

A Moral Obligation- The Story of Martin Luther King, Jr.



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CAST

CHARACTER	DESCRIPTION
Narrator	
Michael (Martin) Luther King, Jr.	Preacher, NAACP Pres.
Coretta (Scott) King	Wife
Michael (Martin) Luther King, Sr.	Father, Preacher, NAACP Pres.
Alberta Williams King	Mother
Ralph Abernathy	Minister of the First Baptist Church of Montgomery.
Juanita Abernathy	Wife of Ralph Abernathy
E.D. Nixon	Pullman porter, President of NAACP, Alabama & Montgomery
Rev. L. Roy Bennett	President of Montgomery's Interdenominational Alliance and Minister of Mt. Zion A.M.E. Church
Rev. E.N. French	Minister of Hilliard Chapel A.M.E. Ch.
Clara	Neighbor
Geraldine	Friend
Physician	Surgeon that operated to remove knife
Rudy	Classmate at Crozer Seminary
Mary Powell	Friend from Atlanta
Rufus Lewis	Community and SNCC leader
Alvin	Sit-in student
Johnny	Sit-In student
Cindy	Lunch Counter girl
Women in the crowd	Planted in the audience
Man in the crowd	Planted in the audience
Mayor Gayle	Mayor of Montgomery. Alabama
Threat voice	
Sam Donaldson	Reporter
Peter Jennings	Reporter
Police officer	
Choir	CVA

Main Resource: The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr., Edited by Clayborne Carson

NOTES

NAACP- National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

MIA- Montgomery Improvement Association

SCLA- Southern Christian Leaders Association

SCLC- Southern Christian Leaders Conference

Jim Crow Laws - Laws in the south relating to racial segregation (Jim Crow is a stereotype black man in the 19th century, a song- and-dance act.)

Ku Klux Klan- A white Supremacy organization responsible for violent methods to maintain segregation

Caste System - Division of society in India based upon wealth, rank, and occupation

Untouchables: The lowest class in India

13th Amendment officially outlawed slavery, Dec. 6, 1865

14th Amendment gave citizenship to all born in the U.S. and males 21 years old the right to vote. July 9, 1868

15th Amendment prohibits the government in the US from denying a citizen the right to vote based on that citizen's race or color or previous condition of servitude, Feb 3, 1870

May 17, 1954- The Supreme court **outlawed segregation** in the public schools and that separate but equal facilities are inherently unequal.

The African Americans in the south faced tremendous obstacles to voting, including poll taxes, literacy tests, and other bureaucratic restrictions to deny them the right to vote. They also risked harassment, intimidation, economic reprisals, and physical violence when they tried to register to vote or try to vote. As a result few African Americans were registered voters, and they had very little, if any, political power, either locally or nationally.

The Voting Rights Act on August 5, 1965, 95 years after the 15th Amendment, was an act to enforce the 15th amendment. It outlawed literacy tests or exclusion by race or color. By the end of 1965 a quarter of a million new black voters had been registered, one-third by Federal examiners. By the end of 1966 only 4 out of the 13 southern states had fewer than 50% of the African Americans registered to vote.

Civil Rights Act of 1968- Prohibited racial discrimination in the sale and rental of housing.
Montgomery led to the Civil Rights Act of 1957 and 1960.
Birmingham led to the Civil Rights Act of 1964.
Selma led to the Civil Rights Act of 1965.



Quote

"The way of acquiescence leads to moral and spiritual suicide.

The way of violence leads to bitterness in the survivors and brutality in the destroyers.

The way of nonviolence leads to redemption and creation of the beloved community."

A MORAL OBLIGATION: THE STORY OF MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

Act I – A Moral Obligation: To Learn and Love

Scene I – *Early Years 1935*

Scene II – *Booker T. Washington High School 1943*

Scene III – *Moreland College 1944 & Crozer Seminary 1948*

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Act II – A Moral Obligation: To Social Injustice

Scene I – *Dexter Avenue Baptist Church 1954*

Scene II – *Montgomery Movement, Alabama 1955*

Scene III – *Violence Begins 1955/1956*

Scene IV – *A Win for Desegregation 1956*

Scene V – *Wave of Terror 1957*

Scene VI – *Independence 1957*

Scene VII – *Brush with Death 1958*

Scene VIII – *Sit-Ins 1960*

Scene IX – *Albany Movement & Prison 1961*

Scene X – *March on Washington 1963*

Act III – A Moral Obligation: To Economic Injustice

Scene I – *Across America 1963*

Scene II – *I've Been to the Mountaintop 1964*

Scene III – *Assassination 1968*



Act I A Moral Obligation: To Learn and Love

Scene I - Early Years 1935

Setting: Stage III- Home of Alberta and Martin Luther King, Sr. (Alberta, Martin, Sr.)

Narrator: Martin Luther King, Jr. grew up during a time period in the south when there were segregation laws that separated people of color from white people. The Negro could not swim in the public pool, could not go to a so-called white school or theater, could not eat at the lunch counter, drink from a white water fountain, use a white rest room, sit in the same waiting room or sit in the front seats of a bus. If the seats for colored were full they had to stand even when the seats for whites were empty. These laws in the south were referred to as Jim Crow laws.

Alberta: Well, that was quite the discussion with Martin tonight at supper.

Martin, Sr.: Let's remember mortality is not an easy thing for a six year old to understand.

Alberta: Your mother's death has been hard on him. She was so dear to all of us, but I was referring more to the loss of his friend. Death is one thing, but who can understand racial segregation.

Martin, Sr.: Hmm.

Alberta: Did you hear him say, "How can I love a race of people who hate me?"

Martin, Sr.: Yes. It disturbed me. We have taught him to love even his enemies.

Alberta: He has been friends with the boy next door for years and now he is forced to go to a different school and his friend's father will not let his son play with Martin any more. He is in shock. This is his playmate. Maybe we have been wrong to shield him from segregation issues. We should have prepared him for this.

Martin, Sr.: Who can be prepared for this?

Alberta: (Shaking her head) How can we help him hate a system and not the people?

Martin, Sr.: I didn't tell you about our trip to the shoe store the other day. Martin and I sat down in the chairs to be waited on. The clerk refused to wait on us unless we moved to the seats in the back of the store. I said, "We'll either buy shoes sitting here, or we won't buy shoes at all." I walked out of the store with Martin.

Alberta: (Aghast) Martin you didn't!

Martin, Sr.: I told Martin it is the principle of the thing.

Alberta: We must continue to teach him it is his Christian duty to love even in the face of an unjust system.

Martin, Sr.: You are right, but this is the very thing the NAACP is fighting. We did show them it isn't good for their business. (He sort of grins and chuckles)

Alberta: (With a twinkle) Reverend King!

Scene II - High School, 1943

Setting: Stage III - Home of Alberta and Martin Luther King, Sr. (Alberta, Martin, Sr., Martin)

Narrator: Strict laws existed for segregation. Every day Martin got on the public bus to ride to the Booker T. Washington High School on the other side of the city. Every day when Martin got on the bus he left his mind on the front seat as he walked to the back of the bus and he said to himself, “One of these days, I’m going to put my body up there where my mind is.” It is 1943 during World War II. Alberta: It was really nice of Mrs. Bradley to take Martin to the Oratorical contest in Dublin, Georgia. He is only 14 years old, (Proudly) and he won the contest last night!

Martin, Sr.: (Puffing out his chest) That’s my son! It doesn’t surprise me! I sure wish I could have been there.

Alberta: He left his speech on the table. Let me read parts of his speech to you. The title is: *The Negro and the Constitution*.

“We cannot have an enlightened democracy with one great group living in ignorance. We cannot have a healthy nation with one-tenth of the people ill-nourished, sick, harboring germs of disease which recognize no color lines—obey no Jim Crow laws. We cannot have a nation with one group orderly and sound and then with one group so ground down and thwarted that it is almost forced into unsocial attitudes and crime. We cannot be truly Christian people so long as we flout the central teachings of Jesus: brotherly love and the Golden Rule. We cannot come to full prosperity with one great group so ill-delayed that it cannot buy goods. So as we gird ourselves to defend democracy from foreign attack, let us see to it that increasingly at home we give fair play and free opportunity for all people.

Today thirteen million black sons and daughters of our forefathers continue the fight for the translation of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments from writing on the printed page to an actuality. We believe with them that “if freedom is good for any it is good for all,” that we may conquer Southern armies by the sword, but it is another thing to conquer Southern hate, that if the franchise is given to Negroes, they will be vigilant and defend, even with their arms, the ark of federal liberty from treason and destruction by her enemies.” (Martin, Jr. coming into the kitchen rubbing his eyes)

Martin, Sr.: We were just reading your speech. We are very proud of you son! (Takes hold of his shoulder)

Martin: I will never forget last night!

Alberta: I am sure you won’t. It was a very big honor! We are so proud of you!

Martin: (With emphasis using hand gestures) Not for winning the oratorical contest, I will never forget I had to stand all the way back to Atlanta, 90 minutes!

Alberta: (Showing concern) What happened?



Martin: (Passionately) The bus driver ordered us to give up our seats to some whites. I wasn't going to do it. I was that angry, but Mrs. Bradley urged me to obey the law.

Alberta: She is a wise teacher. You know you must obey the laws. (Fearfully) You don't know what they would do to you.

Martin: How long must we bear this inequity? I abhor segregation. We passed places where Negroes were lynched. Oppressive and barbarous acts come from segregation and racial injustice has a twin-economic injustice. I am so blessed. Father, you provide well for us, I have everything I need, but I have friends that live in tragic poverty and poor whites are exploited just as much as we are!

Martin, Sr.: A better day is coming! (Decisively) We can make a change in society. We will make a change.

Scene III - Morehouse College, 1944 & Crozer Seminary 1948

Setting: Stage II - Street (Martin, Rudy)

Narrator: Martin skipped both 9th and 12th grade. After high school Martin worked that summer on a tobacco farm in Connecticut. He ate in restaurants, and went wherever he pleased. He was the religious teacher to 107 boys. It was difficult to change to a Jim Crow train in Washington D.C. on the way home.

In 1944 Martin entered Morehouse College. He read Henry David Thoreau's essay "On Civil Disobedience" three times. He read of his courage to withhold his taxes and go to jail rather than have his money support a war that would spread slavery into Mexico. It was Martin's first contact with the theory of nonviolent resistance. He was fascinated with refusing to cooperate with an evil system. This was a new concept to him.

He studied under Dr. Mays, president of Morehouse College and Dr. George Kelsey. Their godly influence plus the influence and adoration of his father's noble moral and ethical character led Martin to choose the ministry. At 19 years of age he entered Crozer Seminary. He felt a sense of responsibility, an obligation, he could not escape. Then one Sunday he went to Philadelphia to hear a lecture by Dr. Mordecai Johnson, president of Howard University.

Martin: I have been on a quest for a method to eliminate social evil for a long time. I have studied: Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, Locke, Marx, Nietzsche, and more. I have studied capitalism, communism, Marxism, liberalism, fundamentalism. I have looked at both theory and practice and practice does not always match theory. Evil must be resisted. No moral man can patiently adjust to injustice.

Rudy: That's why we joined the Intercollegiate Counsel to make racial justice a reality.

Martin: I never realized that many white young people are our allies in this.

Rudy: That was an incredible speech we just heard on the life and teachings of Gandhi.

Martin: I am going to buy every book I can find on the man.

Rudy: It seems impossible that nonviolent resistance can change society.



Martin: But it has! I was moved by Gandhi’s Salt March... and his fast for the untouchables!

Rudy: His Satyagraha: the force of truth which equals love. Incredible!

Martin: Truth force or love force- I didn’t think it possible that love could change more than just the individual! Yet Ghandi has shown it has potency in social reform. (Shaking his head) I have been mistaken. Gandhi may be the first person in history to lift the love ethic of Jesus to a powerful and effective social force.

Rudy: “Pacifism is not nonresistance to evil, but non-violent resistance to evil, a courageous confrontation of evil with love.” What an inspiration!

Martin: (Nodding his head) Gandhi’s emphasis on love and nonviolent resistance is the method for social reform I have been looking for. I need to continue my search for truth, have an open mind, and not abandon faith. The church cannot be silent on man’s collective evil. I believe the pulpit and the church is the place to begin.

Scene IV - Boston University, 1952

Setting: Stage II - Street, Home (Martin, Mary, Coretta)

Narrator: Martin completed his Master’s of Divinity and was ordained at Crozer Seminary entering Boston University in 1952.

Mary: Martin, It is time you found a girl friend. You need to get married before you begin your ministry. You have lots of girls chasing after you. Why aren’t you interested in any of them?

Martin: I just haven’t found the girl for me and I am beginning to get cynical.

Mary: (Laughing and then emphatically) Martin, you are too serious! All you do is study.

Martin: You attend the New England Conservatory of Music here in Boston. “Do you know any girl for me. She must be nice, and attractive.”

Mary: Hmm. I do. (She rubs her hands together) This is an opportunity I can’t pass up. The girl I am thinking of is a beautiful person, and smart. Like you, she is very involved in social issues. (Dreamily with her hands over her heart) She is a mezzo-soprano and has the voice of an angel. Seriously, Coretta came to the New England Conservatory of Music with the aid of a scholarship to work her way to be a concert singer. (Shaking her finger at him) I will give you her number, but you must promise to call her tonight.

Martin: I will. Oh! The girl I marry must be my intellectual equal.

Mary: Oh, she is!

(They part) (Martin goes home to make the call) (Coretta off stage)

Martin: (Picks up phone) Hello, Operator, Could you please get me Coretta Scott at 617-748-4554. Thank you.



Coretta: Hello, this is Coretta Scott speaking.

Martin: Hello Coretta, “This is M.L. King, Jr. A mutual friend of ours told me about you and gave me your telephone number. She said some very wonderful things about you, and I’d like very much to meet you and talk to you.

Coretta: Mary told me about you.

Martin: (Surprised) She did? I hope it was good. Well, tell me about your family.

Coretta: (Laughing) Everything she said about you was good. I come from a wonderful home. My father, Obie Scott, is a courageous man. He owns a trucking business, a combination filling station/grocery store and a chicken farm. Though he has been insulted and humiliated many times he is not bitter. My mother is a very quiet woman, she taught me moral and ethical values through her words and example. I admire both of my parents very much.

Martin,: “Every Napoleon has his Waterloo. I’m like Napoleon. I’m at my Waterloo and I’m on my knees. I’d like to meet you and talk to you. “

Coretta: I would like to meet you, too.

Martin “I’ll come over and pick you up. I have a green Chevy that usually takes ten minutes to make the trip from Boston University, but tomorrow I’ll do it in seven.” (Martin exits, meets Coretta, they sit on a bench on the street and talk)

Narrator: They met the following day and talked for an hour about many things: family, religion, music, racial and economic injustice, and the question of peace. Coretta was actively involved in movements dealing with these problems. After an hour Martin’s mind was made up.

Martin: “So you can do something else besides sing. You’ve got a good mind also. You have everything I ever wanted in a woman. We ought to get married someday.”

Act II – A Moral Obligation: To Social Injustice

Scene I - Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, 1954

Setting: Stage I - Dexter Church (Audience, Coretta, Elder, Martin)

Narrator: Less than a year and a half later Coretta and Martin were married on June 18, 1953. Martin finished the residential requirements for his Ph.D. in psychology. Now he needed to write his dissertation and he needed a job. Churches in Massachusetts and New York were interested in calling him. Three colleges offered him attractive and challenging posts--one in teaching and one a deanship. Then he received a letter from the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church of Montgomery, Alabama asking him to come and preach as they were without a pastor. They had heard of Martin through his father. So on his Christmas holiday Martin preached on the three dimensions of a complete life: The Length of Life- personal welfare, The Breadth of Life- concern for the welfare of others, and The Height of Life- the upward reach toward God. He prayed that his sermon would be a channel for the inspiration of God. He was asked to be their pastor.

The Dexter Ave Church was across the square from the Alabama State Capital where on January 7, 1861 Alabama voted to secede from the Union, and then on February 18 Jefferson Davis took his oath of office as President of the Confederate States and it was where the first confederate flag was unfurled. This was the very cradle of the Confederacy!

After much prayer, Coretta and Martin chose to make a cultural and family sacrifice- return to the deep south that was steeped in segregation and Jim Crow law because of a **moral obligation** with the feeling that something remarkable was unfolding in the South. They wanted to be a part of this great possibility.

Daily Martin rose at 5:30. He studied and wrote on his thesis for three hours and returned to do the same at night. It is 1954 and Martin Luther King, Jr. is preaching his first sermon in the Dexter, Montgomery Baptist Church.

Elder: All kneel. (Prayer) Father in heaven: This morning we lift our voice to you in thanksgiving for the many blessings you give to your children. We praise your name. Anoint the lips of our new pastor this morning. Fill us with your presence. Lead us. Show us the way to salvation. We come to you in the name of our Savior. Amen

Martin: (Stepping to the pulpit) *“It is a significant fact that I come to the pastorate of Dexter at a most crucial hour of our world’s history; at a time when the flame of war might arise at any time to redden the skies of our dark and dreary world; at a time when men know all too well that without the proper guidance the whole of civilization can be plunged across the abyss of destruction; at a time when men are experiencing in all realms of life anxiety. Today men who were but yesterday ridiculing the Church of Christ are now asking the Church the way to the paradise of peace and happiness. We must somehow give our generation an answer. Dexter, like all other churches, must somehow lead men and women of a decadent generation to the high mountain of peace and salvation. We must give men and women, who are all but on the brink of despair, a new bent on life. I pray God that I will be able to lead Dexter in this urgent mission.*

I come to you with nothing so special to offer. I have no pretense to being a great preacher or even a profound scholar. I certainly have no pretense to infallibility—that is reserved for the height of the



Divine, rather than the depth of the human. At every moment, I am conscious of my finiteness, knowing so clearly that I have never been bathed in the sunshine of omniscience or baptized in the waters of omnipotence. I come to you with only the claim of being a servant of Christ, and a feeling that I have been called to preach and to lead God's people. I have felt like Jeremiah, 'The word of God is in my heart like burning fire shut up in my bones.' I have felt with Amos that when God speaks who can but prophesy? I have felt with Jesus that the spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and to set at liberty those that are bruised." (Sits)

Choir Sings: *Some of these Mornin's* by Mark Hayes

Scene II - Montgomery Movement, Alabama, 1955

Setting: Stage I & III - Martin Luther King's home. (Martin, E.D. Nixon, Rev. Bennett, Ralph, Coretta, Rev. French, Elder-cast)

Narrator: Martin became involved in the local branch of the NAACP and organized in his church a social and political action committee designed to keep the congregation intelligently informed on social, political and economic situations. He also became active in the Alabama Council on Human Relations that was educational in nature. Though some disagreed he felt both approaches were necessary: working through the courts as well as changing attitudes through education. It was during this first year that Yolanda Denise was born into the King home. It is 1955.

Martin: (Phone rings and Martin answers it)

E.D. Nixon: (Phone off stage) (*Agitated*) I was at the police station last evening.

Martin: The police station! What for?

E.D. Nixon: I signed a bond for Mrs. Rosa Parks.

Martin: Rosa Parks? She is a quiet, calm, and dignified lady with an impeccable character. She is one of the most respected people I know. She doesn't even belong to the NAACP! Why arrest Rosa?

E.D. Nixon: That is the beauty of it. She was arrested for refusing to move to the back of the bus. The police dragged her off the bus. Her trial is set in four days. Reporters were there. It's all over the news.

E.D. Nixon: I went right down and posted bail and she is at home. Listen, "*We have taken this type of thing too long already.*" I am calling you because "*I feel that the time has come to boycott the buses. Only through a boycott can we make it clear to the white folks that we will not accept this type of treatment any longer.*" I have talked with Ralph Abernathy and we feel a bus boycott is our best course of action.

Martin: I agree that something needs to be done. A boycott can be used for good or evil. (Contemplatively) Our purpose is good if we use this to birth justice and freedom. What's the next step?

E.D. Nixon: I have discussed this with Ralph Abernathy. We are calling a meeting of all the ministers and civic leaders here in Montgomery for this evening. I'll meet you there.



Martin: I'll be there. (Walks over to the church)

(Church) (Martin, E.D. Nixon, Ralph Abernathy, Rev. Bennett, others) (Benches)

E.D. Nixon: (Stands) Rev. L. Roy Bennett, president of Montgomery's Interdenominational Alliance and minister of the Mt. Zion A.M.E. Church is going to present the proposal.

Rev. Bennett: (Moves to the front) I am proposing that the Negro citizens of Montgomery should boycott the buses on Monday in protest. (Decisively) *"Now is the time to move, this is no time to talk; it is time to act."* (Ralph raises his hand) Yes, Ralph.

Ralph: We are referred to as: Niggers, Black Cows, black apes ...

E.D. Nixon: (Interrupts) We pay our fee in the front of the bus and must go to the back door to get on. Many times I have paid at the front and been left on the curb: (Audience looks at each other and nods in agreement, murmurs are heard- Yes it has happened to me many times)

Ralph: It is difficult to stand over empty white seats! We can no longer give our cooperation to an evil system.

Martin: (In the audience, but stands up to speak) We are not here to put the buses out of business. (Gestures and loudly with emphasis) We are here to put justice in business. We are no longer willing to cooperate with an evil system. (Audience nods)

Ralph: A committee has met and prepared a statement that I will read to you:

"Don't ride the bus to work, to town, to school, or any place Monday, December 5. Another Negro woman has been arrested and put in jail because she refused to give up her bus seat. Don't ride the buses to work, to town, to school, or anywhere on Monday. If you work, take a cab, or share a ride, or walk. Come to a mass meeting, Monday at 7:00 P.M at the Holt Street Baptist Church for further instruction."

Rev. Bennett: Are we in agreement?

Group: (All together) Yes! (EXIT)

Setting: Home of Martin (Martin, Coretta)

Coretta: Good morning Martin. (Looking out the window) (Excitedly) Martin, look!!

Martin: (Sitting at the table eating breakfast- Quickly coming to the window) What is happening?

Coretta: The bus is empty!

Martin: Last night we said it would be a success if 60% supported the boycott!

Coretta: (In wonder) It surely is 100%!



Martin: Look! The next bus is empty, and the next. Look! Everyone is walking. The street is full of our people walking!

Coretta: There are only two white people on that bus!

Martin: Coretta, I am heading to the police court with Ralph and then a meeting at the church to get ready for tonight. Rosa Parks is on trial today.

Coretta: I will be praying. (Martin goes to the church)

Setting: (Church) (Ralph, Martin, Jr., E.D. Nixon, Rev. French, Rev. Bennett, others) Rev. Bennett leading the meeting.

Ralph: Rosa Parks was fined for breaking the segregation law.

Martin: Yes, ten dollars plus court costs- She paid the clerk 14 dollars!

Rev. French: They do not realize what they have started.

Rufus Lewis: Well, where do we go from here?

E.D. Nixon: Rev. French, Ralph and I met this morning and discussed setting up a committee to give organization, guidance, and direction to the protest.

Ralph: We have discussed names: Negro Citizens' Committee is too much like the White Citizens' Counsel.

Rufus Lewis: What about the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA)

Martin: I like it. It has a positive sound to it.

Rufus Lewis: Mr. Chairman, I would like to nominate Reverend M. L. King for president.

Ralph: That is a good Idea. He is not an officer of the NAACP and it will not be misconstrued as an NAACP conspiracy.

Rev. Bennett: (Looking at Martin) Will you accept the nomination?

Martin: I will humbly do my best.

Rev. French: Some want us to just sing, pray, and pass out our plans secretly.

E.D. Nixon: (Disgustedly) "We are acting like boys, somebody's name will have to be known, and if we are afraid we might just as well fold up right now. We must also be men enough to discuss our recommendations in the open.

We'd better decide now if we are going to be fearless men or scared boys."

Rufus Lewis: Would it be best to call off the protest while we are ahead? They already know our strength.

Rev. French: We should let the people decide tonight at the meeting.

Setting: Home of Martin (Martin, Coretta)

Coretta: Supper is ready

Martin: I have been elected President of the new Montgomery Improvement Association to lead the protest. I felt I had to accept it. I know it means even less time together and perhaps danger.

Coretta: “You know that whatever you do, you have my backing.” Martin you need to eat some supper, you have not eaten since breakfast.

Martin: I only have twenty minutes to pray and prepare an outline for my speech this evening. I will not have time. (Coretta exits) (Martin on his knees) Father, I am so inadequate. Restore my balance. I need your guidance more than ever before. Show me how to arouse people to positive action within the bounds of Christianity. Help me to inspire people. Help us all to be devoid of hate. Give us dignity as a people. Open my mouth and speak for me. Amen.

(Sits at the table and begins writing his outline) (Get up and exits to the church)

Setting: Church (Ralph, Rufus, E.D. Nixon, Rev. French, Rev. Bennett, Martin, crowd on benches)

Rufus: (Rushing in) (Excitedly) I had a hard time getting here. Cars are lined up and down the street. There isn't any place to park. There are thousands in here.

Congregation: Onward Christian Soldiers (First Verse)

Martin: We are here tonight to discuss the events that have happened over the last few days. You all know the abuses and indignities we have experienced on the busses. By now you know what has happened to Rosa Parks.

“We are here this evening for serious business. We are here in a general sense because first and foremost we are American citizens and we are determined to apply our citizenship to the fullness of its meaning. We are here also because of our love for democracy, because of our deep-seated belief that democracy transformed from thin paper to thick action is the greatest form of government on earth... You know, my friends, there comes a time when people get tired of being trampled over by the iron feet of oppression. There comes a time, my friends, when people get tired of being plunged across the abyss of humiliation, where they experience the bleakness of nagging despair. There comes a time when people get tired of being pushed out of the glittering sunlight of life's July, and left standing amid the piercing chill of an alpine November.

We are not wrong. We are not wrong in what we are doing. If we are wrong, the Supreme Court of this nation is wrong. If we are wrong, the Constitution of the United States is wrong. If we are wrong, God Almighty is wrong. If we are wrong, Jesus of Nazareth was merely a utopian dreamer



that never came down to earth. And we are determined here in Montgomery to work and fight until justice runs down like water and righteousness like a mighty stream.

I want to say that in all of our actions we must stick together. Unity is the great need of the hour, and if we are united we can get many of the things that we not only desire but which we justly deserve. And don't let anybody frighten you. We are not afraid of what we are doing... because we are doing it within the law. There is never a time in our American democracy that we must ever think we're wrong when we protest. We reserve that right.

We the disinherited of this land, we who have been oppressed so long, are tired of going through the long night of captivity. And now we are reaching out for the daybreak of freedom and justice and equality. May I say to you, my friends, as I come to a close... that we must keep... God in the forefront. Let us be Christian in all of our actions. But I want to tell you this evening that it is not enough for us to talk about love. Love is one of the pivotal points of the Christian faith. There is another side called justice.

Standing beside love is always justice and we are only using the tools of justice. Not only are we using the tools of persuasion but we've come to see that we've got to use the tools of coercion. Not only is this thing a process of education but it is also a process of legislation.

As we stand and sit here this evening and as we prepare ourselves for what lies ahead, let us go out with a grim and bold determination that we are going to stick together. We are going to work together. Right here in Montgomery, when the history books are written in the future, somebody will have to say, "There lived a race of people, a black people, 'fleecy locks and black complexion,' a people who had the moral courage to stand up for their rights. And thereby they injected a new meaning into the veins of history and of civilization."

(People rise to their feet and applaud.) (People sit)

E.D. Nixon: (With great emphasis using hand and fingers to make the point) Here is our resolution: (Reads) *"Negroes are not to resume riding the buses until: 1) courteous treatment by the bus operators is guaranteed; 2) Passengers are seated on a first-come, first-served basis. 3) Negro bus operators are employed on predominantly Negro routes."* All in favor of the motion stand.

(People stand and cheer)

Rufus: (Stands) I will organize rides for those needing to get to work on time.

Scene III - Violence Begins, 1955 & 1956

Setting: Stage I & III - Home of Martin & Church (Voice, Martin, Coretta, Ralph, Mayor, Woman, Man, Nixon)

Narrator: The meeting on December 5, 1955 was a victory for a new sense of dignity and destiny. A movement began that gained national recognition and was heard by all nations.

With an extended protest transportation became an issue. The MIA organized drivers because the Police Commissioner issued an order that cab drivers could not lower their rates. Thousands of leaflets announced 43 drop off and pick-up stations around the city. Teachers, pastors, volunteers with cars including whites joined to assist Negroes to their jobs. Many walked. One grandmother refusing a ride said, "I'm not walking for myself, I'm walking for my children and grandchildren." Because of the confidence the Negroes had in their leaders they were willing to adopt the non-violent techniques. King learned that the privileged would not give up their privileges on request without strong resistance and that segregation oppressed and exploited. He saw that segregation perpetrates injustice and inequality. White leaders tried to bring separation in the Negro community to cause division in their leadership. Martin said he would resign his leadership, but instead was given the support of the people. When dividing leadership didn't work the police got tough by following drivers and picking them up. Martin was picked up, fingerprinted and jailed for allegedly driving 30 miles per hour in a 25 per hour zone. Ralph Abernathy immediately went down and Martin was released on bail.

Martin: (Phone rings) Hello.

Voice: (Off stage) *"Listen, nigger, we've taken all we want from you; before next week you'll be sorry you ever came to Montgomery."* (Phone beeps off)

Martin: (Kneeling) *"Lord, I'm down here trying to do what's right. I think I'm right. I'm here taking a stand for what I believe is right. And Lord, I must confess that I'm weak now, I'm faltering. I'm losing my courage. Now, I'm afraid. And I can't let the people see me like this because if they see me weak and losing courage, they will begin to get weak. The people are looking to me for leadership, and if I stand before them without strength and courage, they too will falter. I am at the end of my powers. I've come to the point where I can't face it alone."* (Looks Up)

Voice: (Off stage) *"Martin Luther, stand up for righteousness. Stand up for justice. Stand up for truth. And lo, I will be with you even until the end of the world."*

Martin: Yes, Lord. I hear you. I will.

(Martin exits stage toward city and the meeting with Ralph at the church)

(Coretta in the Kitchen)

Coretta: (Singing a spiritual) All night, all day, angels watching over me my Lord. All night, all day, angels watching over me. Repeat

(Bomb goes off on the porch) (Coretta runs backstage.)



(Phone rings at the meeting and Ralph leaves to answer)

(Ralph whispers to Nixon and looks anxiously at Martin)

Martin: What happened? (Looks from one to the other)

Ralph: A bomb was thrown at your house a few minutes ago.

Martin: (Stands) My family! Coretta and Yolanda! Are they safe?

Ralph: We think so. We think it only hit the porch!
(They rush to Martin's home)

Martin: (Embraces Coretta and the baby, a doll)

Coretta: Now Martin, stop worrying, we are both fine. God protected us.

Mayor: (Enters) We regret this has happened.

Ralph: We better calm the crowd gathered in front of your home. (They step forward to outside)

Mayor: You may all go home. Everyone is safe. We regret this incident. We will get to the bottom of it.

Women planted in the audience: “You may express your regrets, but you must face the fact that your public statements created the atmosphere for this bombing.

Man planted in the audience: “This is the result of your ‘Get tough’ policy.”

Martin: (Martin faces the audience as if they are the crowd. He raises his arms to silence them.) We are alright. Coretta and Yolanda are fine. “We believe in law and order. Don't get panicky. Don't do anything panicky at all. Don't get your weapons. He who lives by the sword will perish by the sword. Remember that is what God said. We are not advocating violence. We want to love our enemies. I want you to love our enemies. Be good to them. Love them and let them know you love them.

I did not start this boycott. I was asked by you to serve as your spokesman. I want it known the length and breadth of this land that if I am stopped this movement will not stop. If I am stopped our work will not stop. For what we are doing is right. What we are doing is just. And God is with us.”
I want you to know that if M.L. King had never been born this movement would have taken place. I just happened to be here. You know there comes a time when time itself is ready for change. That time has come in Montgomery, and I had nothing to do with it.

Let's not fool ourselves, we haven't reached the promised land, North or South. We still confront segregation in the South in its glaring and conspicuous forms. We still confront it in the North in its subtle and hidden forms...if democracy is to live, segregation must die. The underlying philosophy of democracy is diametrically opposed to the underlying philosophy of segregation, and all of the dialectics

of the logicians cannot make them lie down together. Segregation is an evil, segregation is a cancer in the body politic which must be removed before our democratic health can be realized.

There was a time that we attempted to live with segregation. There were those who felt that we could live by a doctrine of separate but equal and so back in 1896, the Supreme Court of this nation through the Plessy v. Ferguson decision established the doctrine of separate but equal as the law of the land... You see, equality is not only a matter of mathematics and geometry, but it's a matter of psychology. It's not only a quantitative something but it is a qualitative something; and it is possible to have quantitative equality and qualitative inequality. The doctrine of separate but equal can never be... There is no such thing as separate but equal."

(A women placed in the audience stands and shouts) "Amen!" "God bless you!"

(Man placed in the audience stands and shouts): "We are with you all the way!"

Martin: (They return inside)

Coretta: Dad called. He wants me to come home, but I told him I can't leave you. I am staying here with you for the whole struggle.

Martin: (Puts his arm around his wife)

Mayor: You need a gun.

Martin: We decided not to even own a gun. We have come face to face with death. We are no longer afraid. We will not sink to the level of our oppressors.

Scene IV - A Win for Desegregation, 1956

Setting: Stage III - Home of Martin (Coretta and Martin, Ralph & Jaunita Abernathy, and E.D. Nixon)

Narrator: The Negroes came to see that it is more honorable to walk in dignity than ride in humiliation. So in a quiet dignified manner, they substituted tired feet for tired souls to crush the walls of injustice.

When the opposition discovered division and violence could not block the protests a Montgomery attorney called attention to an old state law against boycotts. When the arrests began Martin was in Atlanta. His parents tried to stop him from returning to Montgomery. He told his parents....

Martin: (Off stage) "My friends and associates are being arrested. It would be the height of cowardice for me to stay away. I would rather be in jail ten years than desert my people now. I have begun the struggle, and I can't turn back. I have reached the point of no return."

Narrator: His father broke into tears. The NAACP assured Martin he would have the best counsel. Martin, Sr. decided to return with Martin, Jr. to Montgomery. Martin, Coretta, and Martin, Sr. went to the jail where a holiday atmosphere presided. Many had voluntarily gone to the jail to see if their names were on the arrest list. It was a new Negro, a Negro that was freed from fear and proud to be arrested for the cause of freedom. In this atmosphere Martin was photographed, fingerprinted and charged with violating the state's anti-boycott law.

At his trial he was found guilty and fined \$500 and court costs or 386 days at hard labor in the county of Montgomery. Judge Carter announced that this was a minimum penalty because of what he did to prevent violence. The judge entered a continuance for the other Negroes until the final appeal was decided for Martin's case. Martin left with a smile, proud of his crime because it was a crime of desiring the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for his people. He was convincing his people **that noncooperation with evil is just as much a moral duty as is cooperation with good.** We take you to the evening of Tuesday, November 13, 1956.

Ralph: Can you believe it? We lost and won in the same day. I wish you could have been there Alberta.

Alberta: Someone needed to take care of Yolanda. (Urgently) What do you mean? You can't both lose and win?

E.D. Nixon: It took all day for us to lose, but it didn't matter because we won at noon.

Coretta: I'll tell you. The city of Montgomery had a petition directed at the Montgomery Improvement Association, several churches, and individuals. It wanted compensation for damages growing out of the car pool operation. Martin was the chief defendant.

Ralph: About noon during a brief recess, we noticed an unusual commotion in the courtroom when Mayor Gayle and Commissioner Sellers were called out. Then Rex Thomas—a reporter for the Associated press—came up to Martin with a paper in his hand. Martin read it to us.

Martin: (Removes the paper from his pocket and reads) “The United States Supreme Court today affirmed a decision of a special three judge U.S. District Court in declaring Alabama's state and local laws requiring segregation on buses unconstitutional. The Supreme Court acted without listening to any argument; it simply said ‘the motion to affirm is granted and the judgment is affirmed.’”

E.D. Nixon: God Almighty spoke from Washington, D.C.

Martin: This is what nonviolent resistance has accomplished, moral ends through moral means.

Jaunita: Praise God, but I don't understand how you lost.

E.D. Nixon: Court continued and the court ruled we could no longer continue the car pool.

Coretta: The beauty is we no longer need a car pool. We can ride the buses without segregation.

E.D. Nixon: You better believe we are going to be the first ones to ride the first integrated bus in Montgomery!

Ralph: It's late. We all better get to bed.

(Jaunita, Ralph, E.D. Nixon leave)

Phone rings:

Martin: Hello



Caller: “If you allow the niggers to go back to the buses and sit on the front seat, we are going to burn down more than fifty nigger houses in one night including yours.”

Martin: (Calmly) Sir. That is not the way to solve the problem.

Caller: “Shut up you mouth, nigger, or we will come out there and blow you up right now.”

Martin: (hangs up the phone) (Phone rings again and Martin answers)

Caller: “I have evidence that all the Supreme Court justices are Communists. We are just waiting for Hugo Black to come back to Alabama, and we are going to hang you and him on the same tree.”

Narrator: According to the newspaper- that night about “forty carloads of robed and hooded Ku Klux Klan members” rode into Montgomery. The Negroes did not retreat, but turned on all their lights including their porch lights, came out on their porches and waved. The klan drove off. The bus boycott lasted 385 days.

The MIA meeting took on a new theme: victory for justice and democracy could come without violence. There would be no boasting of rights. They would simply sit where there was an empty seat. Courtesy and Christian brotherhood would reign. There would be mutual respect. They must love enough to turn an enemy into a friend. They would move from protest to reconciliation.

Scene V - Wave of Terror, 1957

Setting: Stage II - Street (Clara, Geraldine)

Narrator: The Montgomery Story was really about the Negroes growing self-respect that inspired them to struggle and sacrifice to achieve first-class citizenship. Desegregation of the buses brought hatred and violence against the Negro, but the new Negro in the South had a new sense of dignity and destiny. Along with it came a moral awakening of white Americans. Segregation like slavery confronted the ideals of democracy and Christianity. It is 1957.

Clara: Geraldine, fancy seeing you today. How are you!

Geraldine: Just fine. It has been a while, Clara!

Clara: You live next to the Kings. I declare, she must be a saint, always so calm in the face of danger. How does Coretta do it?

Geraldine: Did you hear the latest? (Clara shakes her head) Ralph Abernathy’s house was bombed. Ralph Abernathy and Dr. King had to fly home. They were in Atlanta preparing for meetings.

Clara: (Concerned) Well, is Jaunita hurt?

Geraldine: No. She is safe, but in shock. The porch was completely blown off and the house is a mess. There were several other bombings last night. The Bell Street and Mt. Olive Baptist churches were almost completely destroyed.

Clara: How terrible! When will this end?



Geraldine: I went to the meeting last night. Well, I have never seen Dr. King so upset. It is the first time I have seen Dr. King break down in tears. It was when he began to pray. He said, “Lord, I hope no one will have to die as a result of this struggle for freedom in Montgomery, but if anyone has to die, let it be me.”

Clara: No! No! (Puts hands over her mouth with eyes of fright)

Geraldine: That is just what the people cried. (With emphasis) We need him. He is our leader. He gives us confidence. We Negroes feel courageous under his leadership. He calls it “Non-violent resistance.” He says we are securing a moral end through moral means. He wants us to be first class citizens.

Clara: Yes. He makes us feel like we are somebody.

Geraldine: Yes that’s it. (Wistfully) Somebody.

Clara: It has been three years since the Supreme Court passed the law that separate is not equal, but here we are. What a time. Did you hear about the jury’s decision on those seven white men?

Geraldine: Yes. It doesn’t seem like it can be true, but they let those seven white men go free.

Clara: Those men even signed confessions that they bombed: the People’s Service Station, the Cab Stand, that poor old man’s home, and Dr. King’s house.”

Geraldine: Yes. Divine intervention is what it was. Divine intervention kept those twelve sticks of dynamite smoldering and not going off on Dr. King’s porch.

Clara: (With disgust) Yet, they are going free.

Geraldine: Oh, they are not really free. They just think they are. There is a higher court than down here. (She looks up)

Clara: (Looks up and nods)

Scene VI - Independence, 1957

Setting: Stage III - Home (Ralph, Jaunita, Coretta, Martin)

Narrator: In March of 1957, Dr. King attended the midnight ceremony marking Ghana’s independence. Prime Minister Nkrumah was educated in America with a theology degree as well as Master’s degrees in philosophy and sociology, but he went back to Africa to lead his people to freedom! Prime Minister Nkrumah and other leader’s unrelenting pressure on Great Britain finally gained Ghana independence.

Martin: Ralph, I wish you could have come with us. It was an incredible ceremony. There were many prominent people from America there, and people from our civil rights movement. Vice President Nixon was there. A handsome black man came on stage with several others. He said this as the old flag came down and their new flag went up. “We are no longer a British Colony. We are a free and sovereign people.”

Coretta: The vast crowd of people shouted and cried, Freedom! Freedom!

Martin: When it was over the old and young even six year olds sang in the street, “Freedom! Freedom! Free at last, free at last, Great God Almighty, I’m free at last.”

Coretta: Kwame Nkrumah and his ministers did not come to the celebration in expensive robes. Do you want to know what they came in.... (With slow emphasis) they came in their prison caps and coats. He gave his speech dressed like that.

Martin: Ghana has something to say to us. It says to us first that the oppressor never voluntarily gives freedom to the oppressed. You have to work for it. Privileged classes never give up their privileges without strong resistance. Freedom is never given to anybody.

Coretta: The birth of this new nation will be felt worldwide.

Ralph: Because Nkrumah spoke against the domination and exploitation of his country he was sentenced to 15 years in prison. The charge was sedition. But the people in mass elected him to Prime Minister and he only served eight months.

Martin: Nkrumah said, Often the path to freedom will carry you through prison.

Coretta: And it did. (She looks at Martin) I guess we can relate to that.

Martin: He was elected executive secretary of the united Party of the Gold Coast and then the Convention People’s Party working for independence.

Coretta: Nkrumah said, “I prefer self-government with danger to servitude with tranquility.” That is a powerful statement. Everyone was crying, “Hail Nkrumah.”

Martin: They love him because he was willing to suffer for them.”

Ralph: This will be a beacon of hope to our people. Justice triumphs in the end.

Ralph: Are you going to go to the Prayer Pilgrimage to Washington D.C. in May?

Martin: I am.

Scene VII - Brush with Death, 1958

Setting: Stage I - Hospital (Physician, Martin)

Narrator: On September 3, 1958, Dr. King was signing his autograph to copies of his book, *Stride Toward Freedom*, in a Harlem department store with hundreds of people. Mrs. Izola Ware Curry, later found to be demented, asked him a question, “Are you Martin Luther King.” Dr. King responded, “Yes,” and she plunged a letter opener into his chest. He was rushed to the hospital to have it removed to save his life.

(Martin in a wheelchair, Physician) (Book: *Stride Toward Freedom*, letter, wheelchair)

Physician: You are very fortunate to be alive.



Martin: Fortune has nothing to do with it. God is watching over our struggle for freedom.

Physician: I can't argue with that. You have made an amazing recovery. You know, *“If you had sneezed during all those hours of waiting your aorta would have been punctured, and you would have drowned in your own blood.”* Why are you so calm when someone has tried to take your life?

Martin: I can only say it is *“due to the power of God working through me. Throughout this struggle for racial justice I have constantly asked God to remove all bitterness from my heart and to give me the strength and courage to face any disaster that comes my way... In the midst of external tension, God can give an inner peace.”*

This letter to me gives me hope, (Holds up the letter) Listen, *“Dear Dr. King: I am a ninth-grade student at the White Plains High School. While it should not matter, I would like to mention that I am a white girl. I read in the paper of your misfortune, and of your suffering. And I read that if you had sneezed, you would have died. And I'm simply writing you to say that I'm so happy that you didn't sneeze.”* This is a letter I will cherish. This letter helps me to believe the world is changing. I am receiving many letters like this.

Physician: Hope cures.

Narrator: *“To believe in nonviolence does not mean that violence will not be inflicted upon you. The believer in nonviolence is the person who will willingly allow himself to be the victim of violence but will never inflict violence upon another. He lives by the conviction that through his suffering and cross bearing, the social situation may be redeemed.”*

October 23, 1958, Martin Luther King III was born.

Scene VIII - Sit-In 1960

Setting: Stage II - Town, Lunch Counter (Alvin, Johnny, Cindy) (Johnny's head is bandaged)

Narrator: In February, 1959 Dr. King and Coretta had an eye opening experience when they traveled to India and learned from that great country. Dr. King lectured, signed autographs, and held press conferences in major cities. They loved Coretta's renditions of the Negro spirituals. They saw the poor and the rich. They witnessed the government's conscious grappling with social problems. They met with Prime Minister Nehru. They saw firsthand the results of Gandhi's leading India to independence from Great Britain using love and nonviolence that resulted in a new relationship between the oppressed and the oppressor. Gandhi had mobilized and galvanized his people. Gandhi refused to eat until there was an end to the caste system, an end to untouchability, and all the people worshiped together in the temples. Gandhi changed the untouchables to touchable by his example. He adopted an untouchable as his own daughter. Hundreds of millions of people who had never touched each other for two thousand years now sang and praised together. Mahatma Gandhi was shot by his own people just as Abraham Lincoln was shot by his own people for trying to heal a divided nation.

India's constitution was changed, housing and jobs opened to untouchables, and land reforms took place. Dr. King left India more certain than ever that nonviolent resistance is the most potent weapon available to oppressed people struggling for freedom.



In 1960 the King Family moved to Atlanta, Georgia and Dr. King became the Co-pastor of the Ebenezer Baptist Church. He felt a moral obligation to give a maximum of his time to the expanded civil rights movement in the south. He also felt a moral obligation to take one day a week as a day of silence and meditation. In a few days after moving to Atlanta he was charged with falsifying his 1956 and 1958 Alabama state income tax returns. 1960 was also the beginning of the sit-ins and demonstrations by students across the south.

Cindy: (Behind the counter holding a glass, Johnny and Alvin come in and sit at the counter) Hey, You Niggers can't sit here.

Johnny: Now Miss. (Smiling politely and Alvin takes his caps off) We don't want any trouble. We are just asking for respect. We are hungry and want something to eat and drink and we are going to sit here.

Alvin: I would like a cream soda and some French fries.

Johnny: And I would like a burger and a root beer.

Cindy: Don't you know they can put you in jail for this? It looks like you have already been in trouble.

Johnny: Yes, we are fully aware of what they can and are doing to us. (Gestures to his head)

Alvin: Let them take me to jail. I have made a pledge to be taken to jail!

Cindy: (With surprise) What do you mean?

Alvin: Many of us have taken that pledge. We want the world to hear about us.

Johnny: It will be an honor to go to jail for our freedom. We aren't afraid.

Alvin: (Smiling at Cindy who is still wiping the counter) Thank you for getting our order together. (She never does)

Johnny: Did you hear the good news? (Emphasizing white) That all white jury acquitted Dr. King of those trumped up charges of tax evasion in Alabama.

Alvin: They told him he would go to prison for 10 years.

Johnny: Dr. King said we have a moral obligation to remind the white man that segregation is wrong. The ultimate aim is to be reconciled with our white brothers.

Alvin: We are to conduct ourselves with dignity.

Police Officer: O.K. you two niggers come with me. I'm placing you under arrest. (Takes them away)

(While they are talking Cindy is listening with interest and expression as she works.)

Narrator: The sit-ins, bus protests, economic boycotts, mass marches and demonstrations in the cities reminded the nation that segregation could not be maintained in the South without resultant chaos and

social disintegration. All over the south jails were full. Many students were held in mass in public places.

Scene IX - Albany Movement and Prison 1961

Setting: Stage I - Prison (Ralph, Martin)

Narrator: Dr. King met with the Senator John F. Kennedy. He knew that segregation was morally wrong and he committed himself to integration.

Students asked Dr. King to join two hundred and eighty students in a sit-in demonstration. He felt a moral obligation to support the students. They were arrested and put in the Fulton County Jail. He told the judge...

Martin: (speaking from behind the scene) “If by chance, Your Honor, we are guilty of violating the law, please be assured that we did it to bring the whole issue of racial injustice under the scrutiny of the conscience of Atlanta... The festering sore of segregation debilitates the white man as well as the Negro ... Maybe it will take this type of self-suffering on the part of numerous Negroes to finally expose the moral defense of our white brothers who happen to be misguided and thusly awaken the dozing conscience of our community.”

Narrator: At three a.m. in the morning he was awakened and taken in chains, all the way down his legs, and chained to the floor. He was treated like a hardened criminal and transported to a segregated cell block in Reidsville State prison two hundred and twenty miles from Atlanta because of a back traffic violation of using his Alabama driver’s license. Senator John Kennedy called Coretta and then worked to have Dr. King released.

His next arrest was over the Albany Movement. Twenty-seven thousand Negroes lived in Albany, Georgia. The Albany movement used all the methods of nonviolence: mass demonstration, jail-ins, sit-ins, wade-ins, kneel-ins, political actions, boycotts, and legal actions simultaneously. Students began riding the Trailway and Greyhound buses to test the law from D.C. and Baltimore to Richmond, Raleigh, Atlanta, Savannah, Montgomery, Birmingham, Philadelphia, Memphis, and Nashville. On December 16, 1961 Dr. King willingly went to jail for parading without a permit, disturbing the peace, and obstructing the sidewalk. The cells were crowded with women over seventy, teenagers, and middle-aged adults from all walks of life, some with: medical, law, and education degrees. Dr. King, Ralph Abernathy, Eddie Jackson, and Solomon Walker were sentenced to forty-five days in Albany City Jail for leading the protest. Ralph Abernathy and Dr. King were placed in a dirty, dingy, filthy and nasty cell together. The police chief, Laurie Pritchett, seeing he had political prisoners with snooping newsmen had it cleaned.

(Martin kneeling and Ralph sitting on the bench)

Ralph and Martin: (Sing -Walk with Me Lord by Douglas Wagner)

Martin: I was thinking Ralph, “An individual who breaks a law that conscience tells him is unjust, and who willingly accepts the penalty of imprisonment in order to arouse the conscience of the community over its injustice, is in reality expressing the highest respect for law. “

Ralph: That is what Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did because there was a higher law than the King’s at stake.



Martin: The early Christians as well. (Quiet reigns a moment then Ralph speaks)

Ralph: I was thinking the white moderate is a bigger threat than the Ku Klux Klan or White Citizen's Counsel.

Martin: *"We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the hateful words and actions of the bad people but for the appalling silence of the good people."*

Ralph: I keep seeing the police dogs sinking their teeth into that unarmed young man and kicking and cursing that old Negro woman.

Martin: It is wrong to use immoral means to attain even moral ends. Remember that old woman walking. She said, "My feet is tired, but my soul is at rest."

Narrator: Through the Albany Movement, thousands of Negroes were added to the voting registration rolls. That next summer a moderate defeated the segregationist in the city which in turn helped Georgia elect its first governor pledged to respect and to enforce the law equally.

Even the children knew the stakes. In 1963, college and high school students joined by the hundreds. Young children went to libraries and sat down and read. One student said, "I'm not doing this only because I want to be free. I'm doing it also because I want freedom for you and Mama, and I want it to come before you die" Seven years earlier the elderly had said, "I'm doing it for my children and grandchildren." Now the children were doing it for themselves and for their parents.

Newspapers across the country showed Birmingham Alabama's police with raised clubs over prostrate women, police dogs with fangs bared at children, and the brutality of fire hoses sweeping bodies into the street and against posts and buildings. On another occasion Police Commissioner, Bull Connor, with dogs and clubs ordered his men to turn the fire hoses on a group of Negroes marching to a prayer vigil in front of the jail. The Negroes did not turn back.

Peter Jennings: Today, May 10, 1963, a pact was signed by the Alabama Senior Citizens' Committee. They made four historic concessions:

- 1.) The desegregation of facilities
- 2.) Hiring of Negroes in job categories previously denied to them
- 3.) The release of jailed persons
- 4.) Communication between white and Negro people

Sam Donaldson: On location here in Birmingham, Alabama. The Ku Klux Klan bombed the home of Reverend A.D. King, brother of Martin Luther King, Jr. Thankfully no one was hurt. Another bomb was planted in Room 30 of the Glaston Hotel where Dr. Martin Luther King stays when he is in town. Dr. King was in Atlanta, but several people staying in the hotel were injured.

When the bomb went off people poured out of the nearby bars. Police came. Wyatt Walker a man staying in the Glaston Hotel urged those coming out of the bars to go home, but stones were hurled at the police. Numerous innocent Negroes including Wyatt Walker's wife as she was about to enter her room in the partially bombed out hotel received beatings from the police.

Governor George Wallace's state police have sealed off the Negro area and moved in with the bullies and pistols.

We have just learned when Wyatt Walker returned from taking his wife to the hospital he was beaten by the police. The President told the nation he would not let the extremist sabotage a fair and just pact. He has ordered three thousand federal troops into position to stop the troublemakers.

Narrator: The following day the Alabama Supreme Court ruled Eugene “Bull” Connor and his fellow police commissioners out of office, once and for all.
In the midst of this turmoil on January 30, 1961 Dexter Scott King was born.

Scene X - March on Washington, 1963

Setting: Stage III - Aisle, Church (Martin, Marchers)

Narrator: On March 28, 1963 Bernice Albertine King was born. Birmingham turned President John F. Kennedy’s sympathy to the Civil Rights Movement. Kennedy wanted legislation for civil rights, so he welcomed a March on Washington, D.C. to inspire a solid impact on Congress. Washington had not seen a spectacle of this size and grandeur. On August 28, 1963, 250,000 people journeyed to the capital, from almost every state, and by every form of transportation. They came with dignity. It was a heavy financial sacrifice for many. They came, Negro and White. They applauded their leaders and their leaders applauded them. The march touched the nation. We take you to Washington, D.C., August 1963. You will hear the last part of Dr. King’s speech. He began his speech with a prepared speech, but he used a phrase that was not in his speech, “I have a Dream,” and from that moment on he turned aside from his written manuscript.

Cast: (March down the aisle. Some are carrying banners on their person and holding posters etc. They are singing: We shall Overcome, Ain’t Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me ‘Round, and other spirituals. They are dressed in their best- dresses, glove, hats, suits, etc. They stand in front of the podium to hear the speech)

(Signs hanging on their bodies: Equal Rights, Voting For All Citizens, No More Police Brutality, We Want To Be Free, Jim Crow Must Go!, Register to Vote, Register now- Freedom Now, Freedom, End Racism, We March for Civil Rights, Wanted Equal Rights, Equal Rights, Wear Old Clothes, Set on Freedom)

Martin: (I have a dream speech at the podium)

“I say to you today, my friends: so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I 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 will 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, this will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with 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.

And 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 snow-capped 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."

Marchers: Cheers, Freedom! Freedom!



Act III - A Moral Obligation: To Economic Injustice

Scene I - Across America, 1963

Setting: Stage II - Street (Peter, Sam, Martin)

Narrator: Martin was not alone in the courageous struggle for Civil Rights. All across America brave men and women were in the fight. Many were beaten, bruised, and murdered at the hand of racists, police brutality, and the Klu Klux Klan. On September 15, 1963 four innocent young girls were murdered when Birmingham's Sixteenth Street Baptist Church was blasted. Police killed another child on the street, and an innocent Negro boy was killed while riding his bicycle. Dr. King spoke in the service. He called the children a redemptive force. On November 22, 1963 President Kennedy was assassinated.

On July 2, 1964 Congress initiated meaningful and effective national voting rights legislation, but on July 4, two days later:

Peter Jennings: (Off Stage radio voice) Peter Jennings here at ABC News. On June 21, 1964 three civil rights workers in Mississippi gained the nation's attention and persuaded President Johnson and Congress to initiate meaningful and effective national voting rights legislation. On July 2, 1964 two days ago Dr. King attended the signing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 with President Lyndon B. Johnson. We go to Sam Donaldson in Philadelphia, Mississippi with breaking news. Come in Sam.

Sam Donaldson: (On stage with clipboard in hand to refer to) As you know 12 days ago three CORE, Congress of Racial Equality, workers disappeared shortly after they were released at 10:20, P.M. from the Neshoba County Jail for speeding. They came here to get statements about the burning down of the Mt. Zion Church.

Today FBI Agents discovered their bodies in an earthen dam at Old Jolly Farm on Rock Cut Road six miles out of town. The two white students, Field Secretary, Michael Schwerner and Summer Volunteer, Andy Goodman had both been shot once. Black student, James Earl Chaney, was shot twice in the head and once in the chest. Back to you Peter.

Peter Jennings: (Off stage) This news is shaking the nation. Racial oppression threatens white as well as black students working for racial integration. Back to you, Sam.

Sam Donaldson: Today we see the epitome of what Martin Luther King, Jr. has advocated. He said, (Looking at his clipboard) "True nonviolent resistance is not unrealistic submission to evil power. It is rather a courageous confrontation of evil by the power of love, in the faith that it is better to be the recipient of violence than the inflictor of it, since the latter only multiplies the existence of violence and bitterness in the universe, while the former may develop a sense of shame in the opponent, and thereby bring about a transformation and change of heart."

(Looking at the audience) Today we have witnessed courage. It is our hope that this act of violence will bring about a sense of shame and a transformation in the heart of America. (Touches his own heart) Back to you, Peter.



Scene II - Rights for the Poor

Setting: Stage I - Washington

Narrator: On December 10, 1964 Dr. King traveled to Oslo, Sweden to receive the Nobel Peace Prize and sixty days later in February he was jailed with more than two hundred others while leading a voting rights march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama. The results of this march led to the Voting Rights Act.

As the Civil Rights Movement swept across the country Dr. King expanded it to speak for the poor and against the Vietnam War. He received many death threats. He moved to Chicago to replace murderous riots in major cities across the nation that resulted in mass deaths with non violent resistance. Because of intolerable living condition violence and rioting moved through the cities. Dr. King advocated for quality integrated education, open housing, equal employment and pay, better living conditions, and desegregation. He defended the method of non-violent resistance against those advocating for violence and force to achieve these reforms.

In 1967, 1968 he launched the Poor Peoples Campaign. His speech given on March 3, 1968 came to be known as “I’ve been to the Mountaintop”. We take you to hear the end of his speech.

Martin: (Standing at the podium) **“Well, I don’t really know what will happen now; we’ve got some difficult days ahead. But it really doesn’t matter with me now, because I’ve been to the mountaintop. And I don’t mind. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life—longevity has its place. But I’m not concerned about that now. I just want to do God’s will. And He’s allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I’ve looked over, and I’ve seen the promised-land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the promised land. And I’m happy tonight. I’m not worried about anything. I’m not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.**”

Every now and then I guess we all think realistically about that day when we will be victimized with what is life’s final common denominator—that something we call death. We all think about it. And every now and then I think about my own death, and I think about my own funeral. And I don’t think of it in a morbid sense. Every now and then I ask myself, “What is it that I would want said?” And I leave the word to you this morning.

I’d like somebody to mention that day, that Martin Luther King Jr., tried to give his life serving others.

I’d like for somebody to say that day, that Martin Luther King, Jr., tried to love somebody.

I want you to say that day, that I tried to be right on the war question.

I want you to be able to say that day, that I did try to feed the hungry.

And I want you to be able to say that day, that I did try, in my life to clothe those who were naked.

I want you to say, on that day, that I did try, in my life, to visit those who were in prison.

I want you to say that I tried to love and to serve humanity.

Yes, if you want to say that I was a drum major, say that I was a drum major of justice. Say that I was a drum major for peace. I was a drum major for righteousness. And all of the other shallow things will not matter. I won’t have any money to leave behind. But I just want to leave a committed life behind. And that’s all I wanted to say.



If I can help somebody as I pass along, if I can cheer somebody with a word or song, if I can show somebody he’s traveling wrong, then my living will not be in vain. If I can do my duty as a Christian ought, if I can bring salvation to a world once wrought, if I can spread the message as the master taught, then my living will not be in vain. “

Scene III - Assassination 1968

Setting: Stage I - Motel Room.

Narrator: In April Dr. King went to Memphis, Tennessee to support the garbage workers that were receiving poor pay and unfair working conditions. He stayed in the Lorraine Hotel.

Ralph Abernathy: Thanks for coming down here. It is my hope that this strike will improve the working conditions of the sanitation workers here in Memphis.

Martin: I wouldn’t miss it. I have a moral obligation to come.

Ralph Abernathy: The strike went as well as could be expected today, but this kind of freedom never comes easy.

Martin: The problem goes beyond racial line. Many poor white workers here need our support for better pay as well. Hopefully this will improve their living conditions.

Ralph Abernathy: The black ghetto here is appalling, (Shakes his head) crowded and rundown without services, very unhealthy conditions exist. Better pay could improve their living conditions. They need electricity, running water and flush toilets. (Looking toward the balcony) There won’t be peace in this city for a while. Not until some corrections are made.

Martin: “Genuine peace is not the absence of tension, but the presence of Justice.” We need the presence of justice here.

Ralph Abernathy: This won’t be a safe fight or a popular fight for us.

Martin: Cowardice asks the question “Is it safe?” Expediency asks the question “Is it politic? Vanity asks the question “Is it popular?” Conscience asks the question “Is it right?” And then there is the big question “Is it so precious you will die for it?”

Ralph Abernathy: Good questions. I hope we always remain true to our conscience.

Martin: Our position comes from a man named Jesus. He will help us remain true. (Ralph and Martin look toward the audience) What is that commotion outside? It sounds like a crowd is gathering.

Martin: I was wondering myself. Let’s go out on the balcony. (Ralph and Martin stand a moment and observe)

Ralph Abernathy: (Calls down) What is going on down there?

(Gunshot is heard) (Martin crumbles to the ground) (Ralph tends to his body)

Ralph Abernathy: (Looks up and around) Call an ambulance. Hurry! Have mercy. Father forgive them. They don't know what they have done. (Moaning) Don't die on me Martin, we need you! Oh! We need you. Don't die on me...

Woman in the audience: (Shouts) Get the police.

Man in the audience: (Shouts) Call an ambulance.

Woman in the audience: (Shouts and Pointing) They caught him! Look they have him!

Narrator: James Earl Ray- A white drifter and escaped convict shot Martin Luther King, Jr. on April 4, 1968. He was convicted in 1969 and sentenced to 99 years in prison.

Dr. Kings Epitaph reads: Free at last, free at last. Thank God Almighty I'm free at last.
In 1983 Congress passed a federal holiday honoring Dr. King. The day is celebrated on the third Monday of January.



Costuming

Guys	Girls
Dark Suit Vest Dark shoes White Shirt Tie or Bow Tie Beret (Optional) Fedora (Optional) Belt	Full Skirt, to the knee or dress with full skirt Blouse that can go with skirt- Long Sleeved Sweater- Plain Simple Cardigan Apron Flats Square silky scarf (Optional) Pill Box hat (Optional) In case of male role- Dark Slacks White Shirt. Belt