

# How Martin Climbed the Mountain!

## A Performance Guide

*This interactive story/ song performance is focused on three basic goals:*

- 1- Conveying important information about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and his mission in civil rights history.*
- 2- Identifying other historical persons and cultural connections for curriculum study regarding the African American quest for freedom and justice in America from 1619 to 1963.*
- 3- Providing context for students to apply the inspiration of Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech and his work to their study of civil rights past and present.*

### *~ BACKGROUND ~*

All too often, we hear the words "I Have a Dream!" in the context of a past African American history. It rings as a finished product that happened long ago. That phrase is too often presented as if Dr. Martin Luther King plucked it out of thin air without the benefit of the 200 plus years of struggle that he learned about as he grew. His having a dream is part of a greater story and a long effort by many others who preceded him and from whose lives he gained

In this 50 minute interactive journey, Reggie Harris highlights and connects students to some of the people and events that young Martin used to build his dream that came into focus on that afternoon in 1963 as 250,000 people came together to celebrate the cause of freedom in Washington DC.

Along the way, Reggie teaches the songs and gets the audience involved in discovering that having a dream is only the first step.... that it takes work, study and commitment to make a dream come true.



### *~ About the Performer ~*

Reggie Harris is a songwriter, storyteller and lecturer who has traveled the world for over 40 years performing for audiences of all ages. He has appeared at thousands of schools, concert halls and universities in the U.S., Canada and Europe, using music and story to bring history alive.

One of the foremost presenters of the songs of the Underground Railroad and of the Modern Civil Rights Movement. Reggie is a teaching artist in the John F. Kennedy Center's CETA program and a Woodrow Wilson Scholar and as the Director of Music Education for the UU Living Legacy Project; Reggie leads civil rights pilgrimages throughout the Southern US. Reggie is a 2018 recipient of the Children's Music Network's "Magic Penny Award" in recognition for a lifetime of excellence in performance and education.



### *~ Key Aspects of the Performance ~*

#### **The Use of Song and Story To Build Community**

As practiced in the African American cultural tradition, Reggie will use songs and stories to create an atmosphere for our learning community. By alternating his flow between monologue, audience participation and active listening, the lesson develops as an interactive sharing. Students will be encouraged to listen, respond and follow simple directions as they would in a community setting. Singing together creates a bond that allows information to flow back and forth as the conversation unfolds. Each audience and situation is unique and Reggie is a master at finding the right tempo and the level of engagement both in ages and context.

\*Note Reggie's' role in the show as the **song-leader** or a "**Griot**" who would be a resource in the African village life. The use of **Call and Response** as a song form makes the song easier to learn and sing.

**Reggie will lead this song in Performance.**  
(He does the “call”... audience does the “response”)

**Call: I'm on my way      Response: I'm on my way**

**Call: To freedom land      Response: To freedom land**

**Call: I'm on my way      Response: I'm on my way**

**Call: To freedom land      Response: To freedom land**

**Call: I'm on my way      Response: I'm on my way**

**ALL: I'm on my way, Oh yes, I'm on my way!**

**Other verses: I'm on my way, I won't turn back!**  
**I asked my mother...father....sister...brother....(etc)**  
**If you won't go don't stop me now!**

***~ How This Song Inspired Dr. King ~***

**Young Martin** experienced the power of song growing up in his community and church in **Atlanta, GA** and he was aware that “**spirituals**” (rural songs in the 1800s based on biblical sources) were used as songs of faith and practical songs of freedom. In African villages, **singing** was used to **pass important information, ease work and play, keep the history and build relationships**. During and after slavery they continued in that use while also pointing people toward building a dream of freedom. Songs like “**I'm On My Way!**” “**Go Down Moses**”, “**Wade in the Water**” and “**Free At Last**” As he grew, those songs filled Martin's head and heart with hope.

The **Modern Civil Rights Movement** was fueled by the use of song. It is embedded in the culture of the African American community from the time of slavery. As the movement grew, people adapted existing songs and created new ones that were sung at rallies, **community mass meetings**, and events like the **March on Washington** in **1963**.

In **1961**, Martin Luther King, Jr. named the singer Odetta "The Queen of American folk music." Not too many Americans can remember Odetta's performance at the 1963 civil rights movement's **March on Washington** where she sang “*I'm On My Way*” (to freedom land.) **Here is a short video clip that can be used to introduce this event to students:**  
<https://youtu.be/0wDZVfQVvGo>



~ **HOLD FAST TO DREAMS-** (a poem by Langston Hughes) ~

Hold fast to dreams  
For if dreams die, life is a broken-winged bird that cannot fly.  
Hold fast to dreams  
For when dreams go, life is a barren field frozen with snow.

(James Mercer Langston Hughes was an American poet, social activist, novelist, playwright, and columnist. He was a large part of the Harlem Renaissance.)

**Performance Follow Up:**

You may wish to discuss this poem with your students. What does the poem mean?

Ask them share their dreams about what they hope to do in life.

Do they know the difference between “**dreams**” and “**goals**?”

Is Dr. King’s dream alive today or did it die with him?

How can we use his dream to help our dreams come true?

~ **OTHER POEMS TO EXPLORE** ~

*Essay on Children’s Poetry by Jacqueline Woodson -*

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/articles/70271/lift-every-voice>

*Harlem by Langston Hughes -*

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46548/harlem>

*Still I Rise by Maya Angelou - <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46446/still-i-rise>*

~ **The Use of Stories Inspire Action** ~

The message of Reggie’s performance is that the lives and accomplishments of others provides a great foundation for inspiring our dreams and goals. Martin Luther King Jr. was the son of The Reverend and Mrs. Martin Luther King, Sr. He graduated from Booker T. Washington High School and earned a Bachelor of Arts from Morehouse College at age 15. Upon graduation he earned a Bachelor of Divinity from Crozer Theological Seminary and earned a **doctorate** in systematic theology from Boston University in 1955.

Reggie will touch on how the lives of some notable African American historical figures helped pave the way for the civil rights accomplishments and in shaping Martin Luther King’s dream

**Here are some notable African American heroes and sheroes:**

*Crispus Attucks – an escaped slave, the first person killed in the Boston Massacre.*

*Benjamin Banneker – an educated free citizen who was an astronomer, inventor and surveyor.*

*Phyllis Wheatley – slave who learned to read/write and gained fame as the first Black female poet*

*Richard Allen - founder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church who bought his own freedom. He bought his own freedom for \$1500*

*Harriet Tubman - the most famous Underground Railroad conductor and civil war hero who led over 100 people to freedom and inspired millions more.*

*Frederick Douglass - an escaped MD slave who became a great orator, abolitionist and writer*

*George Washington Carver - an agricultural scientist, professor and inventor who improved farming methods throughout the country*

*Jackie Robinson - the first African American to integrate Major League Baseball in 1947.*

*Satchel Paige - a ground- breaking baseball player who was the first African American pitcher in the World Series*

### **~ THE MARCH ON WASHINGTON in 1963 ~**

Following a day of songs and speeches, Dr King addressed the crowd of 200,000 people in Washington, DC and gave his “**I Have a Dream.**” message that spoke to the need for unity in justice and for giving civil rights to all people. **Here is a short segment of that speech.**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YpqeTK19tUI>

### **~ Closing song: Free At Last ~**

#### **Background:**

Once over the border in Canada or in a free state, people would often sing, “Free at Last” in celebration. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. used a quote from the song to close his famous “I Have a Dream” speech. He said, “Free at last, free at last, thank God Almighty, I’m free at last!”

#### **Questions for Discussion:**

1. Discuss the term “freedom” with students. What freedoms did slaves not have? (choice in where they lived, payment for their labor, stable family relationships, schooling, enough food, etc...)
2. What would it be like to gain these freedoms after not having them? Would any aspects of becoming “free” be scary? Why are personal choices important?
3. Discuss Dr. King and his importance to American history with your students.
4. Sing the song “Free At Last” together with your class and teach them the words and music to this song of joy. (see words and music below)

## ~ Writing The Rhythm of History ~

### Goals:

*To help students to remember famous personalities in African-American History.*

*To teach students the value of song in remembering information.*

*To work on creative writing skills related to structure, rhythm and rhyme.*

*Rap songs, hip hop and spoken word pieces all carry narrative value that can compile and spread information in an easy to remember form. This chorus was written by Reggie to help a group of students remember the names and some details about people they studied in a residency.*

*One to one in the land of the free  
We're talking about our history  
One to one for liberty  
We're talking about our history!!*

*The result was a song that was eventually performed and recorded as a CD.*

### *The Black History Wrap Up Rap*

<https://soundcloud.com/kimandreggiesing/the-black-history-rap-up>

1. Using the **Black History Rap**, have students discover how to perform a rap using research about historical figures.
2. Have your students research the people in the song (lyrics are below) and discover their contributions to the American history narrative.
3. Select a topic or person
  - Brainstorm words/ideas that relate to the subject/people/event.
  - Using a simple drum beat, compose a simple verse detailing a person or event in history.
  - Have students write on a rap or musical poem as an entire classroom or in small groups.
  - Help student to get the words into rhymic sections so that it 'scans' or matches the tempo and phrasing.
  - It's useful to compose a simple chorus that serves as the focus of your theme
  - Repeat the lines to check the rhythms as students begin to learn the rap
  - Have students perform their work and discuss the final versions with the class to see what new details have been learned in the process.
  -

# In the Classroom...

*Black History Rap ©1992 by Reggie Harris, ASCAP*

*One to one in the land of the free  
We're talking about our history  
One to on for liberty  
We're talking about our history*

## **1. In 1619 on the Eastern Shore**

*The first African landed, there would soon be more  
Many came as slaves or indentured ones  
With dreams of freedom for their daughters and sons*

## **2. In Boston, this got a little rough**

*The British came and said, "Show us your stuff!"  
So Crispus Attucks and several more  
Put their lives on the line and started a war*

*Revolutionary War - you know the names  
Washington, Adams, they all got the fame  
But 5,000 blacks fought too, you see, and they're a part of our history*

## **CHORUS**

*There was Richard Allen, a preacher man  
He bought his own freedom, a man with a plan  
Benjamin Banniker was a scientist,  
A mathematician who's high on our list*

*Phyllis Wheatley, she was good with words  
Her poetry dazzled the world!!!  
While Jean Du Sable was on the go  
He settled the place we call Chicago*

*Update! Update! The Civil War, people were  
dying - this time...  
for an end for to slavery, for equal rights  
Sojourner Truth would help with that fight*

*Now Frederick Douglas was an educator, advisor  
to Lincoln, a liberator  
Like Harriet Tubman, she set people free  
They call her Moses in history*

## **CHORUS**



*Sometimes the names just pass you by.*

*How many can you identify?*

*Let's take a trip for young and old*

*Down the lane of a history honor roll*

**3. Phillip Randolph, Rolland Hayes,  
Langston Hughes and Willie Mayes**  
*Barbara Jordan, Nat King Cole, Ellen Craft  
and Lawrence Joel*

**4. Bessie Coleman, Louis Wright, Garrett  
Morgan, Gladys Knight**  
**Booker T. Washington, William Still, Louis  
Armstrong, and Florence Mills**  
*Matthew A Henson, Dr. Charles Drew, Jesse  
Owens, Maya Angelou*

**5. You might not know them so easily**  
*But they're all a part of our history*

**Chorus:**

*One to one in the land of the free*

*We're talking about our history*

*One to on for liberty*

*We're talking about our history*

# In the Classroom...

## Free At Last

Free at last, free at last, I thank God I'm free at last; Free at last,

Free at last,.... I thank God I'm free at last. O free at last.

1. 2. FINE

1. 'Way down yonder in the grave-yard walk, I thank God I'm  
 2. On a my knees when the light pass'd by, I thank God I'm  
 3. Some of these morn-ings, bright and fair, I thank God I'm

free at last,.... Me and my Je. sus goin' to  
 free at last,.... Tho't... my soul... would...  
 free at last, Goin' meet... King Je.... sus.....

meet and talk,.... I thank God I'm free at last, O

D.C.

# In the Classroom...

*Here is a list of other important African American History Makers who inspired Dr King:*

*Frederick McKinley Jones (1892-1961): Developed first practical refrigeration system for long-term travel and unit to keep blood serum fresh.*

*Lewis Howard Latimer (1841-1928): Worked with Alexander Graham Bell on drawing up the blueprints for the telephone and with Thomas Edison on perfecting the light bulb*

*Mary Edmonia Lewis (1846-1890): Sculptor/ graduate of Oberlin College*

*Elijah J. McCoy (1843-1929): Mechanical engineer and inventor*

*Garret A. Morgan (1875-1963): Inventor of automated traffic signal and perfected a gas mask, which saved many people from death in World War 1*

*Bill Pickett (1870-1932): Great black rodeo cowboy now in the Cowboy Hall of Fame*

*Mary Ellen Pleasant (1814-1904): Financial broker of John Brown and mother of the civil rights movement in California*

*Florence Beatrice Smith Prince (1888-1933): Award-winning composer of symphonies*

*Paul Robeson (1898-1976): Actor, singer, lawyer and international activist*

*Mary Church Terrell (1862-1954): Civil rights activist*

*Sojourner Truth (1797-1883): Escaped slave, orator, abolitionist and worker for women's rights.*

**Madam C. J. Walker (1867-1919): Millionaire and inventor who invented a line of African-American hair care products in 1905.**

*Maggie Lena Walker (1867-1934): Millionaire and bank president*

*Fats Waller (1904-1943): Fabulous pianist, entertainer and composer*

**Mary Edmonia Lewis- (1844 1908) American sculptor who was the first woman of African-American and Native American heritage to achieve international fame as a sculptor in fine arts.**

**W.E. B. DuBois (1868- 1963) an American sociologist, historian, civil rights activist, author and writer.**

# In the Classroom ...

## Lesson Activity: Civil Right Tree of Rights

### Goals:

- To define and discuss the notion of rights, responsibilities and accountability
- To become familiar with the Bill of Rights and other Amendments to the Constitution that influenced the Civil Rights Movement

**Background:** From the Declaration of Independence to the Constitution, to the Bill of Rights to the Voting Rights Act to today, the idea of rights continues to be debated, challenged, and redefined. The idea of rights and the promise of American documents of law are part of the backbone in the Civil Rights Movement, from the Underground Railroad to today.

**13th Amendment - Abolish Slavery in 1865**

**14th Amendment - Granted citizenship to all born or naturalized in the United States 1868**

**15th Amendment - Granted voting rights for all men in 1870**

**19th Amendment - Women's voting rights 1920**

### Lesson Activity:

1. Create a bulletin board of a Tree of Life. It should be a very large tree with individual leaves. On each leaf, have students write an individual right that they would consider part of the Bill of Rights.
2. Suggested Rights: Life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness, food, clothing, shelter, a home, a job, privacy, the right to vote, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom to gather peacefully, freedom of religion, the right to a lawyer, trial by jury, the right to move from place to place, the right to get married or to stay single, and the right not to testify in case of self-incrimination.

### Questions for Discussion:

1. What does it mean to have the right to something?
- 2.

**Right: (Adj.) In accordance with justice and law. Correct, Sound or normal.**

**(Noun) Legal, fitting or proper. That which is due to anyone by law or nature**

3. What is a responsibility? How do rights and responsibilities complement each other? Are they ever in conflict?
4. What rights do you need or want?

5. Why do people try to take away rights from other people? Is this situation ever fair, legal, or proper? Take an opinion and poll the class.
6. Learn about the Bill of Rights. Why is the document important? Do people need to know what their rights are? Does the Bill of Rights give any special protection to minorities or women? Does the Bill of Rights apply to children or foreigners? What rights do adults have that children do not have?
7. Compose a new Bill of Rights for children, for the planet, and/or for students

## In the Classroom ...

### Activity: Current Events

#### Goal:

- To promote the idea that the struggle for civil rights is a present day, on-going event.

#### Activities:

1. Using a student newspaper, local/national paper, magazine, or other news source, have students find stories relating to the present day struggle for civil rights.

- Voting rights
- Peace issues
- Ethnic fighting
- Ecology
- Women's issues
- Issues of the differently-abled
- Human Trafficking



2. Students may work in small groups of 2-3 people.
3. A person from each group may relate the story to the entire class.
4. Take an opinion poll for 1 or 2 issues. How do students feel about the issue? For/Against/Not Sure (more research needed)
5. Have a spokesperson for each side and attempt to relate their opinion and the reasons for their feelings.
6. Take another opinion poll.
7. Have students discuss present-day strategies and new ideas for working for freedom.

**Hint:** This discussion may include issues on the use of force, or non-violent civil disobedience.

### **Questions for Discussion:**

1. What are the issues that continue to cause people to need to work for freedom?
2. Do the students confront issues of freedom that make their daily lives difficult?
3. Learn more about Rights groups and what they attempt to do in America or in the world. i.e., The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)
4. Learn more about issues in South Africa, China and discuss them as a class.

### **Useful References and Links ‘**

**The History Channel- MLK.Jr.**

<https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/martin-luther-king-jr>

**Lesson Plans & Teacher Guides**

<https://www.nps.gov/malu/learn/education/lessonplansandteacherguides.htm>

***Songs and the Civil Rights Movement***

<https://www.nps.gov/malu/learn/education/lessonplansandteacherguides.htm>

**Let the Children March by Monica Clark-Robinson**

<https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/books/let-the-children-march-by-monica-clark-robinson/>

**National Civil Rights Museum | At the Lorraine Motel**

<https://www.civilrightsmuseum.org>

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