

YEAR 22, ISSUE 9

FEBRUARY 12, 2025

ODYSSEY



ORACLE

ODYSSEY LOVE



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SONG OF THE CLASS OF 2025

We are the Odyssey Class of 2025!

We have worked as a server, cleaner, cashier, nanny, baker, daycare teacher, data checker, package handler, medical cleaner, phlebotomist, pizza maker, garden center stock boy, landscape laborer, patient advocate, resource specialist, warehouse worker, veterinary assistant, car salesman, claims adjuster, bartender, CDL driver, waiter, barista, greenhouse attendant, cosmetologist, line cook, transcriptionist, dental assistant, wedding server, dietary aide, Illinois tollway representative, billing specialist, administrative assistant, lab tech, CNA, aviation customer service representative, caterer, correctional officer, and mother, with jobs at Chipotle, Wendy's, Dane County Airport, St. Mary's Hospital, VA Hospital, Schoep's Ice Cream, Qdoba, American Family Insurance, Olive Garden, Great Dane, Buffalo Wild Wings, St. Vincent de Paul Processing Center, Amazon, and Uncle Joe's Shoes & Sportswear.

We hail from Madison, Stoughton, Fitchburg, Monona, Janesville, Beloit, and Kenosha, Wisconsin; from Merryville, Indiana; Long Island, New York; Irving, Victoria, Brownsville, and Austin, Texas; Roseville, Minnesota; Chicago, Joliet, and Rosedale, Illinois; Cincinnati, Ohio; Tennessee; Aguascalientes and Neza, Mexico; and the Gambia,

With ancestors coming from Indiana, California, Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, North Carolina, Massachusetts, Illinois, New Jersey, Florida, Arkansas, Minnesota, Missouri, and New York; from Mexico, El Salvador, Jamaica, Cameroon, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Germany, Ireland, Greece, France, Ghana, Nigeria, and the Gambia in West Africa,

Speaking Spanish, English, German, Irish, French, Mandinka, Nahual, and patois,

Worshipping as Baptist, Catholic, Coptic, Jehovah's Witness, Muslim, "some kind of Christian," atheist, land-embracing, and spiritual.

We call ourselves angry, creative, daring, muscular, fun, happy, firm, direct, short, tall, thoughtful, distracted, shy, brave, bright, hardworking, eccentric, funny, joyful, very busy, determined, resilient, silly, outgoing, crazy, quiet, cute, talkative, hopeful, small, loud, lost, proud, curvy, smiley, enthusiastic, black and beautiful.

We are the Odyssey Class of 2025!



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 my self-care days at Eagle Heights Community Center. The music, energy, and hospitality help me focus on my mental and physical wellbeing. I also love that my son gets to come with me and meet new friends. Dancing to "Baile Inolvidable" or "It's Plenty" by Burna makes my whole body sync with my spirit and soul.

(Angelica Alvarez Valencio)

I love being with people that love me--the people I get to keep in my life because I love them as well. They push me to become a better version of myself; my people know me for me. They listen to my struggles and say things I need to hear. My people put a smile on my face and continue to choose me. I love my people who love me. **(Kyiana Baker)**

I love my family and friends. I love being helpful, fulfilled, and blessed, and I love for people to be mindful of what they say to me. Love is just a four-letter word, they say. But without love I never would have gotten through many situations.

My son and daughter are an example of unconditional love, both their way and my way. As a single parent I'm obsessed with myself and I fall more and more into myself ever since I turned 40. LOL but seriously. **(Tiffany Brenston)**



I love my family. I love the family that I come from but I also love the family that I created. It's two different life stories, being a child and then having a child of my own, watching them grow up and then watching me learn to be a mother.

I love writing. I love writing because you can either make a story or write about someone else's story and how you feel about it. With writing, you can organize your mind because seeing things on paper makes life easier.

(Qu'Anna Caffey)



I love my son and family so much. I really want to finally see us all happy and where we want to be in life.

(Eleanor Ceaser)

I love my son T'Lovius. He is an adult now, living on his own. I don't think that I was ready to become an empty nester. There's a saying that "when they're young (your children), they are on your hands, when they are older, they're on your heart." I love the time I spent raising him, although there are some things I wish I had done differently, as well as there are some things I wish that I had implemented. I sometimes feel sad that that time has long gone. I love that I still pray for him night and day. **(Tim Comer)**



I love the brotherhood I have with a select few. I would consider myself to have a good amount of friends and always get along with most everybody, but there are a few people that stick out from the rest. Through thick and thin they've been there, and as I get older, I realize how special those relationships are. **(Dillon Dahlk)**

I love family and friends. I love spending time with my family and friends. I love to cook a lot of food and invite my loved ones over for good food, drinks, games, stories, just family fun, and a good ole time! **(Gela Docks)**

I love life, not my own "living" life but the life of the animal I saved from a car accident, the life I help bring in while wiping the placenta from the kitten's back. I love the life I see grow when I plant seeds at the greenhouse – seeing them germinate. I love seeing my own plants grow even from a clipping, their roots reaching through the water. I love the life of the fish I treated by giving it a bath – yes, you can bathe a fish. I love the life most people take advantage of. I love the life of the creatures that people forget about. **(Brianna Espanol)**

I love you, Ms. Adore! I love you from the top of your head to the soles of your feet. I love your melanin, the way you talk, walk, and stand. Every day you amaze me with your loving ways. Your smile is heartwarming, your voice is like a song yet to be written. When I look at you, all I see is love, love in your eyes, love in your aura, love in your style. I love you, Ms. Adore. Ms. Adore, you are loved <3 **(Adrienne Farrow)**



I love life itself. I don't believe there is anything greater. Even though life is short, they say it's what you make it. You're the leader, you're the boss, so the outcome is up to you. Things happen and some things we can't control, but overall life is love and love is life. **(Jamal Jackson)**

I love to spread love. Every day in a new way, I find myself sharing the love I have for others and myself. To have the power to make an impactful difference in someone's day or just making them feel seen is a beautiful thing, like complimenting someone who looks like they're having a bad day. Or listening to the older woman at my job who has so much to say and so much experience to share, hearing her and giving her someone that will listen. Or showing up for my partner when he's at work in the cold, bringing him food and things to stay warm.

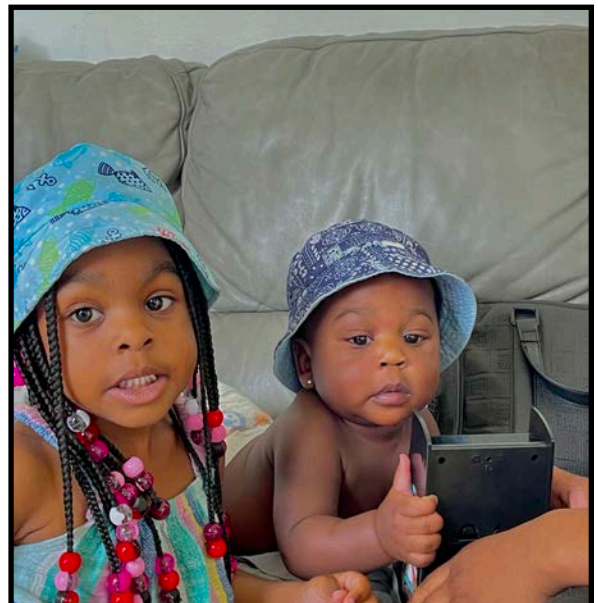
I love spreading love to myself. I love looking at myself in the mirror and saying the things I need to hear at that time like, you are beautiful, you are strong, you are capable. I love spreading love to my younger siblings, such as hyping my little brother up when he makes accomplishments that are meaningful to him. Or telling my sister she's the best dancer. Or that she should teach me how to draw even though it's something I already do. I love randomly thanking my mom simply for being her and impacting my life and my siblings' lives.

I also love my strength, how I've refused to give up on myself or my future. And lastly, I love the Odyssey and the community it provides, the hope it instills, the art it highlights and shows, and the people who genuinely care and give their all to show us love. **(Aaniyah Jefferson)**



I love when my children go to sleep at night and my house is quiet, I get the chance to be in my thoughts. I get to get into my meditation and drift into my serenity and peace. I love to have my me time and finding many ways to improve my mind. To sit in my bed with a glass of wine and smile because just for that moment I am not chasing two adventurous toddlers. **(Gloria Knight)**

I love my children, the way they look at me, love me, check on me, hug me, want to be under me 24/7 it always makes me realize I have two people in my life that I know will love me unconditionally and always be here for me. I am grateful for my kids and the love they give me. **(Crystal Lee)**



I love my children, I love their sense of humor, I love their hugs and kisses. I love that God chose me to be their mother. **(Mariya Lucas)**

I love to work, spend time with family, pray, and work out. **(Alfusainey Manjang)**



I love coming to class at 5:30 every Wednesday night. I love how it is a safe space for all 30 of us. I love the delicious food they have prepared for us. I love how there is always water and fruit offered every class. I love coming to class, learning new things, forming new bonds. **(Valvree Mosley)**

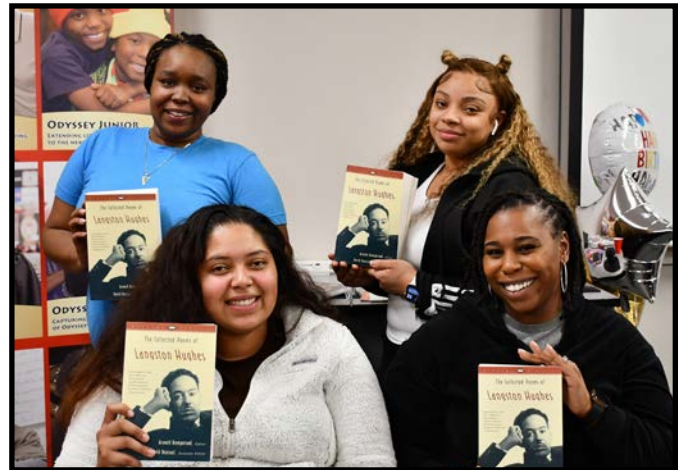
I love having a great imagination. I love having the ability to transport myself to the ocean. I love listening to my earbuds and letting the music take away all negativity and shedding my worries. I like imagining myself amongst the stars and planets far away from all the problems and sadness here on earth. **(Vanessa Martinez)**



I love being a mama. From the time I open my eyes 'til the moment they close at the end of the day I'm still a mama. Mangled words that I can't decipher I usually just chop up to

be, "I love you." Cries that bounce from surface to surface, leaving none untouched. Cries that only "mama" can stop with a simple touch. I love being a mama. I'm learning alongside my children as the minutes, seconds, and seasons pass. Although I'm not perfect, my children make me feel as though I am. I can do no wrong in their eyes, and because of that...I will always love them. **(Alexus McClain)**

I love queer love,
Amistades that hold us through
Hard times
We take care of us
I love queer love,
Friendships that transcend time
I love queer love
(Mickey Mestiza)



I love video games, the way they bring my friends and family together. When playing alone I love the stress relief. It comes with my forgetting my daily problems and emerging into a new reality where I can fix issues or anything I want. Video games will always be a part of me, but I also like board games or any other recreation activity. **(Daija Pigram)**

I love hugs. Most people might be confused by this because I do not like physical touch. My family asks permission to hug me or kiss me. I've been betrayed by a lot of people, so it seems like I keep everybody at a distance or I keep a wall up. But when I love and trust somebody, a hug from them gives me a euphoric feeling when it's the right time. It takes away my worries. It makes my heart warm <3 **(Lailaini Reed)**

I love my Amazon Kindle; the small tablet brings me so much joy. I love the peace that comes over me as I read my urban fiction novels. I love the thrill I get as I turn each page of the stories. **(Tiana Richmond-Lee)**

I love being with family. I love being able to enjoy life peacefully and get closer to God. **(Ashli Smith)**

I love being a mom. I love being able to watch my kids grow and get brighter by the day. I love that my kids give me life daily. I love that they raised me to be a responsible person. I love that their hearts are so big. I love the special bond we have all created together.

Aziyria, Za'Maia, and Jeremiah, I love the warm fuzzy feeling I get watching you play and annoy one another. I love that I have been blessed to be in your lives. I love the warm hugs each one of you give out. They are the BEST! I love that you three are the medicine that keeps me sane. I love that you three are the glue that bonds our family together. Without you guys, I truly don't know where I would be. You are my BEST FRIENDS and THE GREATEST ADDITION TO MY LIFE. I love you, Aziyria, Za'Maia, and Jeremiah. **(Corrie Thomas)**



I love gaming.
I love winning with optimal deck builds.
I love losing with janky home-brews.
I love mashing buttons at 600 bpm.
I love frame data and Galaxy brain reads.
I love looting after the raid.
I love their lists and dev drama.
I love skipping meals to go 0-2 at locals.
I love calling in late for a midnight release.
I love wasting time grinding,
just to change my build.
I love gaming. **(Dan Thomas)**

I love my children; they give me so much to look forward to. They keep me focused on what's important and help me not get distracted. Valentine's Day will always be filled with love as long as I have them. **(Janessa Weichmann)**

I love music. Music helps me feel calm, helps me think and process things. I am constantly listening to music. It drowns out the voice inside that says I am not enough, that says that I am doing a, b, c wrong. Music has been my happy place. It helps me to focus on homework, on de-stressing after a long day. Music makes me really happy. **(Abby Wilson)**

I love my children, husband, and family overall! When days are long or I may not be in the best mood, my family can bring a big smile to my face, whether that smile comes from my babies being silly or my husband picking with me until I drop the attitude or even my dad just being him brings me joy. My family means so much to me, and I love them for the way they love me! **(Ladella Wilson)**



I love spending time with my grandkids. They bring me so much joy to my life and my spirit and my peace. Just knowing that the love coming from my grandkids is pure makes me happy. They make me so proud with their accomplishments, such as football, wrestling, and track. That's the love I need. **(Sable Wright)**



I HAVE A DREAM . . .

When I was young my dream was to reach the stars and become an astronaut. I have a phobia of heights... So it's safe to say I'm comfortable leaving that dream to my childhood. I'm now 33 years old, and my dream is to become an educator; to become a teacher in our communities and advocate for those who are unseen, unheard, and misunderstood. I wish not to label myself on what exactly I'll be doing or even where I'll be for the time being. All I need to know is that becoming a teacher is my dream, and to have a dream is to have a purpose in my heart. My will power to reach my dreams is vicious and hungry. My dream to become a teacher might not change the world, but I know in my heart that I will be a light to guide someone else to their dream. What would become of this world without dreams?.

(Angelica Alvarez)



I have a dream that Martin Luther King's dream will be more relevant and valid, and that kids today would care more about their American history, as opposed to just TikTok and social media. I dream that one day racism and hatred subside.

(Tiffany Brenston)

I have a dream that my dream will reach its greatest potential, and I reach my goals and dream to

turn my dreams into reality and change my thoughts into actions. I have a dream that I will succeed in my education and become better than yesterday. I have a dream that all things are possible when you put your mind to it.

(Qu'anna Caffey)

I have a dream that I will be very rich, very successful, and very happy in life. I will be at my full potential in life being a great, smart, successful woman who will buy her mom a house.

(Eleanor Ceaser)

I have a dream that I will begin the writing of incorporating "Let Freedom Ring," a part 2 version of Martin's ideas in his famous speech. Being given a vision of what it would entail but lacking the courage and belief to implement such thoughts and ideas. Having a social platform of lucrative person(s) could really help me launch a very important beginning of a world-changing event.

(Tim Comer)

I have a dream that good takes over evil. I hope that everyone is treated equally, and that no one has to fear for their life based on their skin color, gender, race, and more. We all become one. I hope we understand that we are all human and deserve to have a better life. I hope we eat the rich. I hope as a united nation we understand that everyone struggles – everyone is going through something. I have a dream that hopefully the generations to come do not have to fight what we are fighting, 2025.

(Kyianna Baker)



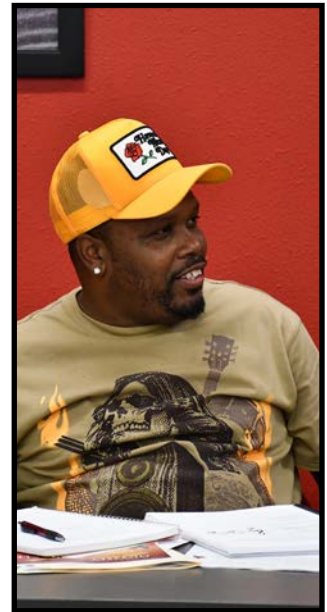
I have a dream that one day I will have a more concrete idea of what my future will hold. Right now is very chaotic and uncertain, so right now, that's the only thing I can think of. **(Dillon Dalhk)**

I have a dream that one day the race war will end and people will no longer be judged on money, social status, and, most importantly, the color of their skin. **(Gela Docks)**



time, and soul. **(Brianna Espanol)**

I have a dream that one day every goal I have set forth for myself will be obtained. I dream that my daughter always looks at me, seeing only success and triumph. I have a dream that everything I am embodies everything that my daughter wants to be. I have a dream that I practice everything I preach to the younger generation. I have a dream that every dream I have becomes a reality and that every nightmare is vanquished with my pure light. **(Adrienne Farrow)**



I have a dream that every homeless person is out of the cold tonight and has shelter not just for tonight but for the rest of their life. **(Jamal Jackson)**

I have a dream that I will be a first-generation graduate, and I will inspire my brothers and sisters to reach for their goals and fight for them with all they have. I hope to heal from all my pain and the generational curses that have fallen on me. I hope to learn all I can learn about how to help people in the ways I've been helped and more. I have a dream to move hearts and change minds. I have a dream to restore hope in hearts lost in the grey. I have a dream to fully utilize and make more than full use of the freedom my ancestors fought for. **(Aaniyah Jefferson)**

I have a dream that one day, T.V. shows that encourage black love, black education, and black success will come back to the air to make African Americans reflect on where our ancestors derived from, instead of showing that we act like the self-hating culture running in a circus of clowns. I have a dream that spin-offs of "A Different World," "Fresh Prince," and "The Jeffersons" come back on the air. I am sick of seeing fights against each other when I know we are worth more and better than what the media shows us. I dream that we will reclaim our identity and sit back on our thrones and adjust one another's crowns without telling the world that it is crooked. **(Gloria Knight)**

I have a dream that school will become more affordable or that scholarships will be easier to obtain. I have a dream that I will be able to be a home and landowner. I have a dream that society will still work on being better with each other and continue to work together. I have a dream that I will find peace. I have a dream I will be able to give generational wealth. I have a dream my life will change in the best way! **(Crystal Lee)**



I have a dream that one day, this country will actually be free, and we don't have to worry about what our government is up to and what they're doing to destroy us more. I have a dream that we will no longer be puppets to the system and realize what's actually going on. I have a dream that we will wake up one day and won't be modern-day slaves and have to work so hard just to stay alive and keep our children healthy and that single mothers won't have to choose between spending time with their kids or working forty+ hours a week just to barely get by. **(Mariya Lucas)**

I have a dream that I find the strength to continue my personal battles. I dream of my children's laughter and voices in my home once again. I dream of family get-togethers, phone calls, car rides, and feeling like the mother I once was. I dream of overcoming all obstacles currently stopping me from breaking the chains of this mental prison and seeing a bright light leading to a better future. **(Vanessa Martinez)**

I have a dream that I will become a social worker helping people from different countries.

I have a dream that one day the American flag will represent more than the amount of RED blood shed unjustly. I have a dream that that the idea of WHITEn superiority will diminish entirely. I have a dream that the color BLUE can symbolize vigilance, perseverance, and justice again. **(Alexus McClain)**

As a law-abiding, legal migrant who entered the country with a visa, I have two pending USCIS cases (asylum and marriage-based). Despite this, I fear potential arrest and deportation. Unfortunately, returning to my home country isn't a viable option due to the risk of torture or worse.

My dreams include providing a better life for my children, improving living conditions for my family back home, and fulfilling my mother's dream of visiting Mecca for pilgrimage. **(Alfusainey Manjang)**



I have a dream that Mexicans will remember we are indigenous. Someday, we will remember how to love the land. I have a dream that our ancestors are guiding us with a plan when we remember; the world will begin to forget who we were when we forget we are one with the land. **(Mickey Mestiza)**

I have a dream that one day, racism will really not exist. I have a dream that one day all people, men and women, will be treated equally. I have a dream that one day poverty will end. I have a dream that everything our ancestors died for will come true. I have a dream the world will be a better place.

(Valvree Mosley)

I have a dream that I will live a long, successful life filled with love, surrounded by loved ones with many positive memories to laugh, cry, and reminisce over. To see my son grow up and make a family of his to do the same with. I have a dream that I will be able to afford to take many trips across the world and experience everything the world has to offer, to be able to take care of my parents with the least amount of stress associated with that. I have a dream that I will have the power to do what I have to, sit there and enjoy the ride for whatever will come my way, a person that will appreciate and look back and say that I've made it. That greed and envy will be lessons learned and I will not sit in that so as not to ruin what I've worked so hard for.

(Daija Pigram)



I have a dream that people can learn empathy. I have a dream that people will respect boundaries. People are learning 24/7 whether they are newborns or 97 years old. I think if people learned these, so much anger would cease. Give everybody a little grace. **(Lailaini Reed)**



I have a dream that one day, my daughters will grow into amazing young ladies and be very successful in whatever path they choose. I hope this cruel world will be kind to them. I have a dream that they will see the potential I do in them and that they never give up on themselves and each other. I dream some nights that their black skin will be accepted anywhere they go and they can be themselves and show their talent.

(Tiana Richmond-Lee)

I have a dream that life would be as good as the movies make it seem. I have a dream that I am able to walk the stage to get a degree and become as successful as I know I can be. I have a dream that I will set my children up for success with paid-in-full tuition to fulfill their ambitions. I have a dream of living the life that my God intends for me, making it possible to extend my arms and help others.

(Ashli Smith)



I have a dream that one day, my family will have no worries, we will strive as one and get out of poverty, and live in a big house where everyone can have their own rooms, a house with glass windows and a huge stairwell. I have a dream that one day I will become one of the best surgeons in Madison. I have a dream that one day my kids will never struggle and have to learn grievance too early. I have a dream that my kids will conquer the world. They will be honor students and learn that life is hard but manageable. I have a dream that we will all forever be great. **(Corrie Thomas)**



I have a dream that we will follow what these words actually mean. I have a dream that these words would not be used as a weapon to win over a particular demographic. **(Dan Thomas)**

I have a dream that one day I will be a nurse making better to support my family and never have to be worried about struggling financially again. I dream that I will raise my children to be motivated to be better than me and be successful. **(Janessa Weichmann)**

I have a dream that I could make a difference in kids' lives. I hope to be a special educator one day, and I hope I can make a difference in students' lives to help them feel heard. Throughout my time in school, I was told I had to do things a certain way that never



made sense to me and at different points you were just expected to know things, like the difference between their, there, and they're. Then, it got to the point where you just had to figure it out or ask your peers, which never worked for me because they either ignored me or they did it for me. My dream is to help the shy, quiet kids find their voices, understand what is going on, and find tools that work for them. **(Abby Wilson)**

I have a dream that one day this world will be rid of all of the evil that's in it. I have a dream that all of the babies, women, men, and elderly that are mistreated will find peace and a safe place. I have a dream that when out and about, we don't have to feel sad for the homeless people out in the streets because the homeless crisis has been taken care of; a dream that when walking into establishments, I am not treated differently just because of the color of my skin; a dream that my children won't have to grow up with kids being heartless. **(Ladella Wilson)**

I have a dream that one day, my classmates and I are going to come together on May 7th, and we all are going to walk across that stage, get our certificates together, as we hold hands and come to a big celebration of our accomplishments. This will be the most exciting time in our lives, as one nation under God. Odyssey is the best ever. **(Sable Wright)**



MOVED BY MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

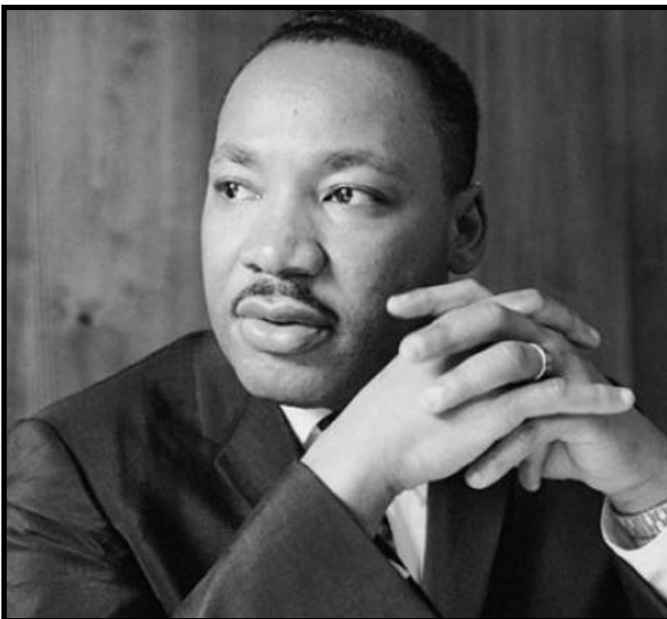
After reading Dr. King's eloquent "Letter from Birmingham Jail," students wrote letters to him as if he were still alive, letting him know what aspects of the letter moved them and how ideas in it remain relevant to struggles today.

Dear Dr. King,



I want to start by thanking you for writing this very detailed and well-written response to the clergymen's letter. Your letter clearly goes over recent events in great detail to clarify and depict the injustice that was happening

at this time. The writing techniques that were used in this letter proved valid points while also describing things in a manner that would be easy for a clergy member to fully understand. For example, there was a biblical reference: "Just as the prophets of the eighth century B.C. left their village and carried their 'thus saith the Lord' far beyond the boundaries of their hometown, and just as the Apostle Paul left his village of Tarsus and carried the gospel of Jesus Christ to the far corners of the Greco Roman world, so am I compelled to carry the gospel of freedom beyond my own home town. Like Paul, I must constantly respond to the Macedonian call for aid."



All of the spiritual metaphors were very prominent in this letter, as well as many other writing techniques, such as parallelism, repetition, exclamation, allusion, figurative language, and superlatives. One statement that really hit home for me was on page 110, third paragraph: "This '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.'" I liked this statement because it is still very true, especially with all the protesting that has happened in the last six years due to the different injustices such as Tony Robinson and George Floyd's "I can't breathe."

This letter also taught me a lot about the injustices that were happening in this period, from the racial signs, vicious lynchings, and beatings to the hate-filled police and segregated businesses. Another thing I found interesting was all the references to other influential members of society, such as John Bunyan, Abraham Lincoln, Socrates, and Thomas Jefferson. Another thing that I found impressive about your letter is that you always made sure to reiterate your nonviolent agenda. This message was never lost no matter how many different subjects you touched on.

In conclusion, this well-written letter definitely opened my eyes to a more passionate and intelligent way of writing. I found this writing profound and heart-wrenching. This piece of writing at times made me emotional, thinking of the injustice. But, at the time, this made me smile because of how intelligent and well-versed the black man who wrote it was. This was a well-thought-out rebuttal to a very ignorant and insensitive piece of writing. **(Adrianne Farrow)**



What was your drive, what made you go help strangers? You could have easily been killed, but that did not stop you. Did you really have those dreams, or was it a metaphor to make people understand

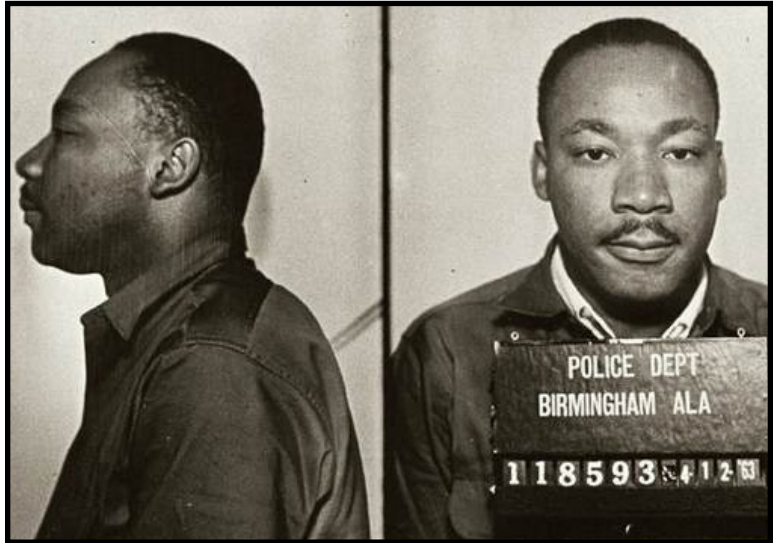
what you were trying to do? We really still need people like you in the world. It's hard to walk in a pair of your shoes. A lot has changed because of you, and I want to thank you for being a real stepper, leading people to see the world through your eyes. Not only did you want justice for blacks but for every race, even for the cold-hearted people who believed we would never be equal. You moved by your basic steps; that was all you needed to believe in to make a change. The collection of facts to determine whether injustices exist, and then it was time for negotiation, self-purification, and direct action. Most things in this world should align with that well. Talk to you later. **(Jamal Jackson)**



I'd like to first thank you for taking time from your busy schedule to read this letter, as I recognize your continued effort to fight for civil rights at the astounding age of 96 years is a lifelong dedication.

As a naive young boy in grade school, we were often tasked with studying your philosophies and the pivotal roles you played during the events of The Civil Rights Movement. Now as an adult who has begun to witness the similarities in today's political atmosphere, I have returned to further study your writings, your letter from Birmingham jail, to be more specific. There is a great deal that we as a society have started to overlook as time passes, and we are slowly reverting to what we've fought so hard to overcome.

In your letter, you make several references to very notable figures throughout history and mythos, making the parallels that, like yourself, these figures are considered extremists who chose to uphold a moral duty or a law of morality even though it went against the law of the land. I believe that these



comparisons are rather fitting of your character as a clergyman. Are there any more notable individuals you can connect your ideals with to this day? Who would you consider to be the torch-bearers in the ongoing struggle for civil and social equality?

If you can recall the events of 2020, I'd like to say that we as a people had a choice on how we chose to respond to social injustice. I personally chose to uphold your philosophies, and I participated in marches and sit ins. I felt a sense of honor and duty for making my voice heard in the most civil way possible. Now, I can't say that others followed the same path of non-violent resistance. If there was a way you could address the people at that time, a way to plant a seed, what would you say to the masses?

I feel as though we are still waiting, and that any progress we make only allows for the pylons to be pushed back. Today I feel as though we are given small victories as a method of appeasement. I feel that we as a community, a collective with the greater good in sight, should work toward reform instead of seeking a band-aid. I feel that there is more people can do, rather than donating money and posting a sign in their front yard. To me, that's just as bad as being silent. It is no better than sitting idly by, casting thoughts and prayers. I am looking for your guidance. What can I do as a 37-year-old man that will leave a positive, lasting impact in our fight for equality? I want to do more. I want to lead by example. **(Dan Thomas)**



Your letter left me speechless in so many ways it's hard to choose somewhere to start from. You are a man of many hats, and I want to give you your flowers because you deserve them. It takes a man of courage to do the things you have done for Birmingham and so on. Your character was attacked on many occasions, but not once did you give up or respond negatively, which shows a lot about your real character. Your protests are so powerful and strong and touched so many people around the world.

I read your letter a few times and even listened to your speech on YouTube as well! But I still can't wrap my head around what you did that was so wrong. For being a real man? For doing what most wouldn't have the balls to do? And you didn't need a crowd behind you or even choose violence like most. You stated, "but more basically, I am in Birmingham because injustice is here." You were there for the people...my people and your people. Is that not a good thing?

It's sad to know that 62 years later we are still stuck in that same system of injustice. I mean, people would say it has somewhat gotten better, but



that's neither here nor there honestly. I've been in Madison, Wisconsin my whole life, and the things I endured as a young girl 'til a grown woman are insane and very disappointing.

"We should never forget that everything Adolf Hitler did in Germany was 'legal'": that sat in my mind for a few days because what Hitler did was beyond out of control and very racist! But having whites and blacks separated and families torn apart, lynched, and jailed, do people really think this is equal or better? If so, maybe people should evaluate their true selves. But all you wanted is for all of us to be equal and treated the right way!
(Tiana Richmond-Lee)



After reading your letter, my first thought was how well it conveyed your message in a way that was not even the slightest way rude or filled with hate. You would imagine someone who had witnessed the things you did would be outraged,

but you conducted yourself with the ease of self-control and emotional intelligence that I wish I had—to be able to get my point across with no reason for the listener to deter my words or manipulate it into anything else than what it is. As

you stated, shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will.

Even still, the ignorance people show today when they think they are superior to others despite the argument of being created equal. There is no understanding to be had with people who seek control. They will flip it whichever way to have it said they are not wrong for the amusement or argument, but they will never see it that way. It has been suppressed, hiding, waiting to come back out to be openly racist. I fear the latter more, so really what is the answer?



(Daija Pigram)

I pray this letter finds you in a joyous land and with the grace of God, peace in your heart and spirit. As my mother has told me over the years, “*después de una noche larga y oscura, el sol siempre amanecerá*” (after a long dark night, the sun will always rise). I read your letter and listened to a recording of you reading it as well. I speak to God as you do, even more so now since the 2025 presidential election. I would like to formally introduce myself. My name is Angelica Alvarez Valenciano. I am a mother to a seven-year-old boy named Noah and an immigrant to this gracious land that I proudly call home now. I am from the land of the great moon pyramid and a daughter to the warm spring rains of this God-given earth. Aguascalientes, Mexico, is the native land that nourished and kissed my melanated flesh.

You stated your purpose for traveling to Birmingham, Alabama, so I feel obliged to do the same. I, like many of my *gente*, were not invited or welcomed, and we have certainly felt the iron cutthroat sting of forlornness being punctured in our hearts and spirit. And as much as I wish to praise your resilience and lyrically impassioned letter to your fellow clergymen, with all my anima, I wish to whisper a tender and sorrowful prayer. Why do I feel the need to send you this letter? Who am I in God's land? As I caress my son's silk, wavy, indigenous hair, I feel free to tattoo the words you used. I am an extremist of love. I weep tears of love and raise my fists like a torch in a desolate storm in the center of the Mariana Trench for those I love.

It is true I am resilient; and bound by blood to remain on this land that seldomly welcomes foreigners. I can smell and taste the odor of our political leaders and their actions. Trump's posse has spoken all too honestly to deny the undeniable truth of this nation's bitter history. “They're poisoning the blood of this country,” he said about immigrants. A quote by our

current president, Donald Trump. I sit typing my letter to you, Dr. King, and ask you, why? You are a man of God and preacher to thousands, and I ask you why such hatred? Why such poisonous words? How am I to tenderly yet truthfully explain to my soft-hearted son that our land's leader is a man of hate? What words or facial expressions did you have? How often did you bite your tongue to deliver such sorrowful sounds? Will my son be bound to the “ominous skies” and neglect the freedom to live genuinely? How do I place peace and comfort back into his veins and spirit?

I am a woman of faith and a warrior when it comes to those I love. But I ask myself in moments of doubt, who will take my place if this President excommunicates my people and our feet, blood, and tears return to our homelands? Who will explain to our children, mothers, and loved ones that we were stolen and abandoned by this nation's compliance and acceptance of hatred? I write these last few words to mourn the extremist of love. I think of the millions of tears, the countless miles through the streets of Alabama your people walked. I pray for the peace of the souls lost to the sands of the Mexican border that have gently massacred my people and tirelessly tried to abolish the right to freedom and justice.

I wish not to praise your work too eagerly or to relate my people's suffering to yours, as we are all



children of our loving God. I simply pray that you hear my tears touch my chest. As a servant of our Lord, please pray for my agonizing heart over our nation's current state and offer a humble prayer for me and my loved ones in these times of peril and injustice. I remain faithful that WE WILL OVERCOME these days of darkness. I have faith that this letter reaches you, Dr. King, and that you honor me and my ancestors by reading each word, as I have read yours.

The Lord is My Shepherd

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

May peace carry you and remain in your spirit and soul, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Sincerely and with gratitude. **(Angelica Alvarez Valenciano)**



After fully reading your heartfelt and mind/thought provoking letter to the clergymen that criticized your decision to lead a non-violent demonstration in Birmingham, Alabama, I wanted to write to you my thoughts and congratulations.

I can't imagine the patience and pure devotion you must be engulfed with inside your heart and spirit. Even as you endure hatred and violence, you were able to see the good in humanity and the sincere optimism for a change in the societal structure that was considered the norm in your day. You touched upon many points in your letter that I agreed with:



the statement you made, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere" and "Whatever affects me directly, affects all indirectly." Everything is like a "trickle-down effect."

You wrote of the broken promises to remove all hateful and humiliating signs in stores, restaurants and public places, the disrespect of men, women and children not being referred to by their name, instead using words meant to demean and degrade African American adults and children, and the injustice and violence incurred by the justice system as a whole. Those are just a few of many injustices that African Americans have suffered.

Postponement of change was only benefiting those doing the oppressing. Change was inevitable; equal rights and treatment are the rights of all human beings. To sit back and do nothing would have been more of an example of criminal behavior. The comfort of others is not your problem, and the shallow, convenient, "understanding" of the church and others is lacking acknowledgment of the severity and inhumane living situations for peoples deemed minorities. I respect and applaud your pious fight for change and the respect one should receive as a simple human being, not being judged or shamed for the simple difference of skin color. **(Vanessa Martinez)**



My name is Alexis, and I am a 25-year-old female from Madison Cheese-town Wisconsin. I wanted to touch base about the letter you constructed to the clergymen from behind bars in the Birmingham jail. I like how your letter addressed

your non-violent approach to segregation and injustice due to one's racial background. Also, I can appreciate how you used concrete writing to bring understanding to the importance of no longer waiting.

"Non-violent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks to dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored. . . . and create a situation so crisis packed that it will inevitably open the door to negotiation." These particular quotes stuck to me because you set the tone by initially mentioning your actions being deemed "unwise and untimely"; then you proceed to vividly elaborate on why now is the time for change by using metaphors highlighting the importance of being told to wait.

Dr. King, you mentioned how you were invited to lead peaceful demonstrations to shed light on the issue at hand—segregation and the treatment of those who faced unjust treatment in everyday life. You then go on to mention how you have ties/allies in the area that you held your peaceful demonstrations. "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." Your peaceful approach was



ultimately to avoid a domino effect, which in the end would create a larger issue somewhere down the line. Marches and protests were designed to gain media attention and show the raw and unjust realities. For instance, when I see things such as the Trayvon Martin incident, it makes me fear for my two innocent little boys.

In addition, allowing people to pick a side (right vs wrong) on issues that come directly from the community allows us to deal with the situation/issues head on. That brings me to the idea of not saying anything and not contributing towards a resolution, which is the same as giving something permission.

Take voting, for instance. Not doing your civil duty and using your voice to vote in comparable to agreeing with things as is.

A concept that I find to still be around in 2025 is racial injustice, from our not-so-lovely Cheeto-head of a president defunding inclusion programs in the workforce to police brutality. Something I bet you would like to see with your own eyes is the police body cameras. I feel as if it shows a little progression in the right way. "So the question is not whether we will be extremists, but what kind of extremists we will be?" (Alexis McClain)



First of all, I would like to thank you for speaking on behalf of our community and standing up for what's right. It means a lot that someone felt brave enough and strong enough to fight for what's right. Today, in 2025, we still face a lot of the same problems, which is sad and scary. No matter how hard people have fought for us, we still face injustice and racism. What should be done? How should we stand up for ourselves without violence because in today's society, it's like they don't hear us or recognize our cries unless we turn to acts of violence?

I love how peaceful you were while writing this letter, yet so loud and voiceful you were. You really know how to get your point across in an extremely professional manner. (Mariya Lucas)



I was born May 13, 1963, the year you created this letter. I can relate to all your concerns, like when you say “All men are created equal.” This is 2025, and we still are going through it today. Segregation still exists in so many ways. As you

stated, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” Trump is the president now. Four years ago and this year, the voting is still being tampered with and politicians are still trying to make it hard to vote fairly. Human rights are still being violated. We are still having problems getting a good education. We are still suffering financially, barely making ends meet to feed our families. We are still fighting the fight our ancestors fought back in your day. It’s a long hard fight.

It’s just more moderate slavery today. We are still living in poverty with little to do. Our people are still protesting against injustice, like the killing of George Floyd, because there’s no justice. We are calling for a nonviolent protest. Women’s rights are still being violated, and they are raped, beaten, and sex trafficked. And children are still being taken from their families and sold. The only difference is them not being whipped and raped in front of everyone like back in “Roots Days.” Instead of hanging them, they’re shooting them.

Nowadays we still try to have peaceful marches. We still have people going to jail for unjust laws and just laws. “Unjust laws are made to be broken.” A just law is supposed to be everybody’s law and equal. Election time, politicians come up with so many different things to interfere with the election

so it benefits them and their party. That is still going on today.

White churches still don’t want to worship with black people. We as black people still have a lot of anger built up for the treatment of our ancestors. I loved what you said: “Negro men and women decide to rise from the dark dungeons of complacency to the brightest hills.”

In spite of their ways to get the black man back in chains, we are coming more and more out of our dark and cold caves. We are coming into the light, bright, sunny, and warm, to realize, “Hey, free at last, free at last, thank God almighty, free at last!”
(Sable Wright)



I first want to say thank you for your courage in speaking out for all of us. It saddens me to know that a lot of things you’re speaking on happening years and decades ago are still happening now.

First, great way to start that letter—very respectful but still hardcore straight and direct. I love that.

Although you could go about things a totally different way, you chose the high road with the “outsiders” response ending it with answering their “why am I here” question. It takes a very strong, brave man to stand up and speak to the “higher” ups. Thank you for genuinely caring about not just you and your family but all of us. You focus not just on what is happening but why.



I love the way you compared our built-up tension to a pot on the stove with the top on; at some point, the top will have to come off and let that steam (feelings) out.

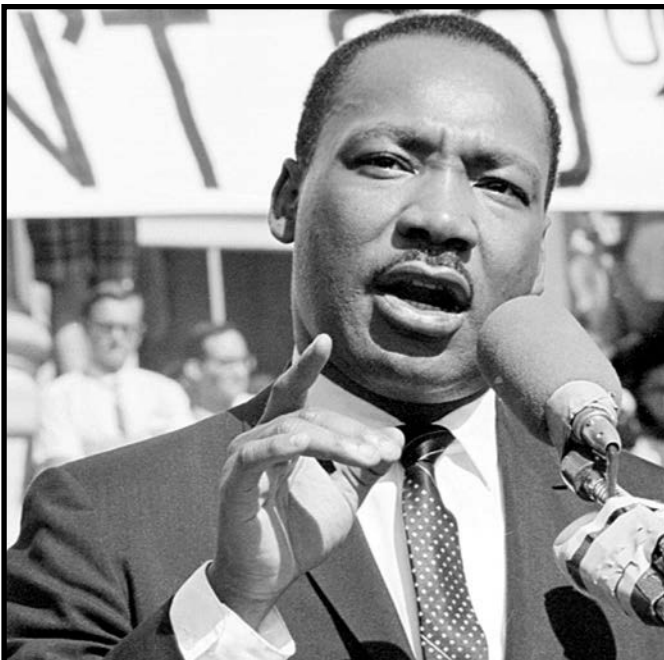
Some of the sad things you wrote about are still going on decades later. There are still kids having to be told that their parents have been killed because of the color of their skin, and children are asking why the white kids are mean to them. It breaks my heart, although

looking from back then to now, we have come a long way. Just imagine how life would be if we really made America great again.

Hearing how it was when blacks and whites were physically separated hurts my heart. It in some ways shows some growth we have made, but it's seeming like that might be turning back to the lifestyle from the past, and it's really scary. Hearing how and why you're locked up writing this saddens me. You state that you would [if you had been in Germany at the time of Hitler] go against "breaking rules" to aid Jews, and I feel like that same exact way. I'll help a stranger in need of aid no matter what. When you mentioned how the yearning for freedom manifests itself, those words stuck to me in these days because manifestation is real.

I want to thank you for calling out the churches and what is really going on with the churches coming from someone who used to love the churches.

Dr. King, I want to thank you again so much for taking time out of your very important day to write the letter. Anyone who has the privilege to read it will feel it. **(Eleanor Ceaser)**



I appreciate the time and thought that went into your letter. While reading it, there were a few things that really stood out to me. When you stated that African Americans don't have the same rights and treatment as white men and women, unfortunately to this day some do not receive the same treatment as their white peers. You also addressed the injustices African Americans face when it comes to law enforcement, and once again to this day plenty of African Americans continue to be treated differently by the law. I really admired when you said, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to Justice everywhere." I truly agree because we are in fact all tied together.

I was fond of the fact that you broke down the points of what a nonviolent campaign consists of... "collecting facts, negotiation, self-purification, and direct action." You also advised that you all have gone through all of those steps and one cannot say that there has been any change. Also, you pointed out how much racial segregation there is in Birmingham, from the embarrassing signs that are hung in business establishments to the brutality that members of the community face on a day-to-day basis, not to mention that Birmingham has the most unsolved bombings of African American churches and homes than anywhere else. You stated that the exact reason you are in Birmingham is because of all these unjust happenings.

Dr. King, you stated that negotiation is needed for a nonviolent campaign. You and others spoke with leadership in the community about change and pushed towards it. As you stated, promises were made, but unfortunately soon after, those promises were undone. For example, stores were asked to remove the humiliating signs towards colored people and they were removed, but only for them to soon return; while some were removed, many remained.

Self-purification was also another point that was made. So with that being said, acknowledgment has been made in regards to the wrongdoings against African Americans. You pretty much let everyone know that, yes, we are working towards change, but

one must mentally prepare oneself because there is a chance that change won't happen right away. If that happens to be the case, one needs to be able to control one's emotions and avoid physical violence and retaliation. It shows the mindset that you had going into this. You were aware of the odds of change happening in a timely manner and wanted others to be privy to it also and mentally prepared. Although frustration and anger were very likely to overcome people, violence is not what we want for the end result.

I fully agree with you stating that direct action is necessary because plenty of steps have taken place including ongoing discussions. You mentioned how demeaning it is to not be addressed appropriately by white men and women and how your wife doesn't even get addressed as Mrs. King. MEN are addressed as Boy no matter their age; anyone with eyes can see the disrespect one might feel because of that. In addition, hearing that your daughter has seen commercials for new places to have outings and her being so excited until you have to regretfully crush those dreams of hers and explain why people of color are not welcome to enjoy those same experiences truly points out why now is the time for direct action. You could not have said it better when you said, "freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed." To put myself in the shoes of your wife or even your precious daughter is heart wrenching because those examples are just a few of the ways we experience disrespect daily!

I certainly agree with you about there being laws that are just and for the benefit of communities. You mentioned that you do not mind following those laws because they are in place for a reason. Now, when it comes to the unjust laws, one can say that they are unjust because they degrade certain humans. You point out that segregation is unjust because it distorts the soul and damages the personality. I couldn't agree more because segregation does distort the soul of the oppressed and of the oppressor!

Dr. King, you had the right idea when using the simile stating that we have to bring the ugly truth to the surface otherwise there won't be a

cure, "like a boil that can never be cured so long as it is covered up but must be opened with all its ugliness to the natural medicines of air and light."

Point taken to your frustration when it comes to people in the community being pointed out for not publicly standing with the movements. I also understand why some of the ones who were expected to stand with colored people didn't because of all of the hate and backlash they would face; in the same breath, courage is needed if change is expected. The disappointment that you felt towards members in the white communities, and not to mention the white churches, is nothing but valid. You did mention that there were a few members of the oppressors' race who understand the disappointment of the oppressed race. I too see how you would expect the church if no one else to stand with coloreds because we all serve the same God; all of the hate, violence, and segregation is not of God.

I could not imagine hearing police be praised for "not using brutality" while attaining order when in fact daily the police were responsible for abusing their authority when it comes to people of color! I admire your drive, commitment, enthusiasm, and patience when it comes to your mission. Without you and many others, we would not have the change that I witnessed today, though we still have a long way to go as of 2025. I am so grateful for all that you have done and the light that you shined and continue to shine upon the injustices of our people. With sincere gratitude. **(Ladella Wilson)**





Reading your letter made me feel so grateful and inspired. I'm impressed and sustained by the power and structure of your words. The admiration I have is for the courage and strength that was demonstrated with being so fearful and not backing down or waiting another 360 years to stand up and fight for what is right! I admire the care and patience with which you crafted your arguments. I wholeheartedly support when you said, "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." Being a person of African American descent myself and on top of that having kids that are African American, I am so very thankful for the work that you have put in and for all the pain that has been endured and the lives that were lost for this fight that we as African Americans are still enduring even after thousands of years. The fight is still not over.

I thank you for being a great African American leader and leaving a mark for life to be at least a little bit better in our era for us. Reading your letter inspires me to be a better person in the community and to further my education to be able to speak of greatness such as you did in your letter. I would also like to stand up for what is right in our country or to even just be able to advocate for myself and my children in a more positive, patient, and healthier way.

Thinking back on the fight you've fought for us to even be this far, I know how hard it is still to this day raising African American men in fear of being shot down by the police. Calling the police for protection, we may end up needing to be protected from them, the ones who are supposed to serve and protect the community. The unjust laws that still go on until this day deeply sadden me—that thousands of years later we still are NOT FREE. I wish you were still here and able to recruit and educate us to continue to fight and be strong leaders like you were.

Your letter is literally a living testament to the daily struggle for human rights. I am so thankful for the opportunity to have the pleasure of reading your

letter. Thank you for the opportunities that you paved the way and fought so hard for us to have today. Thank you, Dr. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.
(Valvree Mosley)



I could totally feel your frustration in this letter. I feel you explained your points in a very calm and educated way and at the same time showed how fed up you are. From constantly being promised change and little to none being done, you felt your "hopes being blasted," as you said. Even you continuously postponing your plans for the right moment shows how much you cared for things to get done but to get done RIGHT! I love how you let us know you choose to do things peacefully all this time but were not afraid of "tension." I agree that society was at the point of demanding and forcing their rights and equality. "This wait has almost always meant 'never'." We would have never gotten to where we made it to without your push. You and so many others are the ones who stood for our people being treated equal in every aspect.

Although it is a fight with much more work to do, we are still fighting to this very day for our respect and rights. I couldn't imagine living in a time where they didn't exist at all. You said something powerful to me that made me open my eyes. "See her beginning to distort her personality by developing an unconscious bitterness towards white people." And this touched me because this is very true. Someone else's wrongdoings can change you in a way to develop a bad thought of all people like them unintentionally. We all are in control of ourselves, but if you are treated poorly by a kind of people all your life, it would automatically change your view of this kind of person even if you don't intend to think or feel that way.

I admire how deep you went in this letter, not letting any detail of what we went through go unnoticed. You really made the reader, no matter white or black, understand, feel, and agree with you. I'm sure people had opinions but were left no choice but to respect you after reading this.
(Janessa Weichmann)



As I read your letter from that Birmingham jail cell, I felt both awe and frustration. The injustices you described still echo in 2025, making me question how far we have truly come as a society. Your message holds just as much truth today as it did then, a reminder that the fight for justice is far from over.

One idea that stood out to me was your criticism of the white moderate. You wrote that 'law and order exists for the purpose of establishing justice, and when they fail in this purpose, they become the dangerously structured dams that block the flow of social progress.' This struck me because even today, people use 'law and order' as a justification to maintain the status quo rather than to create real justice. Your words challenge me to think about who upholds these barriers in 2025 and how they continue to slow the progress of equality.

The struggles you faced with police brutality are still happening today. We've seen so many of our Black brothers and sisters lose their lives at the

hands of the police, and it's frustrating that this is still a reality. It makes me think about how much has really changed and how much still needs to be done.

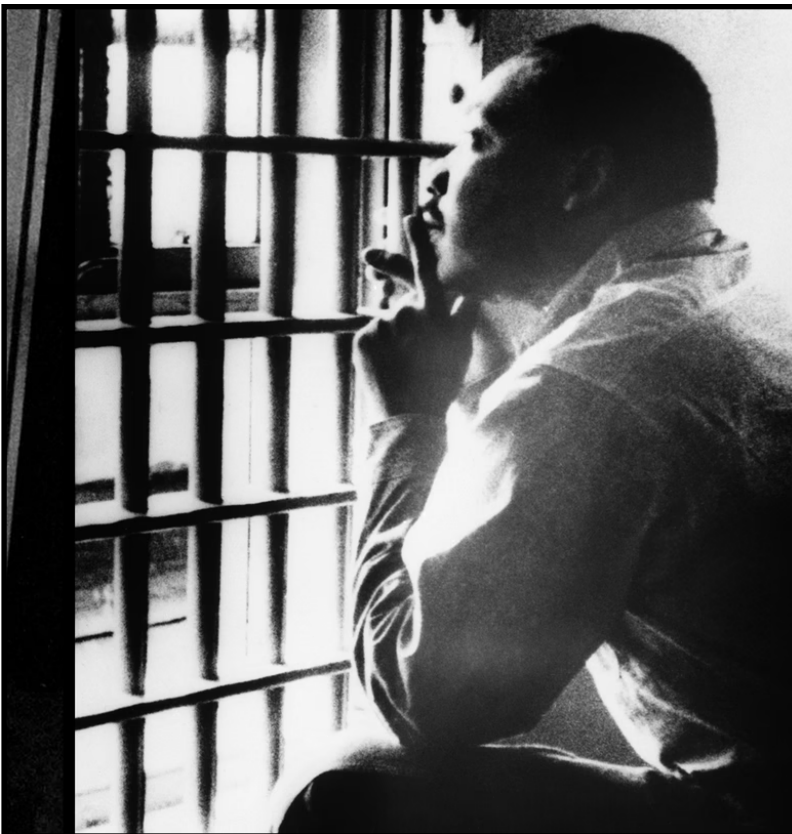
You spoke about how police brutality affected your relationship with the system as a Black man. Given the struggles you faced, do you think the relationship between the Black community and police has improved since your time, or has it remained just as fractured?

Your words, Dr. King, allow us all to question and think about how things are today compared to how it was. Thank you so much. **(Abby Wilson)**



It is January 2025, yet another major time to be alive. Our president is *another* racist white man who gets to make decisions for America. We are going backwards and undoing everything that has at least helped us be more progressive. I'm starting to hate it here more and more. We have had one African American president so far, but Americans are not ready for a black woman just yet. I wanted to write to you about your letter from Birmingham jail in 1963. I also wanted to let you know I have always looked up to you and everyone around you that has fought for the right things. You have *such* powerful words and, being a woman of color, I hear them. Thank you for fighting for civil rights, to end segregation, gain human rights, and raise the minimum wage. Unfortunately, we are still fighting for this in 2025.

I would say personally that it is another scary time to be a person of color. Right now, women's rights are being taken away, and the government (which is full of old white men) gets to decide what you do with your body. Our past is coming back to haunt us. Everything that was provided for people of color that got us jobs, provided us with resources, made it possible to buy a house, let us further our education, and



more is going to be revoked. We are going back to the 1920s.

You had a lot of things to say that really stuck out to me. "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." I have been to many protests in my 24 years of life, and I can tell you, I am not stopping. I have made sure to use my voice for better or worse. I just know no matter what, nothing is fair. Someone will always have more power over someone based on their social class, economic status, ethnicity, gender, or religion. To me, a lot of what you fought for is what we may be going through again. Our current president is beginning to dismantle and end "radical and wasteful" government DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) programs. He is ending the protection against illegal discrimination and restoring merit-based opportunity. This will put barriers back up for people of color and others in society.

You were talking about how black people "never quite know what to expect next and are plagued with inner fears and outer resentments; when you are forever fighting a degenerating sense of 'nobodiness' – then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait." I know when I go up north in Wisconsin, I get stared at and feel uncomfortable. I've had women clutch their purses when I am walking near them, or people cross the road when I'm walking towards them. I've still been called the N word. White women have a fetish of having mixed children and are always accusing Black men of doing something wrong. *It has been a never-ending cycle.* I know it may sound "unfair" to hold resentment towards a certain group, but they are the oppressors. You said, "oppressed people cannot remain oppressed forever." We are still oppressed; we are still murdered, seen as criminals, slaves in prisons, and more. I've only ever seen Black people in poverty unless they are famous. I don't know many Black people that own a home or that don't have to work two jobs to make ends meet. The system is still set up as a net to people of color to keep them in the barrier they want us.



Human rights remain political today. Women at the early age of 12 will be forced to have a child, even if they are a child themselves. People do not care if the mother will die from giving birth, or if the child has medical problems; financial stability and mental stability are not factored in at all as well. "Freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed." People of color, women, and members of the LGBTQ+ community are demanding this again. People are protesting nonviolently until the police are involved. Those groups will be at the biggest risk of injury. As you stated, we have fought more than 340 years for our constitutional and God given rights, and they are being stripped away again in 2025. All I am saying is that I think you would still be disappointed in America today.

You stated, "do good to them that hate you." I really felt this in my heart and as a person. I feel like I wear my heart on my sleeve and always give. I would say I am a very nice and kind-hearted person until you show me the ugly side of you. I feel like "kill them with kindness" does hit someone hard. I always try to kill people with kindness, and most of the time it works. I am trying so hard to use my voice and make sure my people are safe. I will continue the fight for my rights, for me and for the younger generation that looks like me. Like you said, "society must protect the robbed and punish the robber." (Kyiana Baker)



My name is Timothy Comer, and I am a member of the Odyssey Project that specializes in the art of encouraging diversity and uplifting mankind. Sir, I found your letter from the Birmingham Jail quite interesting and intellectually

enlightening. Your rhetorical questioning of just and unjust laws stimulated my thought processes. You alluded to the terms of St. Thomas Aquinas about the code that squares with the moral law and the code that is in disharmony with moral law. Your decision was to take the course of “nonviolent direct action” and accept the results of the outcome for this. I am sorry that you endured such treatment and misunderstanding. Yet, I can view its positive results, which generated your powerful letter.

We both know, Dr. King, that whether you were in your hometown or in the vicinity of the Alabama no-named streets, you would have been deemed an “agitator.” The analogy you used of the man being robbed is and should be undeniable to even the most common of men. Of course, since your letter was written to clergymen and the allusions you pointed to in the scriptures concerning the refusal of Shadrack, Meshach, and Abednego to obey King Nebuchadnezzar’s laws, that should have brought convictions to not only the consciences of the clergymen but also to their faith in God and Church. So, Dr. King, Sir, as I conclude my response to just a short few of your local points generated in your letters, I would like to say, in no laughing manner, one can see what time does in doing time – a person can write long letters, as you mentioned that the letter would have been much shorter if you were positioned in an ideal environment.

I bid you God’s grace and blessings in your endeavors to help mankind be the best that it can be for the betterment of all in this great land. Sincerely, your brother in the struggle.
(Timothy Comer)



After reading and obtaining your intellectually written letter from Birmingham Jail, I have gained perspective. Allow me to elaborate. I am a woman of Black/African descent. I live in the year **2025** at age 20. In your letter you

expressed your right to fight peacefully against immoral laws and social injustices. You, Dr. King, eloquently voiced the inexcusable behavior of inconsiderate segregationists and corrupt legal systems. I am happy to state that your words and brave actions along with others who stood with you less publicly recognized have in fact affected positively the future of black and brown girls and boys, men and women around America. There has been 340 years of oppression, living in such a place that lacks empathy and mental capacity to step out of one’s own perspective, to see the pain and struggles of us, the so-called Negroes. I am also pleased to inform you we are no longer so comfortably labeled as or captive to the labels that were once placed on us. Segregation to the blind public eye ceased to exist. Your work and efforts in the most comfortable way for the White man were successful.

I’m disappointed to have to inform you, Dr. King, it has become apparent that your fears you once expressed of the presence and structure of the church once admired and respected by all



Americans in the year 1965 in fact was unable to recapture the sacrificial spirit it once had and unfortunately lost its authenticity and the loyalty of millions. Christian values are now misconstrued. The church, in fact, in the way you feared is being dismissed and viewed as an irrelevant or outdated social club or religion. The want of relatability and even the values are no longer in most of the hearts of the American people, forgivably so.

Our leader and unfortunate head of the country goes by the name "Donald John Trump," and in less time than Black activists, extremists, and revolutionaries made change in this country for the betterment of all mankind not just black and brown, Donald J Trump has done everything in his hateful hand of power to eradicate the peace, the unity, and the sense of community built by the loving, forwardist protestors of this hateful system, and activists who hold your words and beliefs with them. On January 21st 2025 President Trump issued an executive order titled "ending illegal discrimination" 60 years, 720 months, 3134 weeks, 21,929 days since segregation was made illegal. It's been so long and yet hatred still lives in the hearts and minds of those who have control. I fear war is near. Until the hearts of the people are inspired to fight for change as a people letting go of their own labels, prejudices, hate and fear of nonconformity, we may just become a dictatorship.



I once heard an educated stranger say never wait until you're ready because you may just be waiting forever. If we want change, we must fight for it, PEACEFULLY, following by your example and the brave example of those who came before and after you. It touched me reading your words "oppressed people cannot remain oppressed forever." We are entering a time where no matter your race, age, or origin, we as people are being oppressed. The American citizens are losing rights. Fear now lives in us all. The white moderate no longer prioritizes just order over justice. The white moderate now prioritizes profit off the American people's pain and more control/order over the knowledge we are allowed to receive and the connections we are allowed to have with other people. I think we as a people have either forgotten or lost our fire when it comes to your words "we know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor, it must be demanded by the oppressed." I wish you still walked among us to help guide the new appointed leaders and activists of this generation. I wish your words echoed through the minds of us all. I wish that love and peace along with justice were leading factors in the mindsets and decision making of the so-called American leaders.

I want our hearts and minds to be healed and tranquil. I want us to be seen and heard by each

other and our fear- and hate-infested authoritarian government to either be dismantled or deeply revised for the American citizens' future survival as a people and the overall survival of peace everywhere. As you stated, "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." I thank you, Dr. King, for your contribution to the freedom of the people. I want to state that I don't mean to sound like an extremist, but in your words "the question is not whether we will be extremists, but what kind of extremists we will be." Thank you.

(Aaniyah Jefferson)



I write to you with the fondest of hopes that this letter finds you in a great spirit of resilience and the undying hope that you have always cloaked yourself with, that went as far as not only inspiring people of your time but generations yet

unborn. As a young man living in today's world, I developed a sense of purpose and necessity to pen this writing in response to the powerful and far-reaching writings you sent from the Birmingham jail to not only men of your time but of the future. I find solace and meaning in the emancipating arguments that you brought forward, which further compelled me to sincerely recognize your giant stance.

A message of justice and resistance through non-violent means is an effective combination enough to emancipate not only your fellow clergymen but all those who share your profound beliefs; for it is crucial and relevant even in our time. The challenges of racial inequalities, systemic oppressions, and systematic oppressions are ills that still endure today. Thus, we hold your words as both a beacon of hope and a call to action for the total freedom of us all.

Complacency is dangerous is a sentiment I share from your letter to the clergymen, for it resonates with myself that the consequences of such acts can be grave; I understand it as you argue it. Many out there still hold a firm belief that change is inevitable, and it must come— yet confronted with the thought of its gradualism, for justice delayed is not justice denied; for wrong anywhere is wrong everywhere. I and many like me stand in acknowledgement of your actions in the face of injustice as you stand in total defiance. For you believe that our inaction not only protects the current state of things but helps it endure.

I learned a worthy lesson in your unyielding hope for a better social organization, and your commitment to nonviolence also resonates deeply with me. In this day and age, where anger and frustration trigger one to violence, you've preached that we respond with

understanding and unquestionable love, and that is what will remain crucial. If hate and anger can be suppressed, then we will strive to foster dialogue to build bridges and dwell in harmony with even those who oppose us. That is the approach going into the future for its empowering and healing capacity—for we may be in opposition but not divided.

Furthermore, I want to use this opportunity and appreciate your call to action for young people and the fact that you acknowledge our importance in playing an essential role in advocating for justice. We are responsibility-bound to take up the mantle and continue on the path that you and so many others treaded. We are now in a more digitalized world; through engaging in our communities and using social media platforms to amplify voices, we shall ensure that the fight for civil rights and equality continues uninterrupted.

As I reflect on your letter, my heart is filled with hope for a better future. The spirit of activism and the observance of justice will live in my generation, and we are determined today more than ever to draw inspiration from your godly struggle. We must embrace solidarity and be courageous so that you may rest easy and the same for your peers in struggle.

Ultimately, I want to express my sincerest gratitude for your unwavering dedication to justice and equality. We carry on with your words from the Birmingham Jail in our hearts. Thank you for your courage, Dr King. **(Alfusainey Manjang)**





I was assigned to write you a letter directly after reading you “Letter from Birmingham Jail.” The instruction was to write to you as if you were able to hear me despite your assassination; as if you were able to listen to me as I wrote to you despite your assassination. I believe writing transcends space and time, allowing us to connect and hear each other beyond the living vessels we use to channel the work of God. I write to you not to fulfill my academic assignment but because this is my tireless effort and persistent work as a living person acting to fulfill our collective destiny. I could not find it in my soul to write to you so casually and bypass the fact that you were murdered. I apologize because this is perhaps the first time I have consciously written to you in the 26 years that I have been alive. I am guilty of having been an ally of social stagnation while I assimilated in the state of Wisconsin as a DACAmented immigrant. I was lurking in the shadow illusions of personal safety, and you guided me with the Zeitgeist to channel everything I breathe into creation as a tool to crave and carve our freedom.

Your letter awakened me to the grounded orientation in which I stand alongside you. I am in the middle of opposing forces within the BIPOC community, education system, and global collective. Our cross-cultural collectives have merged with those who have succumbed to complacency. Many of our middle classes have unconsciously become insensitive to the problems of the masses while unable to recognize that we live in a world of mirrors. The opposing force of bitterness and hatred is now festering to advocate for violence. We will all be forced to reckon with the climate crisis of our time, reflecting the wounds in our collective psyche. Our lives today depend on extremist, nonviolent, direct action to neutralize the ominous genocide that is occurring before us. I pray that your spirit guides us with courage to continue identifying the underlying causes. I take my notes into action as I read your words.



I believe that when you say, “Anyone who lives in the United States can never be considered an outsider,” you are perhaps alluding to the indigenous prophecy of the land. The white power structure of this country has caused so many to forget their roots. Still, the thundering rains will bloom ancestral seeds of creation. Those who have been labeled as immigrants will come to know that they are, in fact, of the land. We are beginning to exchange dialogue that will spark a universal memory. This letter is a bridge to creative tension. Our time to act is now. You recalled that no administration can organize for our collective well-being on our behalf. Thank you for sharing that you know “through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed.” As our community prepares for raids at the hands of an administration that uses unjust laws to classify humans as illegal, we, too, lean into the words of St. Augustine to protect each other from separations and deportations, knowing that “An unjust law is no law at all.”

Deportation separation, like segregation statutes, is injustice. You mentioned separation distorts the soul and damages the personality. Deportation creates a false sense of superiority towards those who believe in authority to determine who is allowed to exist on the land. Also, inferiority to anyone who succumbs to internalize being classified as illegal. Which is not only politically, economically, and sociologically unsound, but like segregation, it is morally wrong and sinful. Dr. King, I find myself surrounded by white moderates who, for some reason, are

positioned to listen to what I have to say. As I write to you from my comfortable desk, I hope to echo your voice in the cosmos and extend my apologies yet again to receive your benediction and continue the cause of Peace and Siblinghood. I promise to commend our courageous artists for their willingness to suffer through the discipline it will take to reckon with the church. **(Mickey Mestiza)**



While continuing my education, I was tasked to thoroughly read your “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” piece. And to tell you the truth, I’m quite disappointed in the lack of revelations that should’ve been shock-waved through people, the need and maintenance for natural born kindness. With your doing and involvement in such a vast movement, you would think we would’ve changed more than what we live through today.

Now, I’ll give it to your power: the bombing of homes and predominantly “colored” churches has ceased. However, extreme violence still remains. You said that even when entering a motel, your name is instantly a slur, and you are told to use different facilities for “colored” people; again, today it is not to this extremity of racism. However, it seems to me that the more people are not born in America or those with a slightly more golden/tan tone to their skin, the more hatred rises to a level/position that feels so irreparable. The creation of ICE in the government as well – They take people who have sought safety and refuge only to be sent back into danger, tearing families apart. Klansmen are still upon the American people because of the pale seats of the Senate, Congress, etc., and the insatiable need for control.

I don’t understand, Dr. King. What you’ve fought against decades ago is still occurring in the present day. You made it into history books, lectures, and other writings and teachings, but what is it about humanity’s aversion to change? Why is great pain a recurring theme in history? Why is it that racism has seldom changed? It more so just evolved for the times we are in, but why?
(Brianna Espanol)

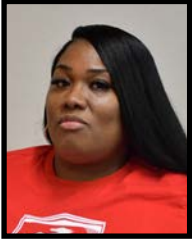


I’m writing this letter to address the letter you wrote to the clergymen while you were in jail. I come to you with a clear mind and a just heart. They are terrible people to have you locked away!

Birmingham amongst all the other cities in America needs to hear everything you have to say and feel every word of peace you’re demonstrating. You’re standing up for human rights. Like Thomas Jefferson said, we all are created equal. We have to fight for justice, “even if it means breaking the law as long as the protests are conducted peacefully and with the focus on creating tension to force the situations and change.” I love your quote, “injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” People in Birmingham right now don’t understand the hurt they are causing all people, especially black people.

Dr. King, I want them to understand the movement you’re on. How dare they say your peaceful marches are “untimely and unwise”? What else would they suggest you do? Keep fighting for us and I will march right beside you. When they free you, I’m going to make it my business to see you and promote nonviolence. One moment in time will change the world. But your “I have a dream” speech will cause a chain reaction and open up everyone’s eyes, including Birmingham.
(Tiffany Brenston)





I have read your entire letter. The truth you speak is profound and resonates deeply. I have learned that “injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” I am so emotional right now. Your words and your truth inspire me to this present moment. The fervent and deeply rooted impact your letter has had on me has left me with an unwavering resistance to injustice. You have left an ineffaceable mark on my conscience. As I reflect on the progress made since your letter was written, I am reminded that to this very day there is still a great amount of work to be done. The struggle for justice and racial equality is still very much ongoing. And many black people do not understand that we must continue to work together to disassemble the systems and organizations that keep in existence injustice, bias, and discrimination.

I do not want to appear disheartened and not give recognition and gratitude to the progress that has been attained, but I am also very aware of the persistent dissimilitude and corruption that remains. I strongly believe that we, the black people, need to over stand and return ourselves to the unfinished commitment “to create the kind of tension in society that will help black men and women raise from the dark depth of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding, and brotherhood. . . . To create a situation, so crisis packed, that it will inevitably open the door to negotiation.”

The so-called leaders of this country and of this world are still “dedicated to the maintenance of the status quo.” Black men and women who may consider themselves middle class or affluent have no desire to remain “devotees of the civil rights movement.” They have been re-educated to believe that these conditions were circumstances of the past and that these conditions no longer affect the black community and the black

nation today. Black men and women are consumed with entertainment and social engineering. Just as Reinhold Niebuhr had reminded you, I must remind the black people of the world that “white privileged groups tend to be more immoral than individuals,” and that many of us are willingly conforming to these unacceptable standards.

As a people, from experience, we know that “freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor, it must be demanded by the oppressed.” And that waiting does mean never. At this present moment “justice has been too long delayed.” We have been waiting for more than 400 years now. It is 62 years later, and we are still waiting for our constitutional and God given rights. We still have not gained political independence. The demand for autonomy and freedom from external influences, particularly European norms in the context of governance and decision making in this country and around the world, has very often and at most times been the last thing on the black man’s and black woman’s mind. Many of us have become inaccessible to the conscious mind and have given up on our responsibility to demand our respect and disobey unjust laws. Like you, I would also “agree with St. Augustine that an unjust law is no law at all.”

Although I may have my own perspective on the approach I would take, your defense of nonviolent resistance and your call to action against injustice



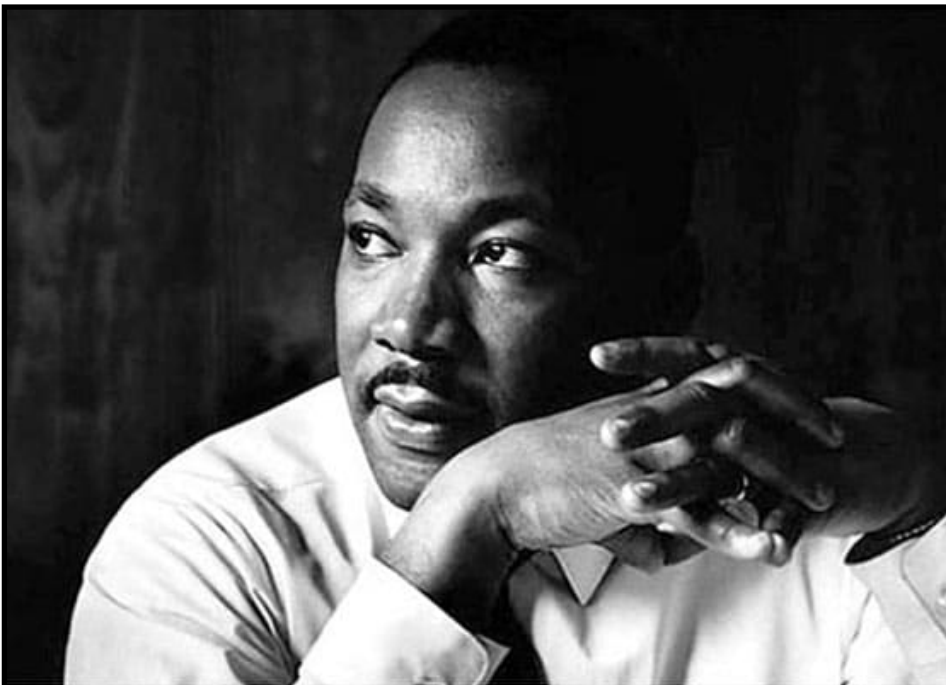
is extraordinary, and it is a very powerful reminder of the significance of standing up for what is right. I am deeply grateful and most appreciative for your courage, your strength, and your resolute commitment to justice, equality, and humanity. Your words are a reminder that blacks remain complicit in the perpetuation of oppression. Your words are to this day an influential call to action urging us to recommit to the work of disassembling systemic racism and structuring a more nondiscriminatory and unprejudiced society. Your legacy continues to inspire and challenge many. I strongly believe that now is the time to lift our nation. **(Gela Docks)**



First, I want to say thank you for your words of wisdom throughout these trying times. I believe we all can appreciate your willingness to commute wherever there are unjust things happening throughout the southern parts of the country. There was great self-reflection when asking yourself, "Are you able to accept blows without retaliation?" Many would find it very hard to stay controlled in such hostile environments. This shows that you and your affiliates truly are wanting to make a change in the most peaceful way that would have the biggest impact in our communities.

When you referred to Socrates, it really helped create a connection showing that even though times change, sometimes mentalities and actions stay the same. Without someone or some people stepping up and being willing to make sacrifices for change, others may never wake up and will continue to be accepting of whatever may be happening in society, whether it be just or unjust.

The repetition you used such as when a colored person's first name becomes "nigger" and when one's wife or mother is never given the respected title of "Mrs." to show racial discrimination really shows the depth of how colored people are being mistreated. It saddens me to know that these issues are still prevalent in today's society. I was also treated differently because of the color of my skin. I was at a food truck near University Avenue one evening, and two Caucasian women walked to the line at the same time as me. They hurried a little to get before me, and I heard one whispering, "The black can't be ahead of us," and the other lady laughed. It hurt my feelings, but I didn't say anything. I felt their treatment of me was very degrading and saddening. However, from reading your letter and also educating myself on racism, I know that responding with ignorance and negative remarks will only cause more harm than what has already been done.



Reading your letter has helped me to understand how far our country has come even though we still have more work to do. Your work and the work of others who stood for racial equality has truly been an eye opener and made me not want to turn a cold shoulder on those who are of different racial backgrounds because of what their ancestors did. I have grown to realize that there are people in the world of all races, sizes, and backgrounds who will help you succeed and root for you even when your own family won't.

Your letter also brought to my attention the laws and actions that were put in place and done that put colored people at a disadvantage despite their right simply as humans to be treated equally. The use of rhetorical questions like, “Isn’t this like condemning a robbed man because his possession of money precipitated the evil act of robbery?” did justice in trying to help others understand racism. There is not one justifiable reason that I can think of to understand racial injustices or why someone is treated differently because of their skin color or where they come from, which one has absolutely no control of. I believe that the actions you and your affiliates took in Birmingham and throughout the southern states were in fact not extreme but were necessary and needed to be done to help make a change—to help young boys and girls grow up with the same education and choices as their peers who do not share the same skin color.

Overall, Dr. King, I want to thank you again and again for the sacrifices, dedication, and hard work it took to help make a difference in this country. Because of these things, my children and I are legally able to have the same rights and access to education, housing, voting, and so much more. You have truly made an impact that will be forever remembered! **(Ashli Smith)**



Reading your letter from Birmingham Jail is deeply upsetting and overwhelming because we continue to struggle with inequality in 2025. Your letter is not only powerful but also thought-provoking, which is the reason for my response. The racism and racial injustice that we experience today is less blatant and very much modernized. Certain guidelines to many programs and housing are not only targeted for the poor but effective in targeting the black community. Some examples are denials for employment, apartments, and education, just to name a few. They are still killing us in our homes (Breonna Taylor), in our cars (Philando Castile), and just walking down the street with candy (Trayvon Martin), calling it “self-defense.”

Racial injustice is like a deeply rooted weed in the garden of humanity, choking out the potential for growth and harmony with its pervasive presence and toxic impact. However, even through all the hate, your words continue to inspire us to fight for a more just and equitable society. It is your courage and determination in the face of adversity that inspires us in the black community to stand for our rights to be treated with dignity and respect. As you stated, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” We must be impregnable because just as the lion preys on the weakest members of the herd, the oppressor feeds on the vulnerability of the oppressed.

We will continue to fight this fight and run this race until justice and equality are given to everyone. Thank you for your bravery and leadership, Dr. King. May your legacy reign, living in the hearts and minds of all those who continue to fight for our rights. **(Gloria Knight)**





I hope this letter finds you well. After reading your Letter from Birmingham Jail, I felt compelled to express my admiration for your courage, moral clarity, and unyielding dedication to justice. Your words continue to inspire

me, urging me to take responsibility in the fight for equality.

I was particularly moved by how you explained your presence in Birmingham. You were invited by local leaders, emphasizing that you came not out of personal ambition but because injustice was present. Your commitment to join the 85 affiliated organizations fighting for civil rights highlights the strength of collective action, a principle that remains essential today. I also found it powerful when you spoke of how Black people had been told to wait for justice for more than 340 years. You made it clear that no more delays would be accepted — a call to action that resonates in our current struggle for equality.

Your words that “freedom is never voluntarily given” are a reminder that justice must be fought for and will not be granted by those in power. This truth still rings clear today. Additionally, your defense of civil disobedience, stating that “one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws,” demonstrates the necessity of breaking unjust laws when the legal system itself perpetuates oppression. This stance is a vital lesson for us, showing that sometimes it is not only permissible but morally required to challenge unjust systems.

Your critique of the white moderate and the white church also deeply resonated with me. As you wrote, “Shallow understanding from people of good will is

more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will.” Too often, passivity and a preference for order over justice only prolong oppression. This critique applies not only to the past but also to the present — those who remain silent in the face of injustice, rather than acting, remain complicit.

I was also struck by your call for unity across cultures and religions. You argued that “we must learn to live together as brothers or perish together as fools,” showing that the fight for justice cannot be confined to one group, culture, or faith. Justice, you emphasized, is a universal cause that transcends national and religious divides. You called on all cultures and faith traditions to join in the struggle, making it clear that we are all interconnected. Your inclusivity reminds us that the fight for justice is global, and we must unite as one humanity.

Furthermore, your call for “creative extremism” for love, truth, and goodness offers a radical yet essential approach to justice. You urged us to become “extremists for love” — not a love of convenience, but a love that seeks truth and goodness, even when it challenges societal norms. This message still speaks to us today, calling on



all who seek justice to rise above moderation and engage in the hard, passionate work of love and truth.

The imagery you used, particularly in describing the struggle against racial injustice, still resonates deeply. The contrast between “the quicksand of racial injustice and the solid rock of human dignity” is a powerful metaphor for the weight of systemic oppression and the strength required to overcome it. Your reminder that “injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere” is a timeless truth, one that calls us all to recognize that our fates are interconnected and that no community can thrive when another is oppressed.

Dr. King, your letter has inspired me to reflect on the importance of standing against injustice, no matter the cost. It is not enough to hope for change or remain passive. We must actively engage in the fight for justice, just as you did, with love, courage, and determination. Your vision and commitment to nonviolent direct action continue to guide us in our own ongoing struggles for equality.

Thank you for your leadership, wisdom, and courage. Your legacy lives on, and it is our responsibility to carry your work forward into the future. With deep respect and admiration.

(LaiLaini Reed)



I am writing to you today to tell you how much I appreciate the way you answered the criticism of your work. I myself personally would not have been able to respond in such a calm, logical way.

Today at work two of my employees called off to take direct action to protest at the state capitol in Madison, WI. They were protesting deportation policies and discrimination against immigrants. I



feel my employees can relate when you said, “As in so many past experiences, our hopes had been blasted, and the shadow of deep disappointment settled upon us.” Perhaps my employees want to “foster such a tension” in hopes that those in power will negotiate the terms of deportation and immigration.

Not everyone who decided to protest needed to protest to protect themselves, but as you said in your letter, “Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.” This is a reason why I feel my other employee called off as well, to be able to support her friends in such a hard and harsh moment. And on the topic of our immigrants, they are now being treated as if they are outsiders, as if they do not work in our facilities and help our country. But as you put it, “Anyone who lives inside the United States can never be considered an outsider anywhere within its bounds.”

I understand your frustration waiting 340 years for “our constitutional god given rights.” It is insane that you had to see and experience vicious mobs

lynch mothers and fathers, the fact that blacks weren't allowed to sit in the same restaurants as whites, the fact that sisters and brothers were drowned at whim: how could someone be so cruel? Thankfully today we no longer have to wait for the end of those things: blacks are allowed to sit where they want in restaurants, on the bus, in public libraries; we even all share the same water fountain. With that being said here are some of the key things we are still waiting on: police brutality is still happening to this day, people of color still suffer more violence at the hands of the police, they are still being kicked, beaten, and treated unfairly, and let's not forget the president we have in office is also implementing discriminatory policing practices to execute an all-out attack on immigrants as well. Although it still exists, we have slowly seen improvement in black poverty.

In conclusion I would like to thank you. The fact that you as a civil rights leader stood up, spoke out, and took the leap to Birmingham speaks volumes. Thank you for not ignoring the situation and for protesting against unfair treatment of Black people in Birmingham, Alabama. I deeply regret reading the fact that you were treated so poorly

and locked up for doing NOTHING. You were just trying to make a change. You even were practicing ways to improve your minds so you don't react to violence because what would they think or say if we engaged? You are a strong man, and once again I thank you, Dr. King. **(Corrie Thomas)**



I am a student in UW-Madison's Odyssey Project, and for one of our assignments we read your "Letter from Birmingham Jail." One thing that stood out to me was your ability to remain poised throughout the whole letter; it was truly inspiring. As I read on, I couldn't help but feel like you were defusing the bomb of racial tensions of the time. In starting out you simply explained your reason for being in Birmingham and stated, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." I found this quote particularly powerful, and it demonstrated your call to action.

Continuing on, you did a great job in explaining why you felt the need to act now in saying, "justice too long delayed is justice denied." Possibly the most powerful part of your letter to me was

trying to explain to your daughter why she couldn't go to the amusement park, and the effects that racism and segregation have on a young, innocent soul.

Lastly, I loved how you wrapped up the letter by embracing the term "extremist." It was a healthy reminder of how the times needed extreme change as well as inviting others to join you instead of being a bystander. Dr. King, there is still a ton of work to be done here in 2025, but I believe because of your stances exemplified in "Letter from Birmingham Jail," we have made undeniable strides in the right direction. **(Dillon Dahlk)**





I would like to start by saying how powerful this letter is and how what you are saying is so true. I would like to start by agreeing that protests are

supposed to be nonviolent, but the police are being very brutal towards colored people in so many ways, such as name calling, kicking them while they are down literally, and letting their dogs attack and sink their teeth into colored skin just for trying to create peace and use the freedom of speech. Understanding that all men are SUPPOSED to be equal but are far from that, I see the frustration. Not only are all men not equal, but people of color in general have been looked down upon for long enough, from grownups to children not being able to play at parks, go to museums, or enjoy a nice school because we are not all equal. I am wondering when people of color will no longer be labeled as “negro” and when they will have the same respect others have just because of skin color.

I love this quote: “the latest temptation is the greatest treason: To do the right deed for the wrong reason.” I feel the great power behind that quote because nothing you do is for no reason and even though you took the right approach, it still ended in a way it shouldn’t have and peace was not given. I see you telling no lies, and the respect from your end was always there and given. I do believe that you and your people deserve to be treated equally. You deserve to have a right to freedom—to know that you can freely walk outside without a beating, to know that your children can receive a great education, and to be able to be called by their name or even Mr. and Mrs. because I’ve noticed that respect isn’t given either.

I would love to take the time to thank you for being so generous, genuine, and outspoken. Thank you for being the leader for the ones who can’t and always having hope no matter the situation until your last day. I want you to know that change



doesn’t happen overnight, but because of the fight you put up, life for us is different and we do not have to endure the pain that you did just to see justice. Thank you for your service and time and for the letter and hard work until your last day with us. Without you, things may have NEVER changed.
(Crystal Lee)



I read your letter from the Burlingham jail, and you got my attention when you said black people were the “victims of broken promises.” I feel like we are still victims of broken promises, and we are still fighting for our life in a way.

I feel like the time is different now because you changed the segregation law. We are able to grow up in school now, which makes a difference for some of us, but we still are going home to different lives where we still are in poverty. We are trying to break the generational curse of growing up in a broken home or having a broken family, which is more common than ever now. Our black father figures are missing out on our life, our black males’ lives, our child’s life, especially the young black men, because of the trap of being in the system.

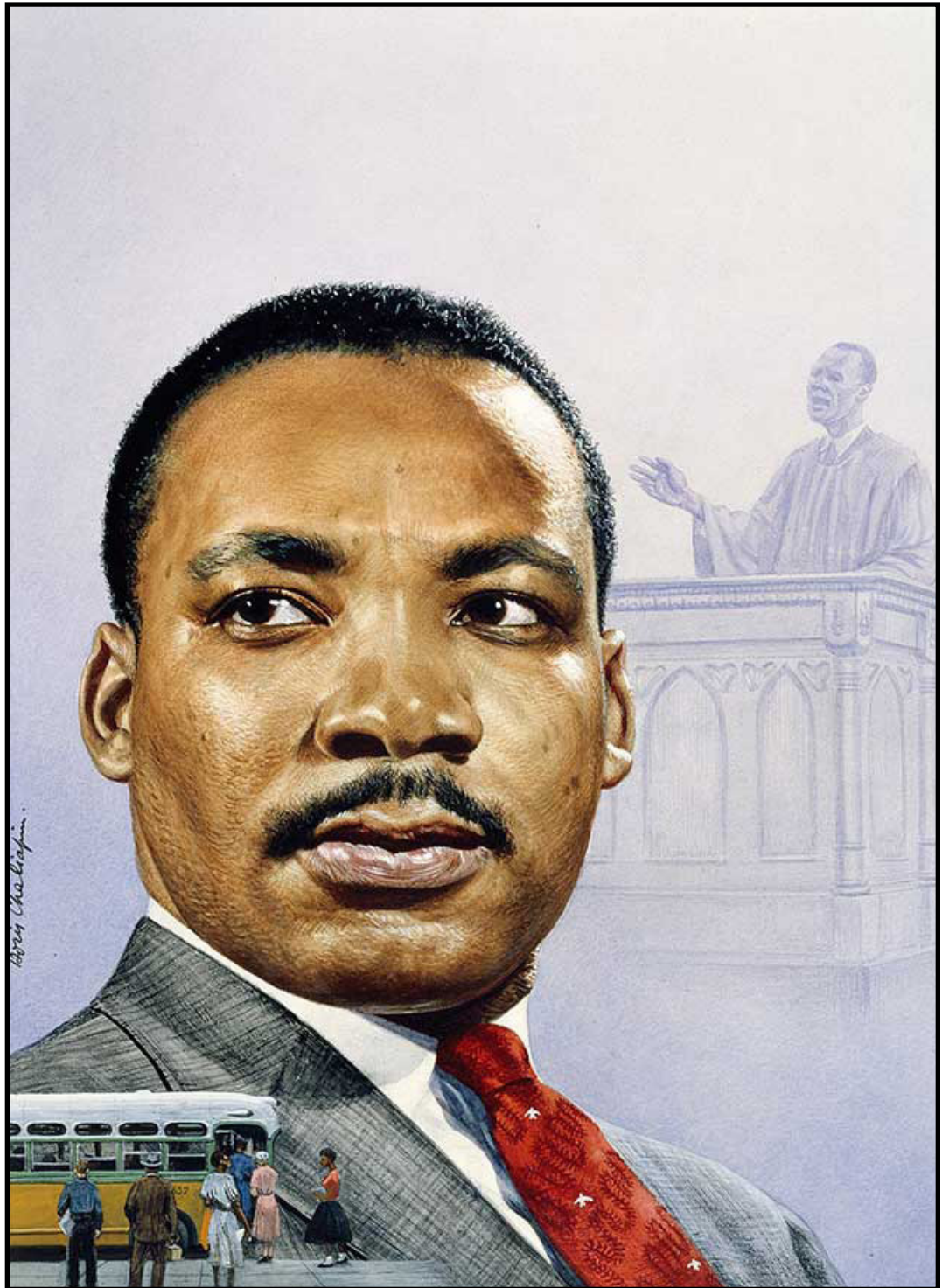
Another thing you said is, “there have been more unsolved bombing of negro homes and churches.” Our black children are being affected now. Black

men and women are getting killed by police in their own homes, getting called out of their names when they were calling for help, just to get killed, getting pulled over or having to run from the police and ending up getting hunted down like an animal and killed.

You also brought up “Are you able to accept blows without retaliating?” Yes, we are. We still do non-violent protests because I feel like if we retaliate with violence, nothing will come back positive. Two negatives don’t make a positive. Another concern I have is having two black sons [one on the way]. raising them in America, raising them up in poverty and where racism is still a thing even if not as bad. For them growing up to be black men, it is important to me that they have their father around, having their dad see them grow up, having them see their father grow as a father and a man, wanting my sons to shine their light as a bright star in the dark of the night. It is hard knowing that people can become a falling star. Our lives get messed up by going down the wrong path, hanging with the wrong people, learning the wrong

thing, knowing there are innocent black people getting locked up, our mother and fathers missing their time and missing them grow up.

You were able to make a change in the world and to make a huge impact. I love that, and I’m hoping we can change the world to be a better place. We all appreciate you, Dr. King. **(Qu’anna Caffey)**



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.”