

# Arkansas Peace Week Lesson Plans - September 17-24, 2023

## Make Peace our "Natural" State!

### Introduction

Arkansas Peace Week lesson plans adapt the teaching and witness of Martin Luther King, Jr, challenging youth to learn and live his principles of nonviolence. The goal is to create an awareness of nonviolent principles and practice as a powerful way to heal, transform and empower our lives and communities.

Each lesson includes case studies and quotations from Dr. King, followed by questions and activities designed for personal reflection and group discussion. Students are asked to decide how they can put Dr. King's teaching into practice on a variety of values and issues.

The following lessons are available. Teachers can use the whole program or choose individual lessons. Lessons can be adapted for different age students.

- Resolving Conflicts Without Violence
- Making Amends and Forgiving Others
- Serving Others in Need
- Standing with Others Who Are Treated Unfairly
- Speaking Out Against Injustice

### About Arkansas Peace Week

Arkansas Peace Week is a program of events planned in observance of the United Nation's International Day of Peace on September 21. These activities educate and promote peacemaking in our society and raise awareness of organizations working to build a lasting peace in Arkansas. The lessons learned and relationships formed during Arkansas Peace Week create a foundation for continuing a sustainable peace in our society throughout the year.

Arkansas Peace Week is planned in coordination with the nationwide Campaign Non-Violence Week of Actions.

Please visit our website [www.arkansaspeaceweek.com](http://www.arkansaspeaceweek.com) or Facebook Group [www.facebook.com/groups/ArPeaceWeek/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/ArPeaceWeek/) for the latest information. Email [arpeaceweek@gmail.com](mailto:arpeaceweek@gmail.com) or call Bob Estes at 501-666-3784 with questions.

## Nonviolent Conflict Resolution - Teacher Pages

### Activity 1 - Understanding Dr. King on Nonviolent Conflict Resolution

- Have students read the quotation for the first of the four principles of nonviolent conflict resolution; invite clarification questions before asking students to answer the questions following the quotation.
- Have students share their answers in pairs before discussing them as a whole class.
- Repeat this process for each of the other three principles.
- Notes and ideas
  - For grades 3-8, choose one of Dr. King's principles of nonviolent conflict resolution to present to your students and write this on poster board to post in front of the classroom or on a worksheet that you duplicate for each of your students.
  - Ask a number of students to explain what Dr. King means by the various phrases in the quotation and the other questions from the Worksheet.

### Activity 2 - Conflict Situation Case Studies: There IS Another Way

- Read the introductory paragraph aloud and make sure that students understand the “fight” and “flight” options, using Situation #1 as a way of clarifying the two.
- Brainstorm together what they think Dr. King's response to Situation #1 would be and why.
- Brainstorm together as many other responses as they can identify.
- Have students do Situation #2 on their own and share their answers in pairs before discussing them as a whole group.
- Repeat this process for Situation #3 and Situation #4.
- Notes and ideas
  - Then choose a conflict situation, like one of those on the “Conflict Situation Case Studies” worksheet, that your students can relate to. This might a conflict situation from your own life when you were closer in age to your students.
  - Explain the “fight” and “flight” ways of responding.
  - Then ask them how they think Dr. King would respond and why. Be sure to get a number of different ways that he might respond.
  - As a way of increasing its impact, you might have some students help you act out the situation and the various responses.

### Activity 3 - Some Conflict Situations from Your Own Life

- Have students do this Worksheet on their own, perhaps at home.
- Have them share work in pairs or triads, with each person focusing on one of the situations they wrote about.
- Depending on time, repeat this process for additional situations.
- As a whole class, have students name what they learned about themselves from doing these conflict situations.
- As a whole class, have them raise questions that surfaced as they did the Worksheet and/or in their small group discussions.

- Notes and ideas
  - To help them focus on themselves, ask your students to name conflict situations that they have been in during the past week or two; write these on the board.
  - For grades 3-8, give each of your students a copy of the “Some Conflict Situations from Your Own Life” and have each of them do just one situation. Walk around the room to check on who might need some help and/or to encourage them.
  - Encourage the teacher to have students use the Worksheet for additional situations after you leave.
  - For grades K-2, you might choose one conflict situation that your students name at the beginning of this activity and roleplay the situation and various ways it could be handled - some “Not Dr. King Ways” and at least one “Dr. King way
  - Depending on time, have one or all members of your team describe a conflict situation you were in, but don’t tell them yet how you responded. It could be a situation that you handled well or one that you didn’t. If it is one that you didn’t handle nonviolently, be sure at the end to explain what you intend to do differently the next time you’re in a situation like that.
    - Have your students identify the various ways that you could act and whether each of those ways would be a “Dr. King way” or not and why.
    - Then tell your students how you actually responded, including the various options you considered and what you thought about them, and how you felt about it afterwards.

## Nonviolent Conflict Resolution - Student Pages

*“You must not harbor anger, “ I admonished myself. “You must be willing to suffer the anger of the opponent, and yet not return anger. You must not become bitter. No matter how emotional your opponents are, you must become calm.”* Dr. King’s advice to himself in STRIDE TOWARD FREEDOM, p. 121.

Dr. King on Nonviolent Conflict Resolution

### 1. Recognize and appeal to the good in our enemies

*“There is some good in the worst of us and some evil in the best of us. When we discover this, we are less prone to hate our enemies. When we look beneath the surface, beneath the impulsive evil deed, we see within our enemy-neighbor a measure of goodness and know that the viciousness and evilness of the acts are not quite representative of all that the person is...”* STRENGTH TO LOVE, p. 43.

Questions:

Is Dr. King naïve about “some good in the worst of us”? Why or why not?

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List the people you dislike the most or who have hurt you the most. Try to identify at least two good things about each person. Was this difficult to do? Why or why not?

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### 2. The goal is to win the other person(s) over

*“Nonviolence... does not seek to defeat or humiliate the opponent, but to win his friendship and understanding.”* STRIDE TOWARD FREEDOM, p. 102

Question: Explain what this principle means and how it changes the way you deal with (i.e. your tactics) those with whom you disagree or in conflict.

Give some examples:

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### 3. Meet the other person's anger calmly

*“You must not harbor anger, “ I admonished myself. „You must be willing to suffer the anger of the opponent, and yet not return anger. You must not become bitter. No matter how emotional your opponents are, you must become calm.”* Dr. King's advice to himself in STRIDE TOWARD FREEDOM, p. 121.

Questions:

What does Dr. King mean by “suffer the anger of the opponent”? Why is this difficult to do?

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What steps can you take to “not harbor anger”?

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What can you do to prevent yourself from becoming bitter?

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How can you remind yourself to remain calm in conflict situations?

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### 4. Be open to learning from those with whom you disagree

*“Here is the true meaning of compassion and nonviolence, when they help us to see the enemy's point of view, to hear his questions, to know his assessment of ourselves. For from his view we may indeed see the basic weakness of our condition. And if we are mature, we may learn and grow and profit from the wisdom of those who are called the opposition.”* Dr. King, THE TRUMPET OF CONSCIENCE, p. 29.

Question:

What are some situations you're in where you can practice this attitude and skill?

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## Conflict Situation Case Studies- There Is Another Way

We often think that “fight” and “flight” (running away or avoiding the conflict) are our only two choices in a conflict, but often we have more options than that. In the situations below, list possible “fight” and “flight” responses (the first one is done for you). Then list ways to deal with the situation that don’t involve fighting or fleeing, starting with what you think Dr. King’s response would be. Try to come up with as many possibilities as you can. Then identify some conflict situations from your own life and do the same, concluding each situation by choosing what you consider to be the best way for you to respond and why.

Situation #1 - Someone borrows your new CD and loses it

- Fight response: Curse the person and demand payment.
- Flight response: Mumble “that’s OK.”
- What would Dr. King do:
- Other possible responses:

Situation #2 - You work at a fast-food restaurant where your boss is always criticizing you. She never has anything good to say to you, and you think she’s unfair.

- Fight response:
- Flight response:
- What would Dr. King do:
- Other possible responses:

Situation #3 - Someone in your homeroom has accused you, unjustly, of stealing from their locker.

- Fight response:
- Flight response:
- What would Dr. King do:
- Other possible responses:

Situation #4 - You are walking with your boy/girlfriend and some students start making fun of you and call the girl some ugly names.

- Fight response:
- Flight response:
- What would Dr. King do:
- Other possible responses:

## Some Conflict Situations from Your Own Life

Situation -

- Fight response:
- Flight response:
- What would Dr. King do:
- Other possible responses:
- What's the best thing for you to do (and why):

Situation -

- Fight response:
- Flight response:
- What would Dr. King do:
- Other possible responses:
- What's the best thing for you to do (and why):

Situation -

- Fight response:
- Flight response:
- What would Dr. King do:
- Other possible responses:
- What's the best thing for you to do (and why):

## Making Amends and Forgiving Others - Teacher Pages

### ACTIVITY 1 - Understanding “Dr. King on Forgiveness”

- Have students read the first of the two Dr. King quotations and invite clarification questions before asking students to answer the questions following the quotation.
- Have students share their answers in pairs before discussing them as a whole class.
  - Repeat this process for the second quotation.

### ACTIVITY 2 - “Making Amends” Worksheet

- Go over this Worksheet with students to make sure they understand what it is asking.
- Have students complete this Worksheet, perhaps outside of class.
- Have them share in pairs what the experience meant for them and what they learned from doing it.

### ACTIVITY 3 - “Letting Go of Grudges” Worksheet

- Go over this Worksheet with students to make sure they understand what it is asking.
- Have students complete this Worksheet, perhaps outside of class.
- Have them share in pairs what the experience meant for them and what they learned from doing it.



## Making Amends and Forgiving Others - Student Pages

*“Forgiveness is a catalyst creating the atmosphere necessary for a fresh start and a new beginning.”*

*“Forgiveness is not an occasional act; it is a permanent attitude.”*  
Martin Luther King, Jr., STRENGTH TO LOVE

Dr. King on Forgiveness

*“It is impossible even to begin the act of loving one’s enemies without the prior acceptance of the necessity, over and over again, of forgiving those who inflict evil and injury upon us... Forgiveness is a catalyst creating the atmosphere necessary for a fresh start and a new beginning... The evil deed is no longer a mental block impeding a new relationship...”* STRENGTH TO LOVE, pp. 42-43.

Questions:

Have you ever experienced forgiveness as the “catalyst leading to a fresh start” in your relationships with others?

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Name some situations in your own life where you could take this step.

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What’s holding you back from doing so?

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*“There is some good in the worst of us and some evil in the best of us. When we discover this, we are less prone to hate our enemies. When we look beneath the surface, beneath the impulsive evil deed, we see within our enemy-neighbor a measure of goodness and know that the viciousness and evilness of the acts are not quite representative of all that the person is... Then we love our enemies by realizing that they are not totally bad and that they are not beyond the reach of... Love.”*  
STRENGTH TO LOVE, p. 43.

Questions:

Do you agree? Why or why not?

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Focus on one person who has hurt you and apply this thought to yourself and to this person; that is, try to see the good and the evil in each of you and get beyond the single deed done to you. Does it help at all?

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## Serving Others in Need - Teacher Pages

### Activity 1 - Understanding Dr. King on Service of Others

- Have students read the excerpts from Dr. King's eulogy; invite clarification questions before discussing the eulogy as a whole class.

### Activity 2 - Your Own Eulogy

- Have students write their own eulogy or obituary in the space provided or on a separate piece of paper if they need more space.
- Have students compare their eulogies with Dr. King's and identify how central the value of service of others is in their lives.

### Activity 3 - Service Projects at Your School

- Identify with your class the various service opportunities already available for students at your school.
- Brainstorm additional possibilities.
- Invite students to check out what would be involved in working as part of any of these possibilities (time requirements, type of service, who the groups serve, specific tasks students can do, transportation, etc.) and report back to the class.

### Activity 4 - "Coming to Decisions and Action"

- Have students use this Worksheet as a way of sifting through these service possibilities and making decisions about their participation.

## Serving Others in Need - Student Pages

*“Everyone can be great, because everyone can serve.”*

Dr. King’s Eulogy and Yours

*“A Drum Major for Justice”*

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

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

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

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

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

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

*And that is all I want to say. If I can help somebody as I pass along; if I can cheer somebody with a song; if I can show somebody he’s traveling wrong; then my living will not be in vain...”*

From “Then My Living Will Not Be in Vain,” Ebenezer Baptist Church, February 1968; quoted in Kathleen McGinnis, DREAMING GOD’S DREAM, p. 39.

Questions:

What does Dr. King mean by “then my living will not be in vain”?

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Make a list of what you will need to do in life so that you will be able to look back and say that “my living will not be in vain”? Put these thoughts together and write what you definitely want the preacher or someone else to be able to say about you at your funeral. Use additional paper as needed.

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## Coming to a Decision and Action on Service

After reading and reflecting on the quotations, video clips, and questions above, what did you learn about yourself?

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Referring back to questions #1 and #2, what would be a good practice to make more a part of your life so that you become a more service-oriented person?

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Referring back to question #3, what kind of service would make good use of the talents and life experiences you have had?

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Referring back to question #4, what person or group of people who are especially in need might you be able to develop a longer-term, mutual relationship with where you could be helpful and where you could learn from the people you would be serving?

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What is it inside yourself or in your current situation makes you hesitate or resist taking these steps? And how could you overcome these obstacles?

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So what is your plan for putting these decisions into action?

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How will you monitor your progress as you implement these decisions?

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## Standing with Others Who Are Treated Unfairly - Teacher Pages

### Activity 1 - Facing Our Fears

- Have students read the passage from Dr. King and discuss the first two questions as a whole group.
- Have students answer the next question (“How do you handle yours [fears]?”) on their own and perhaps share them in pairs before some kind of whole group discussion.

### Activity 2 - Identify Situations Calling for Courage

- Post the list of “Some Situations Calling for Courage” Worksheet on newsprint or the blackboard.
- Ask students to identify several other conflict situations they have experienced in the four categories on the bottom half of the Worksheet that might be even more appropriate for this class and post these as well.

### Activity 3 - Choose and Roleplay One Situation

- With the class, choose one situation to roleplay first.
- Invite one group of students to roleplay the situation.
- Have the participants reflect on their feelings, thoughts and actions in the situation.
- Have the class share some of their observations.
- Then invite a second group of students to roleplay the same situation and demonstrate a different way of handling it; perhaps a third group if the situation invites additional ways of handling it.
- Have the class evaluate the various alternatives in the situation and decide on the best way(s) and why.

### Activity 4 - Do Additional Replays

- Depending on the time available, decide with the class on one or more of the situations to roleplay, using the same process as in STEP 3.
- Consider roleplaying a school bus situation and draw some comparisons with Rosa Parks’ courageous response to her own bus situation. Note: A dramatization of the Rosa Parks action is available from the Institute for Peace and Justice.

### Activity 5 - Further Reflection

- Be sure to add your own experience with these questions:
- Why is it hard to be courageous in these situations, especially if others are watching?
- What can we do to foster greater courage in ourselves and others who might be witnessing situations like these?
- Have students complete the Worksheet on “Thinking Through Courage: Decisions and Action” as a way of pulling this unit together and reflecting further on courage in their own lives and to make some initial decisions.

## Standing with Others Who Are Treated Unfairly - Student Pages

*“Courage faces fear and thereby masters it. Cowardice represses fear and is thereby mastered by it.”* Dr. King, THE STRENGTH TO LOVE, p. 111.

### Dr. King’s fears

Dr. King acknowledging his own fears at age 26, just weeks after agreeing to be the leader of the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Sitting at his kitchen table in January 1956, he picked up the phone and heard -- *“Listen, N\*\*\*\*, we’ve taken all we want from you. Before next week you’ll be sorry you ever came to Montgomery. I hung up, but I could not sleep... I got out of bed and began to walk the floor. I tried to think of a way to move out of the picture without appearing to be a coward. In this state of exhaustion, when my courage had almost gone, I determined to take my problem to God. My head in my hands, I bowed over the kitchen table and prayed aloud: “I am here taking a stand for what I believe is right. But now I am afraid. The people are looking to me for leadership. If I stand before them without strength and courage, they too will falter. I am at the end of my powers. I have nothing left... I can’t face it alone.”*

Questions:

Does this surprise you about Dr. King? He was 26 years old at this point. He turned to prayer in the face of his fears? How do you handle yours?

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What might have happened if he had given in to his fears?

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## Some Situations or Issues Calling for Courage

“What can you or should you do when...

- You see a student being disrespectful to a staff member
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- You see someone in authority being rude or demeaning to a student
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- You know someone was cheating on a test
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- You see older students are bullying younger students
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- You know someone is doing something illegal
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- You know someone is hurting him/herself (e.g., drugs, alcohol)
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- You know someone is being pressured sexually
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In other situations of your life

What situations occur on a school bus that call for courage?

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What other situations occur at school that call for courage?

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What other situations occur at home that call for courage?

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What other situations occur in your neighborhood that call for courage?

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## Thinking Through Courage; Decisions and Action

1. What have you learned about courage from your study of Dr. King so far?

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2. Who are some of the most courageous people you have known in your life -- perhaps even in your own family or circle of friends? What have they shown you about the meaning of courage?

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3. In what situations of violence or injustice in the past have you shown courage (e.g., standing up for someone who was being picked on; challenging someone who was using racist or hateful language or telling racist or sexist jokes; speaking out for doing the right thing)?

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4. In what situations of violence or injustice in the past could you have shown courage, but you didn't?

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5. Why is it hard sometimes to challenge violence or injustice?

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6. Name some situations right now in your life where you could challenge a person or practice that is hurting themselves or others?

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7. Choose one of these situations and write out a plan here for doing something about it.

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## Speaking Out Against Injustice - Teacher Pages

### ACTIVITY #1 - Dr. King on the Need to Speak Out Courageously

- Use the quotation from “The Letter from a Birmingham City Jail” (on the worksheet entitled “It Depends, in Part, on You”) and have your students try to explain what Dr. King meant.
- Have students read the top quotation and discuss the first question as a whole class.
- Have students answer the second question individually in writing, perhaps sharing it in pairs before inviting some sharing with the whole class.
- Have students write out their decision on the final question about how each will speak out and the first steps in their plan.
- For younger students, you will need to simplify the language and focus on just one key phrase.

### ACTIVITY #2 - Your Own Willingness to Speak Out

- Share with your students how each of you has decided to speak out against some form of injustice or violence and why, plus some of your fears or other concerns in doing so.

### ACTIVITY #3 - Challenging Your Students to Speak Out

- Brainstorm with your students how students their age have spoken out against forms of injustice or violence and/or how they have stood up for others who have been treated unfairly.
- Brainstorm ways that your students can themselves speak out or stand up for others and write these on the board or a piece of newsprint.

### ACTIVITY #4 - Making and Sharing Decisions

- Note: Lack of time may make it necessary for the classroom teacher to have students make their decisions after you leave.
- Make copies of the card in the student pages and give one to each of your students, asking them to write their decision about how they will speak out or stand up for someone else and thus help make Dr. King’s dream come true. OR
- If time permits and the classroom teachers agrees that this is a good idea, invite those students who are willing to share their decision with the whole class to come forward and share their decision.
- If students will need more time and discussion before making their decisions, ask the classroom teacher to complete this activity after you leave.

## PARKWAY SCHOOL CASE STUDY (Optional)

### STEP 1 - Present the Case Study

- Have students read the editorials from the St. Louis Post-Dispatch about the incident of racist name-calling on the school bus and invite clarification questions.
- Have students identify ways that students on the bus could handle situations like this.
- OPTION: Roleplay the situation several times with several different students demonstrating different ways of responding to the racist name-calling - Have them identify similar situations from their own experience.

### STEP 3 - How Should the Parents, Principal and School Board Respond

- Have students discuss how the girl's parents responded and how the principal and superintendent responded and whether they agree with the first editorial that more should have been done.
- Have them consider the additional actions taken by the school board and whether these are appropriate to the situation.

### STEP 4 - "Courageous Conversations"

- The second editorial calls for "courageous conversations." Have students discuss whether these are needed at their own school, at home with their parents, and throughout their school district. And how they could be part of one of these "courageous conversations."

## Speaking Out Against Injustice - Student Pages

*“Noncooperation with evil is as much a duty as is cooperation with good”* Dr. King  
*“If we do not act, we shall surely be dragged down the long, dark, and shameful corridors of time reserved for those who possess power without compassion, might without morality, and strength without sight”* Dr. King  
*“Hate begets hate; violence begets violence; toughness begets a greater toughness. We must meet the forces of hate with the power of love; we must meet physical force with soul force.”* Dr. King, STRIDE TOWARD FREEDOM, p. 87.

The Need to Speak Out - It Depends, in Part, on You!

*“We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the vitriolic words and actions of the bad people, but for the appalling silence of the good people. We must come to see that human progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability. It comes through the tireless efforts and persistent work of people willing to be co-workers with God, and without this hard work time itself becomes an ally of the forces of social stagnation.”* Dr. King, “Letter from a Birmingham City Jail.”

Questions:

1. What does Dr. King mean by “human progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability”?

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2. Have you been part of “the appalling silence of the good people” in the face of violence and injustice? How so?

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3. What issue or specific kind of violence or injustice do you choose to speak out against?

How do you plan to start or take the next step in speaking out?

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4. What phrase, sentence or paragraph from Dr. King's speeches and writings touches your heart and calls you to action?

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5. What are some ways you can share this concern with others (telling a friend, finding someone to work with you on it, wearing a Dr. King button, writing a letter to your school paper or local newspaper, etc.)

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| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>How I Will Help Dr. King's Dream Come True</b></p> <p>“And so today I still have a dream. People will rise up and come to see that they are made to live together as brothers and sisters.” - Dr. King</p> <p>I will help Dr. King's dream come true by:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <p>Name: _____</p> |
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## An Example of Racism in the Parkway Schools

### PARKWAY SCHOOLS

# The power of one

**T**HE ADVERTISING COUNCIL has unveiled a powerful campaign to get people to think seriously about prejudice. The campaign, released to coincide with the opening of the National Underground Railroad Museum in Cincinnati, shows how the power of one voice can make a difference.

It's the voice of a black girl who intervenes after her bigoted black classmates seated in a school lunchroom initially refuse to make a place for a white girl who wants to join them. The campaign asks viewers "What would you do . . ." as it presents scenarios in which a single person speaks up and makes a difference.

The power of one voice was absent recently when a 10-year-old white boy used racial slurs when speaking to an 8-year-old black girl on a school bus in the Parkway School District. Not only was the voice absent on the bus, it didn't speak loudly in the principal's office or in the superintendent's suite either.

The principal could have suspended the bully for 10 days. She decided it was enough to simply tell the kid to stay off the bus for a week, sit behind the driver thereafter, apologize to the girl and undergo counseling.

Last week, Superintendent Paul Delanty announced he was setting up a committee to review the district's disciplinary policies. That is a step in the right direction, but does not go far enough.

The district should look upon this incident as a teachable moment about the cancer of racism rather than addressing preju-

dice in such a cotton candy fashion that children miss the point about its poisonous power. That poison landed on Chesterfield lawns last week with the distribution of racist and anti-Semitic fliers distributed by a group called the National Alliance.

Kids need to know that epithets such as "nigger" are unacceptable, and they need to know the stories of American history and racism that tell them why. What child, moved by the story of Rosa Parks, would act the way the 10-year-old acted?

Adults in the district need to add their voices. That means parents need to talk to each other and to their children. They must also pay attention to whether their children are getting racist messages from movies and TV.

One question that the School Board should ask itself is whether it sent the right message about prejudice earlier this year when it watered down its bullying policy by removing specific categories of protected individuals.

Many Parkway parents undoubtedly think the bus incident has been blown out of proportion. But confronting the issue is better than covering it over.

Imagine how different the outcome of the bus incident might have been had some kid stood up and told the boy to put his hate speech back in the gutter. Parkway and other districts should use this incident to inspire students to speak out against prejudice just as many people of all backgrounds did during the era of the Underground Railroad.

If you were on this bus, how would you probably have acted and why? How could you act more courageously in the situation?

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If you were the principal, would you have handled the situation any differently? Why or why not?

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If you were the girl's parents, would you have done any differently than the Johnson's did? Why or why not?

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Do you think the situation was blown out of proportion? Why or why not?

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# PARKWAY SCHOOLS

## Lessons learned

**P**ARKWAY SCHOOL OFFICIALS have mined positive developments from last month's incident in which an 8-year-old girl was the target of racial slurs from a 10-year-old boy on a school bus. The boy was suspended from the bus for a week, ordered to sit behind the driver thereafter, told to write an apology to the girl and undergo counseling.

But the girl's parents, Demetrious and Pat Johnson, objected that the punishment was too light and refused to let the matter rest. After meeting with the Johnsons, school officials set up a committee to review its disciplinary policies; Mr. Johnson is a member of that committee. Parkway also will begin making public the race and gender of students who are disciplined, and will require staff members to show zero tolerance for racial harassment, bullying and intimidation.

All this is to the good. So is the district's willingness to reconsider its own practices and attitudes, rather than respond defensively, or act as if racial problems don't ex-

ist. Parkway made public its survey of high school students who said sexist, racist and homophobic remarks were common. So were nasty comments about disabilities and looks. The students also reported that school staff members often didn't intervene and were sometimes guilty themselves of making demeaning remarks.

After the Johnsons complained about the district's handling of the bus incident, some of their neighbors in Chesterfield found racist fliers on their doorsteps. Parkway countered with an open letter addressing "a continued culture of racism and discrimination that pervades our communities."

One of the most important points in that letter is a plea for "courageous conversations" locally and nationally "to admit that intolerance is a part of the iceberg that lies dangerously below the surface."

Because of the bus incident — and the Johnsons' determination — Parkway has begun its own courageous conversation. Would that other school districts and communities follow Parkway's brave lead.

The editorial is entitled "Lessons Learned." What lessons do you think were learned? What did you learn from considering this case study?

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The first editorial is entitled "The power of one." What one thing could you do to challenge racism and improve race relations in your school and/or community?

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