper School: Barbara Rose Johns and the Advent of the Civil Rights Movement by Teri Kanefield (2014). A 16-year-old student in Virginia grew tired of the “temporary” shacks that served as extra classrooms for the too-many black students in her rural high school. The white students attended a modern brick building in the center of town, and it didn’t look like the school board was ever going to build a real school for the black students. Determined to bring an end to inequality and inspired by her “firebrand” uncle and other outspoken relatives, Barbara Johns convinced student leaders to secretly plan a student strike. Read about their clever plans, her inspiring speech, and the students who started the civil rights movement in Prince Edward County, Virginia.

Robert Parris Moses by Bianca Dumas (2004). This fact-filled book from the African American Biographies series informs readers about a little known figure in the civil rights movement. Moses lived out his belief in the power of education by completing his PhD after decades away from school and facing down threats to continue the Freedom Schools and voter registration in Mississippi. For this work, Moses received a MacArthur Foundation award, which he used to start the Algebra Project to promote college readiness. This is a fascinating story, but the writing is sometimes dull. Mr. Moses’s life deserves a storyteller who will capture children’s imaginations to show how the power of philosophy, math, and courage can change the world one voter, one student at a time.

Let It Shine: Stories of Black Women Freedom Fighters by Andrea Davis Pinkney, illus. by Stephen Alcorn (2000). This book provides well written accounts of ten women who spoke up for freedom, from Sojourner Truth, who wore “her dignity like a well-stitched quilt” to Shirley Chisholm, whose years in Congress and Presidential campaign inspired others to get involved in politics. Chapters cover familiar figures and lesser-known women, too. Learn about Biddy Mason, an enslaved woman who walked to California at the back of a wagon train, petitioned for and won her freedom, and helped to build the first AME church in Los Angeles, and Dorothy Height, an eloquent orator who worked to end segregation and to bring peaceful change to Harlem. The colorful illustrations are as inspiring as the stories of these great women.