

The World House Project Recommended Readings¹

[Dr. Clayborne Carson's Books](#)

[Revolutionary Nonviolence, Organizing for Freedom](#) by James M. Lawson Jr. (2022). This short book is a crucial entry to the long history of nonviolent philosophy through teachings of Rev. James M. Lawson, one of the great practitioners of deliberate and sustained nonviolence.

[Martin Luther King: A Religious Life](#) by Paul Harvey (2021). A fresh look at how King's faith informed his life, his leadership, and his moral stance against injustice.

[Brothers in the Beloved Community: The Friendship of Thich Nhat Hanh and Martin Luther King, Jr.](#) by Marc Handley Andrus (2021). Tells the warm-hearted story of the friendship and mutual influence between the Buddhist monk and the Baptist preacher.

[Nine Days: the Race to Save Martin Luther King, Jr. 's Life and Win the 1960 Election](#) by Stephen and Paul Kendrick (2021). Unique examination of King's October 1960 arrest in Georgia, and how it altered one of the closest elections in American history.

[Blessed are the Peacemakers: Martin Luther King, Jr., Eight White Religious Leaders, and the "Letter from Birmingham Jail"](#) by S. Jonathan Bass (2021). Odd comparison of the letter's composition with the eight clergymen it was addressed to. The author's stance that the letter hurt the careers of these "racial progressive" religious leaders is unconvincing.

[The Sword and the Shield: The Revolutionary Lives of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr.](#) by Peniel E. Joseph (2020). Compelling dual biography highlighting what both men shared in common.

¹ This list was created in collaboration with Mike Selby, the author of [Freedom Libraries](#) [The Untold Story of Libraries for African Americans in the South](#).

[*Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Poor People's Campaign of 1968*](#) by Robert Hamilton (2020). Good starting point for new readers interested in King's final campaign against poverty.

[*The Drum Major Instinct: Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Theory of Political Service*](#) by Justin Rose (2019). Scholarly examination of King's politics as a unified theory. Complex and reaching in places.

[*Reclaiming the Great World House: The Global Vision of Martin Luther King, Jr.*](#) edited by Vicki L. Crawford and Lewis V. Baldwin (2019). Strong collection of essays illustrating how King's legacy affects contemporary protests.

[*The Revolution of Values: The Origins of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Moral and Political Philosophy*](#) by Ramin Jahanbegloo (2019). Gandhi scholar Jahanbegloo turns his attention to King's theories of justice, compassion, and non-violence.

[*The Seminarian: Martin Luther King, Jr. Comes of Age*](#) by Patrick Parr (2018). Well researched account of King's three years spent at Crozer Theological Seminary.

[*Kennedy and King: the President, the Pastor, and the Battle over Civil Rights*](#) by Steven Levingson (2018) Captures the roller coaster history of King's passion overcoming Kennedy's hesitation.

[*The Heavens Might Crack: The Death and Legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr.*](#) by Jason Sokol (2018). Artfully captures King's standing amongst disparate groups at the time of his death and after.

[*Critical Insights: Martin Luther King, Jr.*](#) edited by Robert C. Evans (2018). Scholarly anthology on King's use of language in both his spoken and written works. May be difficult for those not trained in rhetorical analysis.

[*To Shape a New World: Essays on the Political Philosophy of Martin Luther King, Jr.*](#) edited by Tommie Shelby and Brandon M. Terry (2018). Thoughtful collection of wide-ranging essays establishing King as one the strongest political philosophers of the 20th century.

[*Freedom Church of the Poor: Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Poor People's Campaign*](#) by Colleen Wessel-McCoy (2018). Accessible look at what the campaign meant for human rights and why it was deemed so dangerous.

[*King and the Other America: The Poor People's Campaign and the Quest for Economic Justice*](#) by Sylvie Laurent (2018). Social science research is used to reassess the Poor People's Campaign—finding much of it a success, as well as a model to be used today to address the crushing poverty still with us.

[*To the Promised Land: Martin Luther King and the Fight for Economic Justice*](#) by Michael K. Honey (2018). Captivating look at how King turned the small plight of striking garbage workers into a global movement for human freedom.

[*Redemption: Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Last 31 Hours*](#) by Joseph Rosenbloom (2018). Dramatic telling of what all the major players in Memphis were doing during the final hours of King's life.

[*The Power of Unearned Suffering: The Roots and Implications of Martin Luther King Jr.'s Theodicy*](#) by Mika Edmondson (2018). Theological look at King's "unearned suffering is redemptive." Those without a background in theology may find it difficult going.

[*Breaking White Supremacy: Martin Luther King Jr., and the Social Gospel*](#) by Gary Dorrien (2018). Fascinating and rich work charting the intellectual history of King's social gospel predecessors, King himself, and those he inspired.

[*My Life, My Love, My Legacy*](#), by Coretta Scott King as told to the Reverend Dr. Barbara Reynolds (2017) The life story of Coretta Scott King as told fully for the first time, toward the end of her life, to Rev. Dr. Barbara Reynolds.

[*Martin Luther King in Newcastle upon Tyne: The African American Freedom Struggle and Race Relations in the North East of England*](#) by Brian Ward (2017). Recounts the

mostly unknown account of King's acceptance of an honorary degree in Newcastle, and the lasting impact his unprepared speech created. His visit is still celebrated there every year.

[*Fifty Years Since MLK*](#) edited by Brandon M. Terry (2017). Accessibly and lively anthology by academics addressing King's ethical strategies in the spring of 1968.

[*Dream and Legacy: Dr. Martin Luther King in the Post-Civil Rights Era*](#) edited by Michael L. Clemons (2017). Unusual textbook written on the premise that King is still alive; includes an interesting chapter on his immersion in Hip Hop.

[*Behind the Public Veil: The Humanness of Martin Luther King, Jr.*](#) by Lewis V. Baldwin (2016). Portrait of King based on interviews with his friends, family, and colleagues.

[*Martin Luther King, Jr.*](#) by Peter J. Ling (2015). More of a history of the Civil Rights Movement than a biography of Dr. King; it is otherwise accessible and inspiring.

[*Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Theology of Resistance*](#) by Rufus Burrow, Jr. (2015). Addresses King's belief in personalism to address social wrongs, specifically racial violence.

[*The Chicago Freedom Movement: Martin Luther King, Jr. and Civil Rights Activism in the North*](#) edited by Mary Lou Finley (2015). Inspiring anthology exploring the Chicago Campaign; which was much more difficult and violent than the Southern States.

[*A Child Shall Lead Them: Martin Luther King, Jr., Young People, and the Movement*](#) by Rufus Burrow Jr. (2014). Explores King's unique connection to children and young adults, and the critical role they played during the Civil Rights Movement.

[*The Radical King*](#) edited and introduced by Cornel West (2014). Powerful collection of King's lesser known works. Introduction and commentary by Dr. West, who conveys King's message of "radical love" on every page.

[*Extremist for Love: Martin Luther King, Jr., Man of Ideas and Social Action*](#) by Rufus Burrow, Jr. (2014). Strong introduction to the intellectual sources behind King's nonviolent philosophy.

[*Dangerous Friendship: Stanley Levison, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Kennedy Brothers*](#) by Ben Kamin (2014). Charts Hoover's abuse of FBI powers to use King's connection to Levison to sow distrust amongst both Kennedys.

[*Misremembering Dr. King: Revisiting the Legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr.*](#) by Jennifer J. Yanco (2014). A thin book highlighting King's focus against his three evils of the world.

[*Gospel of Freedom: Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Letter from Birmingham Jail and the Struggle that Changed a Nation*](#) by Jonathan Rieder (2013). Explores the creation, impact, and legacy of one of the greatest documents of the 20th century. Its continued use in totalitarian governments across the globe is eye-opening and profound.

[*Confluence of Thought: Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr.*](#) by Bidyu Chakrabarty (2013). Dual biography of the social and political thought of both men and their use of nonviolence. Also examines whether nonviolence remains a viable choice in today's world.

[*Martin Luther King, Jr., Homosexuality, and the Early Gay Rights Movement: Keeping the Dream Straight?*](#) by Michael G. Long (2012). Well researched looked at King's words about homosexuality, and how they have been used in modern times on both sides of the debate.

[*All Labor has Dignity*](#) edited and introductions by Michael K. Honey (2011). Collection of King's speeches on labor rights and economic justice.

Becoming King: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Making of a National Leader (by Troy Jackson (2008). Well researched and accessible look at King's immersion into the Montgomery Bus Boycott, as well as emphasizing the work of the boycott's organizers.

The Word of the Lord is Upon Me: the Righteous Performance of Martin Luther King, Jr. by Jonathan Reider (2008). Examination of the verbal construction of King's public speeches and sermons. Difficult in places.

To The Mountaintop: Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Sacred Mission to Save America, 1955-1968 by Stewart Burns (2004). Intriguing look at how King's Christian faith informed his political leadership.

Ring Out Freedom!: the Voice of Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Making of the Civil Rights Movement by Fredrik Sunnermark (2004). Explores the theology behind King's writings and speeches. May be difficult for the general reader.

Martin Luther King, Jr., Spirit-Led Prophet: a Biography by Richard Deats; Foreword by Coretta Scott King (2000). Spiritual biography of King, with Coretta highlighting the sources of King's faith.

Partners to History: Martin Luther King, Jr., Ralph David Abernathy, and the Civil Rights Movement by Donzaliegh Abernathy (2003). Large format work telling the Civil Rights Movement through photos, most of which are heartbreaking.

Martin Luther King, Jr. by Marshall Frady (2002). Good if at times verbose introduction to King drawn largely from Frady's magazine articles.

The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr. by Clayborne Carson (2001). Retelling the life story of Martin Luther King, Jr., with his own words through letters, sermons, and other primary sources.

I May Not Get There With You: the True Martin Luther King, Jr. by Michael Eric Dyson (2000). More a cultural analysis than a true biography of King. The comparison with Tupac Shakur and the heavy focus on King's weaknesses make this an uneven and complicated work.