On 1/14/2015 5:07 PM, Rubén G. Rumbaut wrote:

TO: Sociology 63, Soc Sci 70A, and Sociology 264 - w2015
RE: Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968): A Remembrance
FR: Rubén G. Rumbaut

Every year at this time, as well as on the first week of every April, I send my students a note aimed to commemorate a life that made a difference in all of our lives. The timing explains why we began our class readings with Letter from Birmingham Jail (1963).

Tomorrow, January 15, 2015, marks the 86th anniversary of the birth of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. And this year will see other milestones: December 2015 will mark the 60th anniversary of the Montgomery Bus Boycott that he led as a newly appointed minister (at an age not much older than most of you in this class), after a young woman, Rosa Parks, refused to sit on the back of a bus as required by the norms of the white supremacist Jim Crow system of caste segregation that had been in place since the previous century. That boycott brought both to national prominence and catalyzed a modern civil rights movement, the legacies of which continue to reverberate into the 21st century. This year will mark as well the 60th of the horrific murder of 14-year-old Emmett Till, in August 1955 (http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emmett_Till) -- which focused national attention on the ingrained injustices of American racism and the barbarism of impunity lynchings, and helped propel the civil rights movement. This year too will mark the 50th anniversary of "Bloody Sunday" and the Selma to Montgomery marches, and of the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act shortly after... (and of UCI itself come October).

Dr. King did not live to see his 40th birthday, but he left us a legacy for all seasons. A religious man of modest origins, who like many of you majored in sociology in college (at Morehouse College) and became perhaps the greatest orator in American history, he was murdered on April 4, 1968, at the young age of 39--a brutal, senseless assassination that changed the narrative arc of history in ways we can scarcely imagine.

I remember that fateful date as if it was yesterday: I was a teenager in college, working 30 hours a week while going to school in St. Louis, Missouri, with less than $300 in savings... but that sufficed to buy a plane ticket to Atlanta, Georgia, and make it in time to join the tens of thousands who lined the streets and marched in the funeral procession that followed his mule-drawn casket. I was not even a citizen of the United States then; but I was shocked and dismayed by the senselessness of the assassination of a man of peace at a time of war, and felt that the only meaningful way in which I could respond was to make an acto de presencia, in silent solidarity. In a way, I have been making that trip of remembrance ever since.

Beginning officially on January 20, 1986--29 years ago--after much controversy and nearly two decades after his assassination, the third Monday of every January became designated a national holiday to commemorate his life. But not all states agreed to honor the national holiday (amazingly, it was not until 2000 before all 50 states did so). Among the most egregiously recalcitrant was the state of Arizona, which finally did so under pressure after the Super Bowl was
moved by the NFL from Sun Devil Stadium in Tempe to the Pasadena Rose Bowl in 1993. New Hampshire was the last state to have a holiday named after Dr. King (in 1999), while South Carolina was the last state to recognize the day as a paid holiday for all state employees (in 2000); prior to this, SC employees could choose between celebrating Martin Luther King Day or one of three Confederate holidays.

Much of what is said and done in these annual days of remembrance amount to little more than a 30-second-sound-bite version of a man, a life, a movement, and a historic period that defy trivialization. Given the central relevance of his life and legacy to our course, this e-mail (with others to follow) is an effort to do more than join in the collective trivialization, and to urge you to do likewise.

For those of you interested in exploring the extraordinary life, work, times and legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr., there is now online a treasure trove of information—not only of most of his entire collection of published writings but also of his speeches on audiotape (so that you can listen to them just as they were delivered), as well as biographies, articles, an interactive chronology, videos, etc., plus information about the remarkable project that makes this possible—available at the click of a mouse at: http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/. I encourage you to visit the Stanford site and spend some time exploring it.

For instance, especially if you're going to see the new film "Selma" (which we discussed in class this week), you can listen to (and read) his speech which concludes the film, delivered on 25 March 1965 - Address at the Conclusion of the Selma to Montgomery March... ending with "How long? Not long, because the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice...." and with his recitation of the Battle Hymn of the Republic, which gives the title to the film's song "Glory." And you can listen to his 18 September 1963 - Eulogy for the Martyred Children... which he delivered three days after the bombing of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham (a scene depicted near the beginning of the film "Selma"), at the funeral service for three of the children—Addie Mae Collins, Carol Denise McNair, and Cynthia Diane Wesley—killed in the bombing, an irredeemable act of white supremacist terrorism that continues to reverberate to this day. He said in his eulogy that day:

"These children—unoffending, innocent, and beautiful—were the victims of one of the most vicious and tragic crimes ever perpetrated against humanity. And yet they died nobly... They have something to say to every politician who has fed his constituents with the stale bread of hatred and the spoiled meat of racism... They say to us that we must be concerned not merely about who murdered them, but about the system, the way of life, the philosophy which produced the murderers. Their death says to us that we must work passionately and unrelentingly for the realization of the American dream. And so my friends, they did not die in vain... [H]istory has proven over and over again that unmerited suffering is redemptive... The death of these little children may lead our whole Southland from the low road of man's inhumanity to man to the high road of peace and brotherhood. These tragic deaths may lead our nation to substitute an aristocracy of character for an aristocracy of color. The spilled blood of these innocent girls may cause the whole citizenry of Birmingham to transform the negative extremes of a dark past into the positive extremes of a bright future. Indeed this tragic event may cause the white South to come to terms with its conscience..."
And you might want to listen to one of his most important if less well known speeches, at Riverside Church in New York City on 4 April 1967 - Beyond Vietnam (the war at that time was in Vietnam, not in Afghanistan or Iraq, but what he had to say then remains eerily prescient): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OC1Ru2p8OfU -- and also read the text of that extraordinary statement in full ["...because my conscience leaves me no other choice... I speak as a citizen of the world... We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history, there is such a thing as being too late. Procrastination is still the thief of time. Life often leaves us standing bare, naked, and dejected with a lost opportunity"]. Exactly one year later to the day he was shot to death in Memphis.

I am attaching here, on the week of his annual national commemoration, the following links to his shortest and best known speeches: the one he gave in Oslo when he accepted the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964 (he was but 35 years old at the time): December 10, 1964 - Acceptance Speech at Nobel Peace Prize Ceremony -- and perhaps his most famous oration at the base of the Lincoln Memorial in 1963 (on the centennial of the Emancipation Proclamation): Martin Luther King, Jr., I Have a Dream, 28 August 1963.

Yet Dr. King was no dreamer, but a man of action par excellence. He sought, indefatigably and with few illusions, economic and political power and justice for a people long downtrodden, as you'll read in his August 1967 speech, "Where Do We Go From Here?", but yet driven by the conviction that "the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." And he could be prophetic, never more so (as I mentioned in class on Tuesday) than in his last speech on 3 April 1968, the night before he was assassinated: "I’ve Been to the Mountaintop."

In October 2011, after many years of planning and designing, a national memorial to Martin Luther King Jr. was dedicated on the mall in Washington DC (see http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/special/lifestyle/mlk2011/interactive-memorial/). A controversy was soon brewing: the words inscribed on the huge statue to Dr. King were not his, but a paraphrase of his actual words: "Yes, if you want to say that I was a drum major, say that I was a drum major for 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." This comes at the end of a long and powerful sermon, "The Drum Major Instinct" (4 February 1968), which you can read and listen to at that link. I encourage you to do so. (The monument on the national mall has been redone to reflect his words and his meaning.)

Today, once more in a ratcheted-up climate of hate and fear and war, do take a moment and go to the King project site to expand your awareness and knowledge of a life that made and continues to make a difference... and a voice for reason that is missed, and needed, more than ever.

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• A short biography of King
• King's speeches and sermons
• Montgomery Bus Boycott
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And beyond his biography, check out the links I sent you two days ago for the larger context of the civil rights movement, 1954-1968, in which his life's mission was played out.

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Quote in: [Letter From Birmingham Jail](https://www.yahoomail.com)
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1954-1968  Civil Rights Movement

- [http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eyes_on_the_Prize](http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eyes_on_the_Prize)

May 1954  Brown v. Board of Education

August 1955  The murder of Emmett Till

- [Antecedents: Lynchings and white supremacy in US](http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antecedents:_Lynchings_and_white_supremacy_in_US)
- [Lynchings that inspired "Strange Fruit"](http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lynchings_that Inspired_"Strange_Fruit")
- [Billie Holiday and "Strange Fruit"](http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Billie_Holiday_and_"Strange_Fruit")

December 1955-December 1956  Montgomery Bus Boycott

1957  The Little Rock Nine (desegregating Little Rock Central High School, 1957)

1960  The Greensboro sit-ins (1960) in North Carolina

1961  Freedom Riders (1961)

June 1963  The murder of Medgar Evers

August 1963  The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom

September 1963  Sixteenth Street Baptist Church Bombing  
(Addie Mae Collins, Cynthia Wesley, Carole Robertson and Denise McNair)
Summer 1964  The murder of James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner, during Mississippi Freedom Summer:  
http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mississippi_civil_rights_workers_murders

1964    Fannie Lou Hamer (and the 1964 Democratic National Convention):

February 1965   The assassination of Malcolm X

1965   The Selma to Montgomery Marches

http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil_Rights_Act_of_1964  

April 4, 1968  The assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. (April 4, 1968)

The Civil Rights Memorial in Montgomery, Alabama

Civil Rights Memorial

Civil Rights Martyrs

On the Civil Rights Memorial are inscribed the names of individuals who lost their lives in the struggle for freedom during the modern Civil Rights Movement - 1954 to 1968. The martyrs include activists who were targeted for death because of their civil rights work; random victims of vigilantes determined to halt the movement; and individuals who, in the sacrifice of their own lives, brought new awareness to the struggle.  The chronology below briefly describes their lives.  More information is available at the Civil Rights Memorial Center.

1955

May 7, 1955 · Belzoni, Mississippi  
Rev. George Lee, one of the first black people registered to vote in Humphreys County, used his pulpit and his printing press to urge others to vote. White officials offered Lee protection on the condition he end his voter registration efforts, but Lee refused and was murdered.

August 13, 1955 · Brookhaven, Mississippi
Lamar Smith was shot dead on the courthouse lawn by a white man in broad daylight while dozens of people watched. The killer was never indicted because no one would admit they saw a white man shoot a black man. Smith had organized blacks to vote in a recent election.
August 28, 1955 · Money, Mississippi
Emmett Louis Till, a 14-year-old boy on vacation from Chicago, reportedly flirted with a white woman in a store. Three nights later, two men took Till from his bed, beat him, shot him and dumped his body in the Tallahatchie River. An all-white jury found the men innocent of murder.

October 22, 1955 · Mayflower, Texas
John Earl Reese, 16, was dancing in a café when white men fired shots into the windows. Reese was killed and two others were wounded. The shootings were part of an attempt by whites to terrorize blacks into giving up plans for a new school. (photograph unavailable)

1957

January 23, 1957 · Montgomery, Alabama
Willie Edwards Jr., a truck driver, was on his way to work when he was stopped by four Klansmen. The men mistook Edwards for another man who they believed was dating a white woman. They forced Edwards at gunpoint to jump off a bridge into the Alabama River. Edwards’ body was found three months later.

1959

April 25, 1959 · Poplarville, Mississippi
Mack Charles Parker, 23, was accused of raping a white woman. Three days before his case was set for trial, a masked mob took him from his jail cell, beat him, shot him and threw him in the Pearl River.

1961

September 25, 1961 · Liberty, Mississippi
Herbert Lee, who worked with civil rights leader Bob Moses to help register black voters, was killed by a state legislator who claimed self-defense and was never arrested. Louis Allen, a black man who witnessed the murder, was later also killed.

1962

April 9, 1962 · Taylorsville, Mississippi
Cpl. Roman Ducksworth Jr., a military police officer stationed in Maryland, was on leave to visit his sick wife when he was ordered off a bus by a police officer and shot dead. The police officer may have mistaken Ducksworth for a “freedom rider” who was testing bus
desegregation laws.

September 30, 1962 · Oxford, Mississippi
Paul Guihard, a reporter for a French news service, was killed by gunfire from a white mob during protests over the admission of James Meredith to the University of Mississippi.

1963

April 23, 1963 · Attalla, Alabama
William Lewis Moore, a postman from Baltimore, was shot and killed during a one-man march against segregation. Moore had planned to deliver a letter to the governor of Mississippi urging an end to intolerance.

June 12, 1963 · Jackson, Mississippi
Medgar Evers, who directed NAACP operations in Mississippi, was leading a campaign for integration in Jackson when he was shot and killed by a sniper at his home.

September 15, 1963 · Birmingham, Alabama
Addie Mae Collins, Denise McNair, Carole Robertson and Cynthia Wesley were getting ready for church services when a bomb exploded at the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, killing all four of the school-age girls. The church had been a center for civil rights meetings and marches.

September 15, 1963 · Birmingham, Alabama
Virgil Lamar Ware, 13, was riding on the handlebars of his brother’s bicycle when he was fatally shot by white teenagers. The white youths had come from a segregationist rally held in the aftermath of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church bombing.

1964

January 31, 1964 · Liberty, Mississippi
Louis Allen, who witnessed the murder of civil rights worker Herbert Lee, endured years of threats, jailings and harassment. He was making final arrangements to move north on the day he was killed.
March 23, 1964 · Jacksonville, Florida
Johnnie Mae Chappell was murdered as she walked along a roadside. Her killers were white men looking for a black person to shoot following a day of racial unrest. *(photograph unavailable)*

April 7, 1964 · Cleveland, Ohio
Rev. Bruce Klunder was among civil rights activists who protested the building of a segregated school by placing their bodies in the way of construction equipment. Klunder was crushed to death when a bulldozer backed over him.

May 2, 1964 · Meadville, Mississippi
Henry Hezekiah Dee and Charles Eddie Moore were killed by Klansmen who believed the two were part of a plot to arm blacks in the area. (There was no such plot.) Their bodies were found during a massive search for the missing civil rights workers Chaney, Goodman and Schwerner.

June 21, 1964 · Philadelphia, Mississippi
James Earl Chaney, Andrew Goodman and Michael Henry Schwerner, young civil rights workers, were arrested by a deputy sheriff and then released into the hands of Klansmen who had plotted their murders. They were shot, and their bodies were buried in an earthen dam.

July 11, 1964 · Colbert, Georgia
Lt. Col. Lemuel Penn, a Washington, D.C., educator, was driving home from U.S. Army Reserves training when he was shot and killed by Klansmen in a passing car.

1965

February 26, 1965 · Marion, Alabama
Jimmie Lee Jackson was beaten and shot by state troopers as he tried to protect his grandfather and mother from a trooper attack on civil rights marchers. His death led to the Selma-Montgomery march and the eventual passage of the Voting Rights Act.

March 11, 1965 · Selma, Alabama
Rev. James Reeb, a Unitarian minister from Boston, was among many white clergymen who joined the Selma marchers after the attack by state troopers at the Edmund Pettus Bridge. Reeb was beaten to death by white men while he walked down a Selma street.
March 25, 1965 · Selma Highway, Alabama
Viola Gregg Liuzzo, a housewife and mother from Detroit, drove alone to Alabama to help with the Selma march after seeing televised reports of the attack at the Edmund Pettus Bridge. She was driving marchers back to Selma from Montgomery when she was shot and killed by a Klansmen in a passing car.

June 2, 1965 · Bogalusa, Louisiana
Oneal Moore was one of two black deputies hired by white officials in an attempt to appease civil rights demands. Moore and his partner, Creed Rogers, were on patrol when they were blasted with gunfire from a passing car. Moore was killed and Rogers was wounded.

July 18, 1965 · Anniston, Alabama
Willie Brewster was on his way home from work when he was shot and killed by white men. The men belonged to the National States Rights Party, a violent neo-Nazi group whose members had been involved in church bombings and murders of blacks.

August 20, 1965 · Hayneville, Alabama
Jonathan Myrick Daniels, an Episcopal Seminary student in Boston, had come to Alabama to help with black voter registration in Lowndes County. He was arrested at a demonstration, jailed in Hayneville and then suddenly released. Moments after his release, he was shot to death by a deputy sheriff.

1966

January 3, 1966 · Tuskegee, Alabama
Samuel Leamon Younge Jr., a student civil rights activist, was fatally shot by a white gas station owner following an argument over segregated restrooms.

January 10, 1966 · Hattiesburg, Mississippi
Vernon Ferdinand Dahmer, a wealthy businessman, offered to pay poll taxes for those who couldn’t afford the fee required to vote. The night after a radio station broadcasted Dahmer’s offer, his home was firebombed. Dahmer died later from severe burns.
June 10, 1966 · Natchez, Mississippi
Ben Chester White, who had worked most of his life as a caretaker on a plantation, had no involvement in civil rights work. He was murdered by Klansmen who thought they could divert attention from a civil rights march by killing a black person.

July 30, 1966 · Bogalusa, Louisiana
Clarence Triggs was a bricklayer who had attended civil rights meetings sponsored by the Congress of Racial Equality. He was found dead on a roadside, shot through the head. (photograph unavailable)

1967

February 27, 1967 · Natchez, Mississippi
Wharlest Jackson, the treasurer of his local NAACP chapter, was one of many blacks who received threatening Klan notices at his job. After Jackson was promoted to a position previously reserved for whites, a bomb was planted in his car. It exploded minutes after he left work one day, killing him instantly.

May 12, 1967 · Jackson, Mississippi
Benjamin Brown, a former civil rights organizer, was watching a student protest from the sidelines when he was hit by stray gunshots from police who fired into the crowd.

1968

February 8, 1968 · Orangeburg, South Carolina
Samuel Ephesians Hammond Jr., Delano Herman Middleton and Henry Ezekial Smith were shot and killed by police who fired on student demonstrators at the South Carolina State College campus.

April 4, 1968 · Memphis, Tennessee
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., a Baptist minister, was a major architect of the Civil Rights Movement. He led and inspired major non-violent desegregation campaigns, including those in Montgomery and Birmingham. He won the Nobel peace prize. He was assassinated as he prepared to lead a demonstration in Memphis.

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere... Justice too long delayed is justice denied." --Letter from Birmingham Jail (1963)