

Name

Professor

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### **Influence of Martin Luther King Jnr. on Quality Education**

Throughout my life, many world changers – from white to black, Christian to Muslim, young and old to physically abled and crippled, social justice and civil rights to environmental and political individuals – influenced my disposition, behavior and perspectives. For this article, I focus on Martin Luther King Jr. In 1929, Martin Luther King Jr. was born by Martin Luther King Sr. and Alberta Williams King in Georgia (King and Ford 217). He grew up with his siblings in Sweet Auburn neighborhood where prominent and prosperous African Americans resided. At the age of 35 years, King received a Nobel Peace Prize; used more than USD 54,000 he won to further his activism in civil rights movement. Four years later, James Earl Ray was assassinated during the civil rights activist at the Lorraine Motel while leading a protest for striking garbage workers in the city (Pepper 159). Currently, the motel is a National Civil Rights Museum site, owing to King's activism. While his own people mistreated him, Martin Luther King Jr.'s international recognition, inspirations, and commitments informed my education philosophy of access to quality education as he emerged as an African American leader of the first rank and social justice.

Martin Luther King Jr. has received international recognition for his civil rights activism role. King was championed against the discrimination of the black population in America, as an executive committee member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; at the time, this organization was unique. He operated from Mahatma Gandhi's

techniques of nonviolence. He took over leadership role the first great nonviolent revolt by African Americans in contemporary US, which lasted 382 days, and in 1956, the demonstrations influenced the Supreme Court's decision to illegalize racial segregation in buses (King and Coretta 123). As a Christian, King assumed the presidency of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, which offered new leadership for the growing civil rights movement in the nation. Over a period of eleven years, until 1968, the activist wrote five books and various articles, spoke more than 2,500 times, and travelled more than six million miles in regions that experienced injustices and mass actions. The protest in Birmingham, Alabama caught the attention of the whole world; it offered what King referred to as the coalition of conscience and inspired his message 'Letter from a Birmingham Jail'. Besides leading peaceful marches in Washington D.C. to register African Americans as voter and more than Twenty-five arrests, he received five honorary degrees and named the Man of the Year in 1963 by the Time magazine, thereby becoming both a symbolic leader for blacks and the world. Today, his accomplishments are taught to not only Americans children regardless of their race, as students and scholars study his teachings and experiences globally. This fact planted a seed of hope inside me, regardless the difficulties and barriers I face in life, I could be the one that makes a difference and be known as a historic social fighter. In recent days we are watching on media Syrian people being killed by what president Trump called him (The dictator animal Bashar Alassad) who killed half a million of his own called him recently, people stopped thinking that lives of Syrians matters, and to be more precise, the Syrian blood became cheap on people's minds, yet if an American is killed in Syria, he would be all over the media. One day the dictator will be taken down, and the world will remember the Syrian heroes who died for their thoughts, freedom and their country.

Martin Luther King Jr. was an influential leader who directed the masses towards the cause of justice. He led numerous nonviolent riots that culminated into change of laws and policies locally and internationally. In his less than Thirteen years of activism, he led thousands of protests and millions of protestors to assist African Americans achieve substantial progress towards racial equality through nonviolent approaches. More so, he advised two important white activists, Harris Wofford and Glenn Smiley, in promoting Gandhi's beliefs on nonviolence (Farrell 90). Earlier, King believed in self-defense, and obtained guns; however, after knowing Gandhi, he vowed never to use arms against his possible attackers (Bennett 217). For instance, in 1968, King supported a nonviolent protest by black sanitary public works staff regarding pay rise and fair treatment (Townsend 364). That year, his assassination demonstrated King's additional influence. The demise led to nationwide race riots across many cities. Days after his assassination, Congress approved the 1968 Civil Rights Act; Title VIII of the Act, known as the Fair Housing Act, outlawed discrimination in housing and related transactions based on race, religion, and/or national origin – this later included sex, family status, and disability (Carson 3). At the international level, he influenced the development of South Africa's Civil Rights Movement and the Black Consciousness Movement (Ansell 139; Clinton 137). I learned that people learn from each other, watching King making changes people followed the path to fight for their rights all over the world, and that is a positive impact towards social equality and justice everywhere in this world. When King approached people's desire for change using nonviolence gave the world a good lesson, to make a change following the peaceful path is the most important thing because at the end we are all human and the life of everyone matters. Also the nonviolent revolt made people from different race to support his goal.

Moreover, Martin Luther King Jr. was committed to his cause, to the point of his death, through various activities. In 1955, King served as Montgomery Bus Boycott's spokesperson in which blacks in the region to push the integration of the bus lines in the city. After more than 380 days effort, the Supreme Court ruled against racial segregation (King & Ford 146). Two years later, he assumed for the presidency of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference developed to offer new leadership for civil rights activism, thereby contributing to the current civil rights movement in America. In 1963, King led a group of civil rights activists in nonviolent campaigns in Alabama, a region where segregation was predominant. The police responded to the campaigns brutally using dogs and waterhoses further provoking a national outrage towards the adoption of the civil rights legislation (King and Coretta 90). During the campaigns, King wrote the "Letter from a Birmingham Jail", documenting his philosophy and tactics, which are currently taught in universities globally. In addition, he participated in the March on Washington protest that drew more than 250,000 protestors to the national mall. That day, he delivered the famous speech, 'I Have a Dream'; consequently, reinforcing his engraved status of a social change leader, and bolstered the America's civil rights act. His activism contribution influenced the Times magazine to name him the man of the year. He was the center of passing the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964, which made racial segregation illegal in the US. Particularly, the law outlawed discrimination of blacks and other minority groups in hiring, education, transportation, or public accommodation (Bennett 212).

Such influence, contributions, and have by Martin Luther King Jr. inspired my personal philosophy on education that everyone, regardless of their race, gender, sex, gender identity, disability, religion, or nationality, should be provided quality and affordable education. Currently, the world celebrates everything King fought for and achieved. Desegregation encompassed only

a small segment of his major inspirations and contributions, but profoundly altered the image of the public school system, thereby creating equal opportunities for kids regardless of their skin color. I believe the country's education system needed to be fixed back then so people could be judged due their content their personalities rather than their identity with their superficial traits, such as skin color and faith. Nevertheless, based on our lives now we can see that people with higher education in general have higher level of living than people who don't, and that is a great inspiration for all people.

In the article, 'The Purpose of Education', Martin Luther King Jr. scripted the importance of education in the community, portraying its goals of intelligence and social living. As I walk around college and engage in different debates and discussions around the school, I find many young people harboring wrong perspective about the purpose of education. Most of them believe that education should equip them with the right exploration instruments to enable them trample over the unlearned, who are apparently the larger majority. At the same time, others believe that education should provide those ways to noble destinations rather than means to ends. I used to think in a similar fashion. In fact, I believed that when I complete my education, I will be very respectable; interestingly, many people are as equally learned. King's perspective on education shifted my philosophy to viewing education as having a dual-function to enhance our lives. First, is its utility aspect and second is its culture aspect. Education should be able to make us more efficient, enabling us to achieve, with intensity, our legitimate life goals. Education should also train us rapid, assertive, and effective thinking. Incisive thinking, as well as personal thinking can be quite difficult in many times. According to King., the role of education is to train us to think intensively and critically (185). Undoubtedly, education that ends at efficiency only could

prove a great menace to the local, national, regional, and global society. Thus, intelligence is not enough.

I believe education goes beyond intelligence to further accommodate the aspect of social living, including how we associate with each other. True education does not merely culminate in the mere ability to unleash memorized facts and/or score better in standardized tests. The goal of true education is both intelligence and character. A complete education system should provide students – who are the current and future generations – with the not only the power to concentrate, but also the worthy goals and causes upon which to concentrate on. For instance, there is nothing inspirational to know that  $y$  equals 4 when  $4y$  equals 8; a student must know *why*  $y$  equals 4. True, broad education, therefore, will transmit substantial knowledge about race to the individual besides accumulating experiences of social living, such as Martin Luther King Jr. As a matter of fact, many Americans, whom I join, would agree that our public education system is altogether fragmented (Pew Research Centre<sup>7</sup>). Actually, a one-fit-all solution to the problem does not exist, at least for now. Students in urban regions have unique education needs. Similarly, students in the small, rural communities have unique education needs. It is quite unfortunate that the current education system fails because it does not consider those unique needs (Ansell 137).

In conclusion, Martin Luther King Jr. influenced perspective of a quality education. Until his assassination, King inspired the current world of civil rights movements. His actions were inspired by Mahatma Gandhi, who advocated for nonviolence, holding peaceful protests in a bid to establish the principle of equality for blacks, as well as the economically malnourished individuals and the victims of social injustice. King led various civil rights and social justice marches, including the Montgomery Bus Boycott along with the March on Washington, which

saw various landmark legislations, such as the 1964 Act of Civil Rights and the 1965 Act of Voting Rights. He inspired the works of civil rights activists globally, and more so, the education system and my personal philosophy of education. Currently, schools are less segregated than during King's time. Through his work, he stated the need for education to enhance individuals' intelligence and character. That was his perspective of true education, which inspired by position of quality education. I believe quality education should train young people to be logical, realistic, and creative thinkers. This would assist our generation to encompass smart people who can solve the world's problems, and give minorities who are being treated because of their religion, skin color or their identities the courage to stand to make a change. Also I agree with all quotes that were said from different people, because one act can be explained by a million words and each person watch things from his points of views based on his culture, community and identity.

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