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ODYSSEY



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ODYSSEY LOVE



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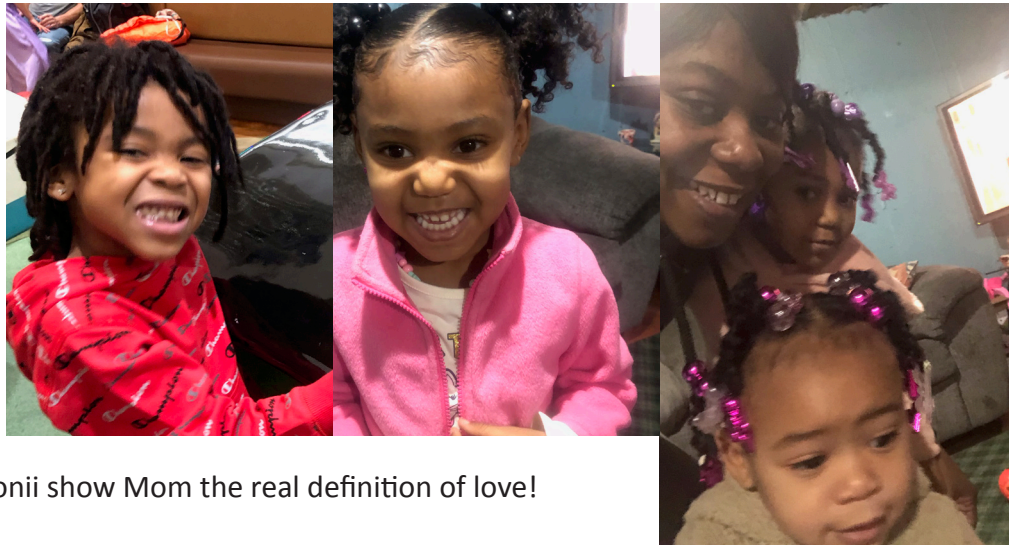
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I LOVE . . .

In search of a broader definition of love for Valentine's Day, Odyssey students completed paragraphs or verses starting with the two words "I love."

I love . . . love
 the first kiss the first touch
 the red flush of cheeks when they heat from a blush
 the first date the first crush
 heartbreak from when you first trust
 the place where you have pride to serve
 where some die to preserve
 the eye contact that says a thousand words
 without it the world loses its color
 without it can we truly see each other? **(Jonathon Adeyanju)**

I love... Raquis, Kaniiyah, and Kaymonii: my three beautiful children who came into my life and made my world a better place to be in. My kids are the ones I will always have unconditional love for no matter what. We have a bond that could never be broken.



Raquis, Kaniiyah, and Kaymonii show Mom the real definition of love!
(Amanda Bell)



I love when I see my daughter's smile when I pick her up from daycare on Fridays and she runs and yells, "I love you, Daddy!" I love when my daughter laughs and smiles. It warms my heart. I love when she lays her head on my chest to rest or just to enjoy the moment of having her with me. I love when I pick her up and she says, "Upside down baby!" I dangle her upside down for a little while and she laughs. **(Brandyn Bess)**



I love to cook
It makes me happy
It allows me to be creative
It makes me concentrate on great taste and beauty



I love to cook
Creating hearty dishes on a cold day
Creating sweet dishes to make the heart smile
Creating healthy dishes to keep the body strong

I love to cook
Family meals on the holidays
Family togetherness at the meal table
Family conversation promoting unity. **(Ericka Booeey)**

I love Giselle. I love Giselle because she's smart. I love Giselle because of her muffin-sized head. I love Giselle because she's beautiful. I love Giselle because of her mind and body and soul. I hope y'all get what I'm trying to say. I would love to marry Giselle someday. **(Jermaine Booeey)**



I love that no matter what life throws at me, I still get through it standing tall, even when I feel like it's impossible. I find hope in everything. I pray and put my faith in God. I wasn't always like this. It took a lot of strength and life situations and lessons to get me here. I love the new me, the strong me. I will try to find the good in any situation. I won't let anything destroy me. It's hard to have that much strength. **(Kayanna Branch)**

I love life
Loving life is exciting
Excitement you will get out of loving life.
(Katrina Collins)

lysis, lyjah, Ermias, thank you for loving me even when Dad does not love himself. Thank you for never giving up on me. I know I'm not always present or in the moment, but I pray over you munchkins nightly and thank God for allowing me to be your father. I will travel universes for all three of you. I will be there with no excuse; I'll give any one of you an organ if you need it.

I love you,
Dad (**Ontario Frazier**)



I love how you look at me
I love how you lay your head on my lap
I love how you sleep next to me
I love how needy you can be
I love how excited you get when I come home
I love how crazy you drive me
I love how loyal you are
I love your big brown eyes
I love how you lay your paw on my hand
I love you, my big doggo (**Erendira Giron Cruz**)

I love watching my daughter explore and move around. I love watching her explore her curiosity. I love watching her personality grow.
(**Cynthia Gonzalez**)





I love watching my children grow. Being able to see how their voice changes, with every new word they learn. Seeing them learn how to crawl, then move up to walking quicker than I can make it to the second level of Candy Crush. Just being able to not only feel the love through unconditional giggles and smiles that show all their incoming teeth but with the “I love you, Mommy” or small toes on my face when I’m still trying to cuddle them in the middle of the night. I love watching my children grow. Seeing them jump from one couch to another or run in circles around the house makes me cheer myself on in silent “Ooh boy, Mama, did you put those motor skills to work early.” Watching my children grow shows my accomplishments not only as a mother but as a person. I love watching my children grow.

(Talaisha Goodwan)

I love myself! During this time in my life, I’m learning to love the little things about life, to love the big things, to love my face, shape, and body, to learn to find value in myself. I’m figuring out how to balance life’s good days and bad days and how to love the journey while I’m living it. I am learning to love the process while I’m going through it and how to love the people, places, and things that I meet along the way! Because that is me! The mosaic of all the lovely, crazy things make up me and who I am. I think it’s turning into a great picture! I’m slowly but surely becoming the woman of my dreams, and I love that for me. **(Zaria Hunter)**



I love the internet.

The ability to have a vast array of knowledge and information at your disposal at any time, right at your fingertips.

I love having access to a place in which I can unleash my mind.

I love never having doubts and being able to look something up in a matter of seconds.

I love that I’m able to broaden my horizons and learn as much as I please about anything and everything.

I love that the world has collectively come together to assemble one of the largest collections of information to date.

I love learning.

I love the internet. **(Yael Jimenez)**



I love this big, brown-eyed little girl. From the moment the doctor said “Congrats, you’re pregnant,” I held you and you won my heart. I never knew I could love someone as much as I love you. From the brown wool of your hair to the bubble gum nail polish on your toenails, you’re my love. I love how you turn your pink lips up when things aren’t going your way. I love when you’re happy and that weird laugh you do showing that big, beautiful smile and straight white teeth. But those thick dark eyebrows and long eye lashes weaken my heart every time I see your face. My dear Reagan, I love how perfect God made you. My love. Love, Mom. **(Crystal Johnson)**

I love the person I’m becoming. I’m trying each day, learning from my mistakes. I used to follow blindly behind my cares, not knowing the consequences of my actions and the impact on my future. Now I think through all my actions and weigh out the pros and cons, just like I would have a conversation with the angel and devil on my shoulder.

My actions don’t just affect me anymore because I have my beautiful sunshine growing in me, a son due July 21st. I want to become a strong mother, a loving mother, and a caring mother. I want to become a person who helps her community. I want to become a person always smiling, who has found inner peace. I love the person I’m becoming. **(Helena Lee)**

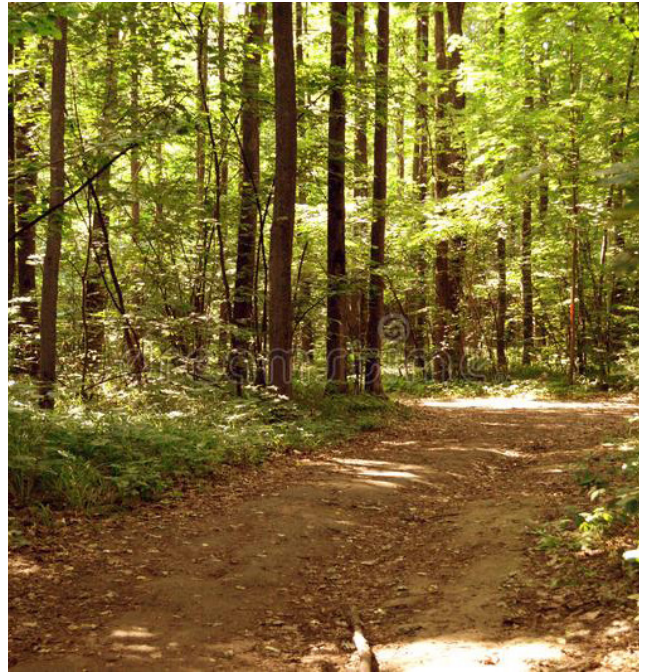


I love when my spirit feels close to God. That feeling of awareness yet wanting to know more. That feeling that a million of pieces that were once misplaced finally start to become a corner of the puzzle. That feeling where you don’t have to fast any longer in the shadows, but the light seems to creep in. This is the feeling that brings the greatest joy and love. **(Michelle Mack)**

I love my daughter. She definitely saved me from myself. She always makes me challenge myself to do better. **(Mariam Maiga)**



Love is taking a nice long walk, feeling the warmth of the sun on my face, relaxing and forgetting about all my problems. It's enjoying having a free mind to take in all the scenery that I miss on my day-to-day hustle in life. It's taking in the beauty of my community, noticing the different seasons, and relating it to a familiar smell. Spring lavender, summer roses, fall and the smell of dead leaves, and winter pinecones. It's taking a selfish but needed time to have the liberty to not think at all. Love is my favorite comfortable clothes, shoes, music in my ears, and the freedom to walk anywhere my legs will take me. **(Mashell McCarter)**



I love the sun outside, educated black woman on my side, or how when I'm on dumb s**t I got good friends that won't let me slide, love a blunt and some soul music for a late night ride, can't decide between my sister's cornbread or Grandma's sweet potato pie, love showing love, love to receive it as well, haters love to hate on a brotha but oh well, love a slick pair of sneaks with the hat to match, love when my girl try to be on bulls**t and I hit her with facts, love Jadakiss voice, love the hood, I ain't got no choice, love hanging out all night til the sun up and the ground is moist, most of my rhymes is off da dome, I love playing with words, they say if you love something you should set it free, that s**t sounds stupid and absurd to me, if you love me you better appreciate me, it's someone new in my inbox weekly, and I'm conceited when I leave the



barbershop you better try and keep me, I love a fresh fade, love how I'm self-made, love to keep it real, I been a fool since I dropped outta school in the 12th grade, self-paid, wealth comes and goes but respect made me the man that I am, these the cards I was played, love how the haters check my page but careful not to like or comment, ain't a stingy bone in my body, you can have it if I got it, wrote some books, got kids looking up to me, now they wanna grow up and be authors too, I put on for my city, love a pretty sister, I got three sisters of my own, only boy so I had to learn to fight on my own, last night my drinks was free all night at the bar, now that's love, gave the bartender a nice tip, gotta show love to the plug, it's aight to smoke a blunt or two but please don't do drugs, I got the sickest pen in the game and that's far and above, nobody close no one near, I know you love my written rhymes, imagine my voice in your ear, just love a brotha, from my scars to my tattoos, f**k it love me from a distance if you have to, that's how I got past you, last few lines is how they remember my written words, far from perfect but worth it, Rausea the wordsmith. **(Reggie Moore)**

I love me
I love everything about me
It took a while for
Me to get here
And now I love me. **(LaRonda Morris)**

I love my children, although being a mom of four is tough. I enjoy every moment of it. The worry of not being good enough, the nights where you have to figure things out. But the best part is the joy, the laughter, the growth. For them, I grow every day, I have the courage to be better, to do better. It's because of them I'm even here.

I love love. Love is a verb and a noun. It is something we all have a different understanding of. Love is a bittersweet emotion. It gives you its lessons with multiple faces. All love is not good love. "Love" can be dark, love can be light. Love can be a teacher; love can be simple. Love can be exquisite. Love can be honest; love can be a lie. Love is a journey, a path with seemingly no destination. An emotion that can make you question yourself or better yourself. Love can be consequential. The best part about love is it can be unconditional if you know how. Love is family, friends, food, a hug, and everything between. Sometimes, it's just the things we need. Love can be rough; love can be tough. Love languages are as unique as the Tower of Babel. It is our duty as human beings to develop the love languages of those who we care about so we can add on more love with strength, faith, and confidence. Understanding one's love language, you can repair someone or invest in someone's spirit. Love is the most powerful tool on this planet. We should nurture it and believe in it; it seems to be what the world is missing. **(Cylinthia Olle)**



I love the fact that God wakes me up in the morning so that I can call the people in my life that God has blessed me with, including my family. I love to talk to them because they are a big part of my life. I wouldn't trade any money in the world for them. Other than the Lord above, they are the lifeline of my happiness. **(Kimari Rogers)**

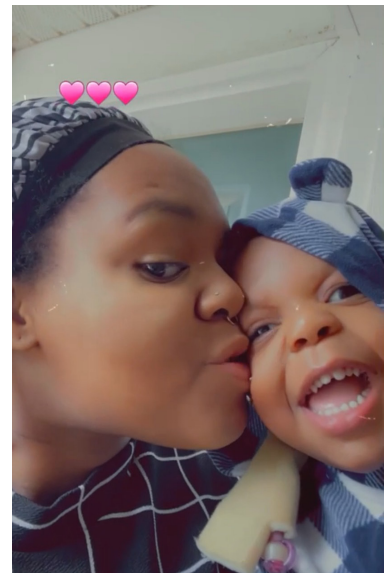
I love my daughter, I love my son, I love the dark, I love coffee, I love long conversations, I love the mornings, I love dark chocolate, I love the fall, I love cold days, I love apples, I love breakfast, I love my kids' birthdays, I love light pink, I love black, I love salads, I love workouts, I love my bed, I love my schedules, I love myself. **(Jessica Saldana Ortega)**



I love that my son was born on Valentine's Day. Every year, I would tell him all the Valentine decorations that were put up EVERYWHERE were for him. They were to celebrate his birthday.

The smile that would appear on his face was priceless. I love my Marcus Marcel Valentino. <3 **(Mechele Williams)**

I love that I can finally understand self-care is cutting negative people out of your life. Protecting your environment isn't being mean; the energy people bring your way can either lift your spirit or have you mentally stressed. Everyone around you has an effect on your self-love, self-care, mental health, and overall environment. Teachers, sisters, etc. . . doesn't matter who, no one controls you, so removing negative people is okay. It shows your improvement. Love yourself enough to do what's best for you. **(Capri Booker)**



I love my family's faces when we are all spending time together. There are not many things that make me feel complete. Genuine feelings of good vibes only make my heart smile. **(Naquila Taylor)**

I love others, but love comes at a high cost for me. My favorite line is “Don’t fall in love with an Aries.” Once we love you, we will love you forever. I love to make sure everyone is doing great. If you’re struggling, I’m going to work my butt off to help you. I will give you the shirt off my back.



My daughter, my youngest sister, and lastly my relationship—these are my pride and joys. When my week is done, I look at how I got here. Well, my daughter is my motivation. My younger sister had my beautiful nephew. He’s my boy I never had. My relationship is why I go so strong. I struggle with commitment issues, so I’m proud of us for lasting so long.

To elaborate on this Valentine’s Day that just passed, I woke up and went to the mall. I had to cut the trip short to go to the church. The church was nice to get away from the family. I had to go get a gift card because financially I’m struggling. Then I came home and slept for an hour. I had a zoom call for my daughter with the Odyssey program. Then her teacher came from the Rise program. His name is Sam. Once that was over and done, I had to drop my nephew off. His mom missed him. This stressed me out, so I ended up at the grocery store and cooking all night. I almost missed work the next day.

Well, that leaves no love left for me. When I put others first, it puts a void in my heart. I try to think but I can’t. This will be a hard battle—to put myself first. The next Valentine’s Day, I will spend it putting myself first. I will vow to love myself and put Cinderria Stephanie Harwell first. **(Cinderria Harwell)**

I love my children. They give me life, I mean literally breathe life into my body. Without my kids, my life is completely meaningless. I love their love and how they love me unconditionally with all of my flaws. I love them! Their smiles ignite the room when I come home from work. They give the tightest and mightiest hugs ever, and I never want to let them go. I love my family that I have created because without them I am nothing. **(Yasmine Dobbins)**



I love my sons—two biological, one stepson, but at the end of the day, MY sons. My favorite thing to do is watch them bond. Family is everything, blended or not. I love my family from my future wife to my mother, my sister, and my dad—friends and everybody. At the end of the day, every day, this is really all that matters. **(Will Nunn)**

POEMS THAT PACK A PUNCH

Langston Hughes in "A Little Lyric of Great Importance" created a poem with just seven words: "I wish the rent / was heaven sent." Class of 2022 Odyssey students wrote their own seven-word poems that pack a punch.

Tragedy either makes you or breaks you. **(Jonathon Adeyanju)**

Weight will be off my shoulders soon!! **(Amanda Bell)**

Brandyn's mind is one of a kind! **(Brandyn Bess)**

Odyssey is a wake-up call for me. **(Ericka Booe)**

My team for3ee shoots 3s for me **(Jermaine Booe)**

Light skin isn't white; melanated queen bright. **(Capri Booker)**

Wish life were as amazing as movies. **(Kayanna Branch)**

Enjoy life, it will go by fast. **(Katrina Collins)**

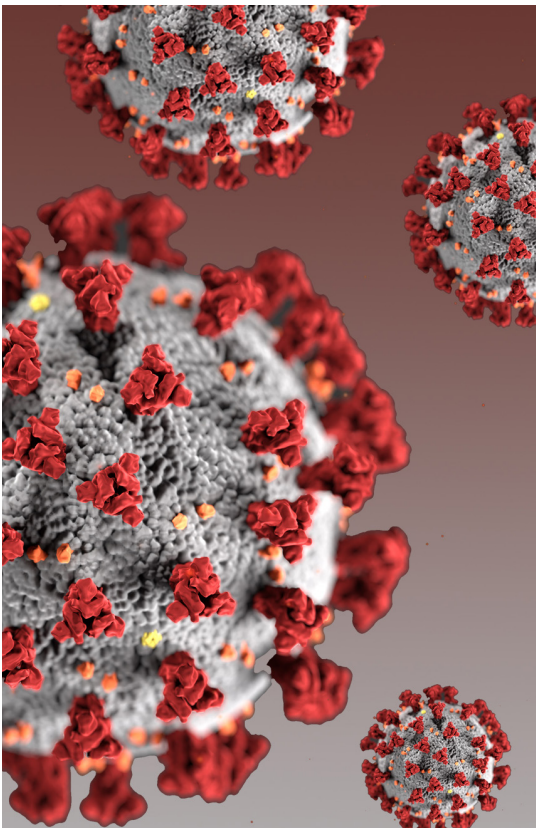
Dreams of me being free, I disagree. **(Yasmine Dobbins)**

Idle Time Will Be Your Worst Enemy! **(Ontario Frazier)**

I wish Covid would disappear now please. **(Erendira Giron Cruz)**

Love isn't supposed to hurt, love heals. **(Cynthia Gonzalez)**

A mother will praise sleepless nights soon. **(Talaisha Goodwan)**



I hate you. You're the worst, COVID. **(Cinderria Harwell)**

I dream and deserve success love happiness **(Zaria Hunter)**

It'd be great if everyone could relate. **(Yael Jimenez)**

Now I check the Mirror. Pop it!! **(Crystal Johnson)**

My baby boy is my heaven-sent motivation. **(Helena Lee)**

Quiet your mind, capture moments in time. **(Michelle Mack)**

I wish the cold would just go. **(Mariam Maiga)**

Sometimes I wish I could clone myself. **(Mashell McCarter)**

She's beautiful, smile melts me as usual. **(Reggie Moore)**

I'm over COVID already. Damn you, COVID! **(LaRonda Morris)**

Search for the light through the darkness. **(Will Nunn)**

Broken. Fixed. Strength. Growth. My life story. **(Cylinthia Olle)**

Hickery dickery dock, turn back the clock. **(Benji Ramirez)**

A mystery in recovery, in absolute discovery. **(Kimari Rogers)**

It is okay not to be okay! **(Jessica Saldana)**

I miss summer, I wanna be summer. **(Naquila Taylor)**

Mechele has power to inspire your soul. **(Mechelle Williams)**

LETTERS TO DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

After reading the eloquent “Letter from Birmingham Jail” from 1963, Odyssey students wrote letters to Dr. King sharing their responses.

Dear Dr. King,



First, I would like to say you elucidated eloquently the social and spiritual injustices that have plagued African Americans for centuries. The deftness of your pen painted a picture that I can see and feel in a way that is undeniable. I would dare say that even the

dullest of minds and hardest of hearts would easily perceive the concepts you illustrated in your letter.

Being African American myself, and consequently victimized by a society that marginalizes, you still manage to crystallize my pain into an anguished clarity. It was as if I was rediscovering my plight all over again. Even more so, it seemed as if the pillars of thought and the voices of provocateurs of justice — could be heard echoing down the corridors of the past to substantiate what you were saying—as if Socrates, Apostle Paul, and Saint Aquinas were brought to life once again. I wholeheartedly agree with your characterization of the African American experience.

I also believe your methods are outdated. In your era the social norms provided a context for the most explicit and grotesque manifestations of social injustice. Lynching, police brutality, and church bombings were commonplace. In essence, it was much easier to create the attention needed, for racism to rear its ugly head and infuse the nation with the awareness of a crisis. But what do you do when your enemy’s tactics are much more subliminal? Or when the mechanizations in infrastructures used to perpetuate inequality are much more insidious and subtle? How then do you listen and thus expose injustice? **(Jonathon Adeyanju)**

First off, I would like to say that the letter you wrote while in Birmingham Jail touched my heart in ways I would have never thought.



After reading your letter, I was thinking about how society is today. Colored people are still dealing with racism, hatred, and unjust and just laws. As you mentioned in your letter, “Justice too long delayed is justice denied.” To me, it means you will feel that if you don’t

receive justice when you expect to receive it, you begin to lose faith and want to give up. This letter has showed me that when you were dealing with racism, you taught others how to take pride and control of their freedom, to stand up for what you believe and NEVER let anyone make you think any different.

As Jesus said, “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.” Personally, I can relate to this quote. I have learned to love the ones who have always wanted to see me fail and not be successful, but as I got older, I came to the conclusion that people’s true colors will always show.

Although you wrote this letter in 1963, it just shows how society is today in 2022. Racism is still at an all-time high. So many times you see that whites (Caucasians) can commit the same crime as a colored (black) human being [but not get the same punishment]. I feel that we are living in the old racism days, and it has continued to cause pain to most African Americans today. When will racism end? Will we always deal with unjust laws? Will we always have to hold back our thoughts or opinions? Why does violence have to exist in America to the point where our people are afraid to defend one another?

We must come together and stand up for what is right in America today. **(Amanda Bell)**



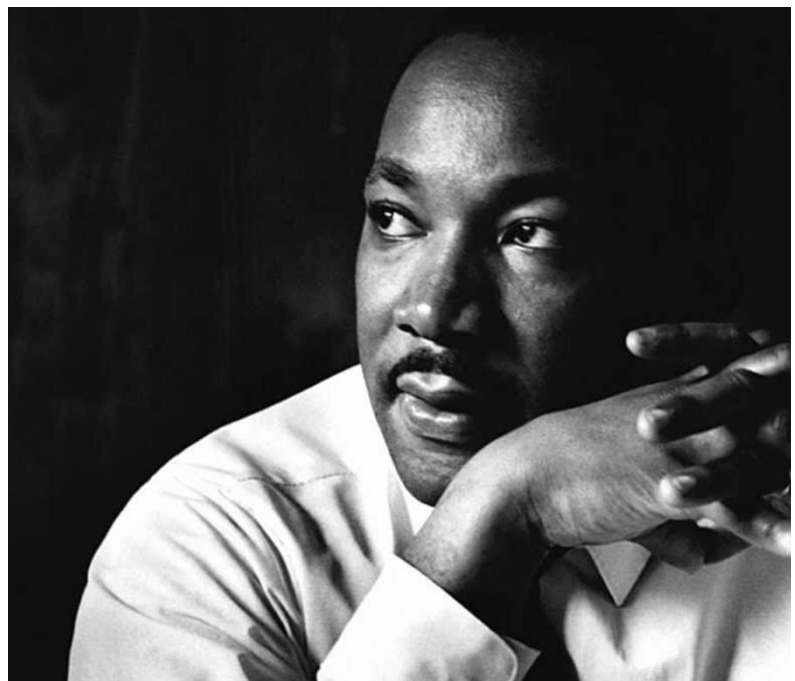
Thank you for your vulnerable words. I learned a little more about you after reading. I felt the pain you felt not only for yourself and your family but also the hurt you carried for your community. You said “what affects one directly affects us all indirectly” and that

was one of the reasons why you came to Birmingham. I commend the bravery but also the frustration it must have taken to take the “Direct Action Program” from city to city. This was the best way for our voices to be heard, but also, like you explained, why should this movement be grounded in one community? Injustice is happening all over America, and we are all a part of America and all deserve justice. As far as the movement being untimely, as your experience showed, after so many incidents of waiting there came a realization there would never be a right time.

There were a lot of things that struck me and some that saddened me. Certain visualizations like your references on situations such as having to “tell your 6-year-old daughter she can’t go to Funtown because it is for colored only,” your wife not being called “Mrs.,” and having to read signs everywhere like “whites only.” It also struck me to think back in 1963 we had been fighting for “340 years for our God given rights” and to think that today in 2022 we are still fighting for rights; for us it’s more systematically. It makes you feel like it’s never going to end. However, when I read letters like this one or any others you wrote or read up on Rosa Parks and other great people that made a difference for us as African Americans, your words help me not be discouraged. I tell myself there would not be the change that we do have today if we did not have people like you to show us it is okay to be brave and stand up for what you believe in always.

Lastly, of the whole letter the paragraph of many similes I loved was the paragraph that states “But though I was initially disappointed at being categorized as an extremist, as I continued to think about the

matter I gradually gained a measure of satisfaction from the label. Was not Jesus an extremist for love: ‘Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.’ Was not Amos an extremist for justice: ‘Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.’ Was not Paul an extremist for the Christian gospel: ‘I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.’ Was not Martin Luther an extremist: ‘Here I stand; I cannot do otherwise, so help me God.’ And John Bunyan: ‘I will stay in jail to the end of my days before I make a butchery of my conscience.’ And Abraham Lincoln: ‘This nation cannot survive half slave and half free.’ And Thomas Jefferson: ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal . . .’ So the question is not whether we will be extremists, but what kind of extremists we will be?” Sorry to use so much of the context, but that part of the letter is what took me. For me it touches on everything. It means in other words be strong, stand in confidence, and, no matter what people call you, be the best version of it, or like making lemonade when life hands you lemons. These lessons are valuable, and I am forever grateful for your strength. PS. I also thought it was hilarious you acknowledged the fact this letter was lengthy and appreciate the explanation LOL. **(Naquila Taylor)**





I've had the honor of being assigned to read the letter you wrote to southern clergymen in response to their accusations that your movement is "unwise" and "untimely," titled "Letter from Birmingham Jail." In my letter to you I will address why I feel you

spoke the gospel of truth and are a wise man as well as a great leader. After reading your lengthy but ever-so-wise response to the clergymen's accusations, I see that the black community is very lucky to have someone like you to help fight through a nonviolent movement using direct action as an approach to pursue justice for black people in a time of hatred and segregation.

The words from your letter ring in my ears today as we face injustices still with the way black people are positioned economically, politically, and with employability, as well as how black people are treated by the police, treated in courts, and not really given the freedom to have nonviolent demonstrations. A good example is how former President Trump had the peaceful rallies cleared out through police using tear gas and riot control tactics so he could take a picture holding the Holy Bible at Lafayette Square. I wonder if you were alive today how would you would react to white moderates as well as straight out prejudiced people's reactions to the "Black Lives Matter Movement." White moderates' response is "All Lives Matter," while straight-out prejudiced people (like US former president Donald Trump) respond to the "Black Lives Matter Movement" as being a "symbol of hate." We were a nation divided during his term as the President of the United States.

I first like the way you explain the cause and effect of the movement. You talk about you and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference working together for black people's God-given human rights for equality. The clergymen you wrote to mentioned this fight should be a fight between the community in Birmingham, but you let them know that you were invited into this fight/movement. Birmingham was the most segregated community in the south. There were so many unsolved

bombings of houses and churches, black people being treated unfairly in the jails and courts, and stores that had racial signs that caused black people humiliation. Composing a plan for direct action with area merchants seemed to be the best starting point.

I liked the way you explained direct action versus negotiation. The merchants showed that they were untrustworthy by giving a broken promise of taking the racial signs down. The movement was forced into direct action. Direct action was not handled violently by you, but it did cause tension that made the issues having to be brought to the attention of their creators. You brought constructive nonviolent tension to the table because negotiations had been ignored. You mentioned, "Socrates felt it was necessary to create a tension in the mind so that individuals could rise from bondage of myths and half-truths to the unfettered realm of creative analysis and objective and appraisal." So, may I quote your reaction to Socrates' statement? "So must we see the need for nonviolent gadflies to create the kind of tension in society that will help men rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood."

Let's now talk about the clergymen's accusation of the movement being "untimely." You mentioned how slow we are going with desegregation of society. In your paragraph about the movement being untimely you use the writing style of repetition to get your point across. You expressed the movement for justice by saying, "When you have seen mobs lynch your mother and father, when you have seen hate filled police misuse you black brothers and sisters, when you see majority of Negro smothering in an airtight cage of poverty, when you have to explain to your daughter why she is not welcome to go to the amusement park advertised on the TV, when you take a cross country drive and sleep in your car because you are not welcome to rent a motel room, when you are humiliated day after day by racial signs of 'whites' and 'colors' on the businesses, when your first name is nigger and your middle name is boy and you last name is John and your wife is not properly

addressed as Mrs.” You can go on and on in this paragraph about how black people are not treated equally but in fact are treated in an inhumane way by oppressors.

I enjoyed reading the way you explained to the clergymen just laws, unjust laws, and how you advocate breaking some laws. Using allusion in your writing, you agreed with St. Augustine that an “unjust law is no law at all.” Just laws are created by man but are in harmony with moral laws or the law of God. I must agree that all segregation laws are unjust laws. I agree that they are unjust because they are used to degrade human personality, distort the soul, and damage the personality. You used a rhetorical question to get your point across: “Is not segregation an existential expression of man’s tragic separation, his awful estrangement, his terrible sinfulness?” Unjust laws are created so majority groups have superiority over minority groups. You gave the example about what Adolf Hitler did in Germany was not illegal but because it was unjust it was worthy for being disobeyed to aid a Jew in distress. In your writing you used several rhetorical questions for when the clergymen condemned your actions because your action was supposed to have precipitated violence. You ask, “is this like condemning a robbed man because his possession of money precipitated the evil act of robbery or is this like condemning Socrates because commitment to truth and philosophical inquiries precipitated the act of making him drink hemlock or Jesus’s devotion to God will precipitated the act of his crucifixion?”

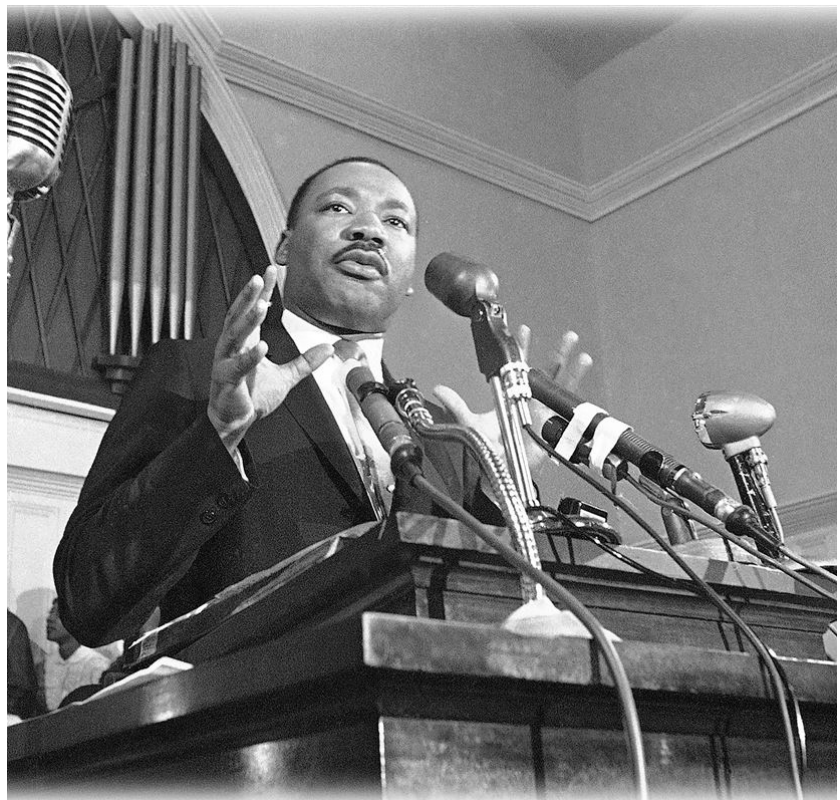
I’m glad you made peace with being called an extremist. Your understanding of and classification of what kind of extremist you are made me think outside the box. It made me understand that an extremist is a person who holds extreme political or religious views, especially one who resorts to advocating extreme actions. That’s who you are and that’s what you did for the

cause of justice for all. You used the writing style chiasmus when you said, “So the question is not whether we will be extremist, but what kind of extremist we will be?”

Lastly, you expressed your disappointment with the churches and their support in the movement. You felt that white leaders of the churches would support the movement the most. Some were against the movement while others were cautious and not courageous. They stayed silent.

Being a black person in the year 2022, I see we haven’t come very far in the movement of equality for black people. Demonstrations today don’t always end peacefully. Black people are still being treated awfully by the police. There is a big gap economically between black people and white people. There is a big gap in accessibility to health care and the outcome to that is black people are suffering and/or dying from illnesses. We will remember what you fought for and died for. Even though we haven’t reached the goals of justice and equality, we will continue to fight nonviolently.

(Ericka Booe)





Good afternoon, Dr. King, and I sincerely hope this letter finds you in great spirit. I was compelled to read your "Letter from Birmingham Jail." I was at the same time impressed and inspired as well as angered and disappointed.

I have to tell you I feel like you nailed being Black in America, especially in the time frame you experienced it. Excellent writing, I must convey.

Many points moved me. The horse and buggy pace towards freedom has progressed here in 2022, but in some ways it almost seems as if it hasn't. We are still out here protesting and peacefully breaking unjust laws to get awareness of the mistreatment of Blacks in American in courts, banks, schools, and employment, and, most glaringly, with racist cops that kill us far too often with almost no consequences.

I feel sympathy for you for your fellow clergymen's veiled lack of understanding that freedom cannot wait. In fact, I stand on the principle that all freedom must instead be hurried.

You stated that "Oppressed people cannot remain oppressed forever." I completely agree, while pointing out that in these days, some of our skinfolk may indeed stay oppressed forever nonetheless, as so many have given up and see no need to fight the power anymore, even while cop killings are recorded and viewed at an alarming rate. Too many of us have adopted the thought that if it ain't happening to them, then it is not their business. It's apathy at its best/worst, depending on your stance.

The church as a whole should visibly lead the fight against racism as the Bible teaches, yet it seems still in 2022 to be almost completely silent. I also am vehemently disappointed in the church. I cannot in good spirit send my child to listen to a church that does not listen to the same child.

In closing, I want to thank you for THIS letter especially, as well as your ultimate sacrifice in the name of justice for the Black man, woman, and child. Even though almost 60 years after this letter we still have too far left to go, I assure you that the

progress that HAS been made was clearly paved by your light that still shines in the heart of activism. Again, thank you. **(Reginald Moore)**



Although I am in my youth, Doctor King, [I share] the concerns you expressed with problems in Alabama, saying that the colored people should have an opportunity to fight in court while also rightfully and justly be convicted according to their own convictions.

Unfortunately, the court system in my opinion has underlying racial undercover tactics that still exist in this day and age. For example, the white man will receive a less harsh conviction than the colored man for the same crime. There also are times that the white judge gives automatic sentences before the jury comes to an agreement. Not much has changed with communities and citizens' strife and natural reactions compared to Birmingham. Just in 2020, this movement swept the nation when George Floyd was murdered in Minneapolis, Minnesota which caused a response from the Black Lives Matter movement. Because of the nation's impatience and strife, some actions were unwise and untimely. As a result, America responded with violence and riots.

I totally agree, Doctor King, that white and colored people should come together with knowledge from both parties and experience of any local situation. Still presently, I observe and perceive that one racial group sticks together for a greater cause, but I seldom see multicultural movements take place in this era. Usually, I observe one race of the same kind banding together, never cross-culturalism.

Hatred and violence are still a common denominator that hinders the solutions of a non-violent approach to solve racism, not just in Birmingham, but in all cities. What would we do without law enforcement? There are still crooked cops in my era, but those that are just should be commended and honored. In this day and age, we as a people should have withdrawn from all violence. Just because it started in the streets doesn't mean it should end in the streets; just as you stated, "a cause should be pressed in the courts and in negotiations among local leaders."
(Kimari Rogers)



It is with astonishing and great appreciation of the words that you have spoken in your "Letter from Birmingham Jail" that I write to you. I can only aspire to be someone of such courage, dignity, and righteousness. The fact that you and many of our brothers and sisters fought for our freedom and bore the consequences instills in me further gratitude. I began to wonder how your deep-rooted faith and moral beliefs kept you so grounded, even under pressure. I couldn't imagine seeing my brother, sister, or loved one being drowned or lynched without losing control.



Yes, I know the lingering feeling of not having the same freedom of those who have lighter complexion and having to worry about whether I'll be the next victim. I know the feeling of being judged by my skin and not by my heart. I don't know what it's like to be in the position where fighting for your freedom is the only choice you have. It's hard to fight when all odds are against you. When you said that your six-year-old daughter had a distortion of personality and unconscious bitterness towards white people because she couldn't attend a community event, that struck a different chord. As a parent I know that made you feel obliged to protect her. You helped me to empathize with how strongly the racial and segregation acts impacted mental well-being. I appreciated your words used, "Forever fighting a degenerating sense of nobodiness," on page 111. Hearing you emphasize the word "Wait" when it came to authority and even Christian leaders gave a guided perspective. One that gave volume was when you said, "'Wait' has almost always meant 'Never.' We must come to see, with one of our distinguished jurists, that 'justice too long delayed is justice denied.'" In other words, you were using language to intrigue the reader, and getting them to listen. You use your intelligence to your advantage, to show that blacks weren't ignorant and that you were fully conscientious.

What is just and unjust? You profoundly spoke on the inequalities of the minorities and how it affected things in the community socially, economically, politically, and spiritually. I too am disappointed at the culture that seems to have an eye shut to the obvious detriment. How does love gain you hatred and imprisonment? Yet the brutality of the opposing lead without reprimand. I appreciate your rhetorical references to Jesus and early Christians as you concluded with the law. As you stated there is misunderstanding in the eyes of the beholders, and not enough willing to stand for the right cause.

I do agree when you said the oppressed couldn't remain repressed forever; it's not destined. I feel like our destiny would've arrived here at some point. Even through police brutality and the violence we still stand, and the chains for freedom are being broken daily. Thank you for not giving up on us, no matter how much pain was afflicted upon many brothers and sisters. You sought our redemption and paved the way for much better greatness. Thank you for your love, humility, and God-spoken truths. May your soul rest peacefully and may the dreams that you have spoken continue to transpire. Truly grateful, Sister Michelle
(Michelle Mack)



There are times where I sit back and think about what life would have been if I had been born in that time period. How would I have explained to my daughter that because of her skin color she would not have the same opportunities as the next child,

and how would I explained to her that if she wanted to go to a playground or watch a movie at a theater she couldn't because it wasn't allowed. I am beyond grateful that my daughter was born at a time where things weren't so segregated and oppressed; where the sky is the limit. With her being a half black and half Mexican child, I don't want her to think she doesn't have the same chance to succeed as the next. I want to teach her to not see color, to treat others the way she would want to be treated. I want her to know about her heritage and to embrace every part of it, to not be ashamed to look and be different. **(Cynthia Gonzalez)**



I want to first thank you for standing up and taking action for a change. Without you, injustice would have not had any change to it. When you said, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere," it stood out to me. I don't think those who are racist or

prejudiced understand that. We suffered for many, many years—340, to be exact, until you stood up and said we need justice and will get justice if it takes nonviolent pressure. This letter you wrote got emotional for me due to me being a colored woman. You explained the pain we have endured by whites and their rules. You helped them understand how important this change was. You went into so much detail that reading about your stories could make someone cry.

I could not imagine going through what you or your family went through. You talked about our right to vote, which was important. This is our country; we should all be equal. You and others made it possible for me to vote today. I'm so grateful for a man like you. So strong and so brave you are. We

deserved freedom, equal rights, and to not suffer from injustice and racism. So thank you again. Your dedication to change changed our world forever. This letter was exactly what they needed to read. You are the king. Thank you once again. Our children now live in a better world—not perfect, but better because of you. I'm just blessed to be one of those people that do. **(Kayanna Branch)**



It is both an honor and a privilege to be speaking to you today. I've recently listened to your "Letter from Birmingham Jail" and have learned a lot about how in-depth you thought about civil rights issues and how you did so in a very articulate manner. I noticed

how you used metaphors, similes, parallelism, and allusions very effectively, as well as how you were able to draw comparisons between different topics. For example, you spoke about just and unjust laws and what defined them as such (natural law vs manmade law). You were talking to the issue that people had of breaking the law and drew parallels from different events in history. You spoke about the Freedom Fighters and how what they were doing was classified as illegal at the time, while also speaking about the people who helped Jews in Nazi Germany and how their actions too would have been classified as illegal, but such actions would not be morally wrong as it was a manmade law created by the majority to suppress the minority. You said that if you too were in Germany at the time, you would have "sheltered my Jewish brothers." Later you spoke about how the biggest threat to the civil rights movement wasn't the KKK or the council; it was the moderate white people who refused to break the law and continued advocating for waiting.

I loved how you mentioned that one of the biggest disappointments and drawbacks to the civil rights movement was the waiting policy while continuing to go to the negotiation table with false promises, and the inability of some to see the importance of civil disobedience. It's true that the ones who don't see why it's necessary to do so are the very same ones who haven't been impacted by the laws

directly. Some can't see why it's necessary to break some oppressive laws in order to make change. I agree with your views in seeing demonstrations as a way of bargaining and shedding light on the issue directly in a way that can't be ignored.

Concurrently, I agree that the oppressors never give power to the oppressed voluntarily, so it must be taken and demanded by the oppressed.

Additionally, while I do not consider you an extremist in your ideology, I can appreciate how you draw comparisons between Jesus and others who were extremists of love. Furthermore, you speak to the criticism of some that say you aren't from Birmingham and why have you come.

It's incredibly moving to hear your compassion and empathy in being unable to stand idly by while atrocities and injustices are being done to your brothers. In addition, you call into question people who don't like the way you are going about the movement and the actions you have taken. You speak about doing it non-violently and how this way is the most optimal and ideal way of enacting change. I agree with your premise that one way or another black people in America will get their rights, either by civil disobedience or violence. One way or another the people will take what so rightfully belongs to them. In addition, I found that the way you looked at laws, especially unjust laws, is very admirable and commendable. You spoke in your letter about having the highest respect for the law and that a person who believes as such will respect the consequences for breaking that law. I

found that really moving and admirable because even after knowing that the law you have to follow is unjust and discriminatory, you still respect the fact that it's still (however terrible it may be) a law of the land. Moreover, your "Letter from Birmingham Jail" provided me insight and enlightened me as to the way you thought about the civil rights movement. In your letter, you speak about trying to aim and direct your approach in a way that would resonate with people's individual morality and inspire them to do the right thing. It's interesting to me that you viewed the morality of the whole as corrupt but believed that at the individual level each person is capable of doing the right thing when properly inspired.

Finally, I want to thank you once again for speaking with me today and for indulging me on my analysis of your very eloquent letter. I am forever honored.

(Yael Jimenez)



We are still waiting for our constitutional, God-given rights, still to this day in 2022. Do you still feel this will happen? We are still being hunted down and killed in the street. Only difference from now and then, we have cameras to show how it happens,

broadcast over multiple social media platforms. I wonder, would you still hold "workshops on nonviolence" or want us as black people to "accept blows without retaliating or endure jail?" I agree

you were making changes; maybe we would have more rights, or maybe have made some progress, but I still feel some of it starts with us, especially the generations that come behind you. What words of wisdom would you give us?

Church, Christianity, would you agree or deny that it has held us back as a culture or in general? Hard to hold belief in a spiritual figure when there is so much evil happening. One could say we are targeted to be killed off, so why pray or call on the figure to help? **(Ontario Frazier)**





Having read your letter responding to the people who put you in the place where you wrote it, I have to say I am impressed by how you execute every word, every sentence, and every paragraph. With your witty writing you responded well and

intellectually on where you stand with your belief about injustice and what the people have to do to stand up for themselves.

In your letter you wrote about injustice and that African Americans should not be quiet, that they should stand up for what they believe and be vocal about the injustice they have experienced. You wrote that it can be done with no violence. Also, you touched on how there's civil disobedience, and how even though there are unjust laws and just laws, as humans we tend to disobey the unjust laws. The last part you touch on is about religion and how every human deserves freedom and justice, and how [a church claiming to be practicing Christianity] is a joke since it's contradictory, since it's doing the opposite of what it stands for.

Now society is still unjust to minorities, and it seems that we are going back in time instead of going forward. It seems that not a lot of people have learned from the past to make this country better. **(Eréndira Giron Cruz)**



I would like to start by saying your hard work and dedication paid off for the black community. Although we aren't in the best place still today in 2022, we have progressed. There is no more segregation, no more signs with the words "colored and white,"

and little children of all colors, backgrounds, and differences can now play together with no judgment. We have African American doctors, lawyers, teachers, engineers, nurses; we even had our first African American president, and now our first African American female vice president. If you had told me a hundred years ago that 2022 would

look like this, I would have called you crazy. There is no way, but it happened!

When you readily consented to go to Birmingham because of the injustice there, it made me feel like to this day there is still a lot of injustice, not only in Birmingham but everywhere—and it's still not being addressed. I like how you said, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." To me, once it starts, people start following it, and it becomes a chain that takes us back centuries. I was appalled when you were arrested on charges of parading without a permit when they knew you were doing a peaceful assembly and protest—the irony of these people saying one thing and doing another. You said that sometimes a law is just on its face and unjust in its application. We need them to do as they say. It's a law that they wrote even if they do not accept it. Assembly, we must be as pure as the ends we seek in order to reach our own end goals. **(Crystal Johnson)**



Everything that is happening is just wrong. I know that if you were here, you would do the same thing as you did before. First, if a black man is shot, the social media or news try to not talk about it, but if a black man does something bad, the whole

media talks about it. Second, some argue that segregation laws and injustice should be fought in the courts and not on the streets, but what can we do if the power structure is full of white people? I do believe that fact-gathering, negotiation, and self-purification is a better path [leading to] direct action. I strongly believe that lawbreaking is a moral act; some laws are okay, but some are unjust laws, like those that degrade humans. The minorities did not create the laws, and therefore we need anti discriminatory voting rights and practices.

You are an incredible human being who fought and defended us; thank you for your extremist creativity. You will be in the history of our country. **(Jessica Saldana Ortega)**



I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing regarding a recent detailed letter you wrote to eight of your fellow clergymen while in Birmingham Jail. I was outraged that they did not collect any facts or speak to

you privately before making a public statement about one of their own religious leaders.

You and your associates were charged with bogus charges of parading without a permit. The Birmingham police used dogs and unnecessary police force to an unarmed, nonviolent protest—a protest that was well-organized and needed in such a segregated city. I think this should have been a state of emergency. Black people had been lynched, there were unsolved bombing of homes and churches, they were not able to register to vote, and there were humiliating racial signs in stores.

I would like to say thank you for your courage to stand up and fight for our civil rights. Still now today we deal with racism; our brothers and sisters are still being killed like strange fruit, and still today our oppressor is getting away with it. Your beautiful quotes keep me in the fight: “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere” and “Whatever affects one affects all indirectly.” **(Mashell McCarter)**



After reading your letter, I’d have to agree with you 100%. Every single point you mentioned was backed up with facts. I, too, agree that the time is now to take action and the longer we wait the longer we will be oppressed. Like you said, “Freedom is never voluntarily

given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed.” How much longer should our people have to wait when we’ve been waiting for the past 340 years?

How is it fair that a man can determine which laws are “just” but doesn’t even give all “men” a chance to vote on these laws. As you mentioned, the stuff



Hitler was doing in Germany was “legal,” but that did not make it right. I’m tired of walking down the street and seeing “whites only” when my family and I deserve to be served at the same establishment.

Your approach is exactly what we need. Like you said, we must dramatize the issue so that it can no longer be ignored. I think this method helps get the point across without the oppressor finding a reason to turn it violent, even though we both know that is not always the case. We don’t want them to just say or agree to change, but to stand on their word and do it.

We are tired of having to explain why we are equally important as white people. We are tired of being humiliated and being called names as we walk with our children. We are tired of not being able to get a hotel room based on the color of our skin. **WE ARE TIRED.**

I applaud you for sticking up for what’s right if nobody else has told you. Don’t focus on who’s not with you, but rather who is. Some people are just afraid to stick up for what’s right out of fear. You are the real hero. Not the police, not the government, you! Those that are in a position of power and don’t use it to do right will have to answer to the very man they say they fear.

You have an army behind you that stands for everything you are working so hard for. Thank you from the bottom of my heart, Dr. King, for standing in the front lines and getting us our rights. **(Mariam Maiga)**



When reading your “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” I was overwhelmed by how powerful the language connects overall to today. Even though you paved the way for us to help eradicate racial segregation and empower African Americans today, we still are

somehow divided as a country and have a long way to improve. Many young African Americans such as I am have a constant struggle with the church and how there has been a divide between what we do right in the eyes of God and how God-fearing people perceive us as being God’s lost generation. Many people in the church have justified the racial and stereotypical behavior and twisted today with what God is telling them. This makes many African Americans including me feel very unwelcome, and no matter what we do we will never be perfect in the eyes of the Lord.

I know that a powerful and intelligent man such as yourself would say “love thy neighbor and only God can judge you,” but how do we block off the negativity of racism and find a way to move past this? Many people have resorted to violence as an outcry for help due to the recent police brutality, while others have been peaceful, marching in the streets and still getting rushed by cops and tear gassed. I want to learn how to come together as one: church, lower class, middle class, black, Hispanic, and white to fight against racism, just like you did during the civil rights movement. Just like you said, “if we wait for change nothing will happen.” But how can we make a change with a country still divided? **(Helena Lee)**

I hear your frustration; your feelings are very valid. Having to tell your children that they can’t go to the local amusement park because of the color of their skin or that they can’t drink out of the same drinking fountains as their fellow people is probably the most hurtful feeling in the world. How about the feeling where the local council people put you off, like the things you stand for just mean nothing, or they just don’t care like you do? You said you’d hope the white moderate would see. How could they relate to anything our people have endured? Maybe you were right, or maybe you were too optimistic and expected too much from them. No, maybe you weren’t because, knowing you, if things were the

other way around you’d most likely do the same for them. They arrested you for parading without a permit, but they’re not arresting people who are lynching people.

The oppressed people can’t remain oppressed forever. I know that is exactly what it feels like because we see no change in behavior or actions. I can definitely get where you are coming from when you say that. You said you came to Birmingham, Alabama, and said you were disappointed once again. How did you think this time was going to be different this time around compared to any other time? Well wishes. **(LaRonda Morris)**



I have to say that I found your letter to the clergy a work of art. It is a masterpiece. The flow of the reading streams like a silent creek. This would include your statement that you wrote, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” This is a very powerful statement—and is so

true. The problem with human nature is that people will ask for the truth but not really want to hear it if they don’t agree with it. There are some things that just must be heard. Your letter has stated so many points in life that are true. I was fully impressed with your three-hundred-plus-word sentence outlining the truth. You brought to their attention that there are four major steps in any nonviolent campaign that explain well the steps that you have taken in Birmingham.

“Tension” is a powerful word that is usually used in a negative way. More of us should embrace tension. I feel that it could bring you a great deal of power to have the ability to have it and be able to work through it.

“An unjust law is a human law that is not rooted in eternal law and natural law. Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust. Sometimes a law is just on its face and unjust in application.” This was a wonderful way of explaining.

Your letter has logos, pathos, irony, repetition, and alliteration. They make this letter magical for the reader. **(Mechele Williams)**



The bravery in this letter was outstanding. I like the fact that you insulted those men's intelligence in such a gentle way. I like how you made it personal to each man who wrote you a letter. I cannot agree more to all the metaphors and sarcasm you bring out in the most delicate way, stating the obvious and making it clear that you were humored by the audacity, much like today when you wrote "an unjust law is no law at all."

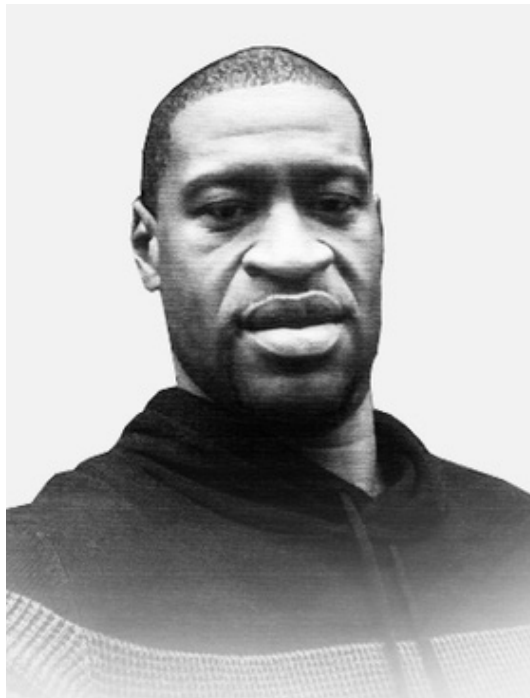
The depth of pain that rides into my head is all the faulty trials, false confessions, and false accusations my ancestry had to face. Every single bit of the unjust was lawful at the time. People standing behind and committing some of the worst acts known to humankind, that alone was simply unjust. Even to be given our "freedom" only to mock us and hold us into another form of slavery. Declaring laws to hold us down yet stealing a record number of inventions to sustain life and call it their own. We see the same thing you have seen yet in another form of slavery. They have now given us the title of person but we are still outright discriminated against, and everyone sits back and watches. Like when you wrote "justice too long delayed is justice denied," I honestly feel like we've seen examples of that happening in this past year. Although I am grateful for all the wins we have been receiving, I have this peculiar feeling that those wins were another crumb handed to us so we can be "quiet" again.

When you said, "lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection," this pertains so much with today. With your lack of technology, you had to be there. Now, we

have uncensored content at our fingertips. Do you know what made George Floyd different? It was mainly since the entire world saw pure, raw, live footage start to finish of a man dying for no reason. Notice I did not say Black man? We need to cut the labels and cut the shenanigans; it is clear now this country has too many issues. Is any country perfect? No; however, this country could use a renovation, something solid and poetic like when they first built it. Even if my ancestors were not "free," the passion of what men were entitled to as basic rights was beautiful. Now if we can apply those same values to today, including every race, color, nationality, etc.

This corporation, excuse me, country, is now filled with greedy, powerful men and women who seem like they do not care about basic human life. They're still out here lying, still out here failing to teach documented truths. Example: Christopher Columbus, we still grant him praise when we know the TRUE HISTORY. He did not come here on gentle pretenses; he came to kill and claim all in the name of greed. Yet we still grant him a whole holiday, and we still tell our children these dressed up lies. Why? Is it because the truth is more graphic, or do we not want to look bad and us as a people say no we got it wrong? This is much to say that they did the same thing to any minority group they came across. The "they" I mention is anyone with a "sound mind" who can see all these numerous examples and still does not even speak. When you see something, you say something.

That is it, that is all; some people need to be coddled, some people need the truth soft-served. I just feel like we need to cut the elephant in the room down and have real conversations and real solutions. The human species makes everything so difficult when all it takes is just a genuine human being and to mind your own business. We can have some progress in this world. **(Cylinthia Olle)**



MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. ON LOVE

“Love is the most durable power in the world.”

“I have decided to stick with love. Hate is too great a burden to bear.”

“Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.”

“Hatred paralyzes life; love releases it. Hatred confuses life; love harmonizes it. Hatred darkens life; love illuminates it.”