

# DR. KING'S DREAM

A RESOURCE GUIDE



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# ABOUT MIXED BLOOD THEATRE

## ABOUT MIXED BLOOD THEATRE

On August 28, 1963, Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., delivered the famous speech in which he spoke of his dream that all people could pay positive attention to each other's differences and similarities. He believed that would yield equality and freedom. The **Mixed Blood Theatre Company** is a professional, multi-racial theater ensemble dedicated to the spirit of Dr. King's dream.

**Mixed Blood's** home is a historic 1887 firehouse that has been converted into a flexible 200-seat venue allowing a variety of seating and stage configurations. The theater's main performance space is the **Alan Page Auditorium**, named in honor of Minnesota State Supreme Court Justice Alan Page, a champion of social justice and racial equality, a former Minnesota Viking inducted into the National Football League Hall of Fame, and founder of the Page Education Foundation (which provides funds for post-secondary education for students of color).

At **Mixed Blood** good theater is a vehicle for artistry, entertainment, education, and effecting social change. Through casting and content this theater portrays a world on its stage not only as it is or was but also as **Mixed Blood** would like it to be. From musicals to extravaganzas to intimate chamber theater to political satires to comedies and dramas, **Mixed Blood** produces new plays on its main stage in predictably unpredictable ways, including one play each year that is produced in English and Spanish with a bilingual cast.

**Mixed Blood** doesn't characterize itself as *multi-cultural*, but rather *culturally-specific* times five...or fifty...or five hundred. **Mixed Blood** aspires to be a model of successful *pluralism*. The theatre has many culturally-specific theatrical productions that tour to hundreds of schools, community centers, campuses, theaters, and workplaces across the country. These shows fill a void in the curricula of schools, provide (and sometimes portray) role models of color, and demonstrate the possibilities of live theater as a voice for the unheard and as an instrument of change. These offerings may include:

- *According To Coyote*, an energetic collection of American Indian legends featuring the wise/brave/foolish trickster Coyote.
- *Black Eagle*, the story of Dr. Ronald McNair, the African American scientist aboard the ill-fated space shuttle Challenger.
- *Daughters of Africa*, a music-driven history of African American women, celebrated and overlooked.
- *The Deaf Duckling*, the story of a deaf child born into a hearing family intertwined with that of the classic fairy tale.
- *Dr. King's Dream*, a brilliant depiction of the great civil rights leader's life and career.
- *Eastern Parade*, a drum-propelled anthology of the Asian American experience.
- *Jackie Robinson*, a memorable portrait of the first African American major league baseball player.
- *Minnecanos*, a buoyant celebration of Chicano cultural history embracing four generations and the entire 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- *Paul Robeson*, actor, athlete, activist—Robeson's power and talent shine in this striking biography.

# SEEING A PLAY

**SEEING A PLAY SHOULD BE AN EXCITING, ENTERTAINING, AND EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE.** This can easily be done if one understands the traditional agreements between the audience and the performers; each expects the other to be at their best and both are an integral part of the live performance experience. Here are some guidelines the audience should follow to make sure that the experience is a successful one for all.

1. Be on time. Tardiness disregards the effort of those who are on time.
  2. No eating or drinking during the performance.
  3. No talking during the performance.
  4. No throwing objects.
  5. Turn off all cell phones, pagers, and text-messaging devices.
  6. Watch the show with an open mind. Remember what you liked and didn't like. Be prepared to discuss the performance when you return to the classroom. Make note of questions and comments that you might have about any aspect of the performance.  
What connections does the show have to you and your life?
  7. Be respectful and attentive.
  8. Follow your school's procedure for dismissal from an assembly.
- Mixed Blood's school performances last about 45 minutes. Make the necessary preparations so that you can stay seated through the entire performance.
  - Often, if time allows, there will be a post-performance discussion with the cast. Be prepared to discuss the performance.
  - As you prepare to see the show, review the pre-performance discussion questions and time line. Research not only the elements that most interest you but also those elements that are completely new to you.
  - After you have seen the show review the post-performance questions. Discuss the elements of the show that were enjoyable. Identify and discuss new vocabulary words. Identify and discuss the plot and themes of the story. Compare your overall opinions of the performance and, if possible, write them down to share with the presenting company.

# TIMELINE

- 1929 Martin Luther King is born to Reverend Martin Luther, Sr. and Alberta King.
- 1939 World War II begins. U.S. enters the war in 1941 after the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor. The war will continue until 1945.
- 1948 King graduates from Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia.
- 1951 He receives B.A. in Divinity from Crozer Seminary. He enters the Boston University School of Theology where he meets Coretta Scott whom he will marry in 1953.
- 1954 He becomes the pastor of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama. U.S. Supreme Court declares segregation unconstitutional in celebrated *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* case.
- 1955 Rosa Parks refuses to give up her seat on a Montgomery bus. Dr. King heads Montgomery bus boycott which will last through most of 1956.
- 1958 Dr. King is stabbed during a book signing tour in New York.
- 1959 He visits India, home of his idol Mahatma Gandhi.
- 1960 Dr. King leaves the Dexter Avenue Church in Montgomery for the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta. Black college students in Greensboro, North Carolina, begin a "sit-down" protest at the all-white lunch counter of a local Woolworth.
- 1963 Demonstrations begin in Birmingham, Alabama. Police Commissioner Eugene "Bull" Connor uses police dogs and fire hoses against demonstrators. Dr. King is arrested and pens his famous *Letter from the Birmingham Jail*. In August, Dr. King delivers the *I Have A Dream* speech during the March on Washington. In September, the Sixteenth Avenue Baptist Church in Birmingham is bombed, killing four young, black Sunday school students. U.S. president John F. Kennedy assassinated in Dallas, Texas.
- 1964 Dr. King is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.
- 1965 Selma voting rights demonstrations lead to Selma-to-Montgomery march. Mounted state troopers and local police attack marchers at the Edmund Pettis Bridge outside Selma. Black Muslim leader Malcolm X is assassinated.
- 1967 Dr. King begins speaking out against U.S. involvement in Vietnam and plans Poor People's Campaign to expand work begun in Chicago in 1966.
- 1968 Dr. King is assassinated on April 4, 1968.

## **ABOUT *DR. KING'S DREAM***

The scene is Dr. King's room at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee. The date is April 4, 1968, shortly before 6 PM. Dr. King has come to Memphis to help organize and take part in demonstrations supporting a strike by African American sanitation workers. Now, at the end of a long day of meetings and negotiations, a tired Dr. King is preparing to go to the home of Reverend Samuel "Billy" Kyles for a "soul food" dinner. While waiting for Ralph Abernathy to finish dressing for dinner, Dr. King and Rev. Kyles pass the time in idle conversation. Rev. Kyles asks the question "When were you most frightened?" This question leads Dr. King into a review of his work in the Civil Rights Movement.

The play is taken, almost in its entirety, from the words of Dr. King. It draws on his books, sermons, and speeches, although the words are often placed out of their proper context.

In preparing for the play, teachers can help students, particularly the younger students, by explaining certain theatrical conventions they will see. This is a one-person play but the actor will often address other characters on the stage. Students should be aware that live theater requires them to use their imaginations. They must use their imaginations not only to see these missing characters but also to follow the action of the play.

The simple setting they see will sometimes be Dr. King's motel room, sometimes a church sanctuary, once the Lincoln Memorial, and so on. Students should also understand the convention of the "flashback." A flashback is a literary and theatrical device that looks back to some event or scene of a previous time. Dr. King, in the play, moves from 1968 back to 1955 and then returns chronologically to 1968.

# BIOGRAPHY

King was born as Michael Luther King, Jr. in Atlanta on January 15, 1929, one of three children of Martin Sr. and Alberta (William) King. He did not receive the name of Martin until he was about six years old. His father was the pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church and his mother was a former school teacher. King received his elementary and high school education in Atlanta, doing well in his favorite subjects: history, music, and English (winning prizes in public speaking). King enrolled in a local college (Morehouse) in 1944. Even though he was not at first inclined to enter the ministry, he was convinced by Dr. Benjamin Mays that a religious calling could have intellectual satisfactions as well. King continued his studies at Crozer Seminary in Chester, Pennsylvania, and received his B.A. degree in 1948 at the age of 19. He then continued his studies at Boston University School of Theology. While at BU he met his future wife, Coretta Scott. By 1953 he had completed the required course work for his doctorate which was awarded in 1955.

King returned to the South with Coretta and accepted the pastorate of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama. It was here that he made his first indelible mark on the Civil Rights Movement. In December 1955, Dr. King was elected President of the Montgomery Improvement Association and began organizing the successful 382-day Montgomery bus boycott.

By 1957 King was a leader of national stature. In this same year he convened a meeting of other African American leaders, which laid the groundwork for a Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). The SCLC practiced the art of nonviolence in its struggle for equal rights. Dr. King had always been influenced by the Gandhian philosophy of nonviolence, and he strengthened his belief in this philosophy by making a "pilgrimage" to India in 1959.

The tactics of non-violent protest were put to their most severe test in Birmingham, Alabama, during a 1963 mass protest for fair employment practices, the establishment of a bi-racial committee, and the desegregation of department store facilities. The world was able to watch on television as Police Commissioner Eugene "Bull" Connor attacked protesters with clubs, fire hoses, and dogs. While in jail Dr. King penned his famous *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*. In August of 1963, Dr. King helped organize the March on Washington. Dr. King delivered his famous *I Have a Dream* speech to 250,000 people gathered at the Lincoln Memorial.

One of his greatest triumphs came in 1964 when he traveled to Oslo, Norway, to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. After accepting this honor he returned to the United States and plunged into the voter registration drive in Selma, Alabama, which culminated in the famous Selma Freedom March.

King's work for civil rights continued, but by this time other more militant voices were heard in America. Even groups originally committed to nonviolence were becoming disenchanted with the pace of social change. Dr. King began to expand his focus on social issues, speaking out against the war in Vietnam and planning a bi-racial march on the nation's capitol, a pilgrimage of the poor. It was this concern for the poor that brought Martin Luther King, Jr. to Memphis in April of 1968 to support a sanitation workers' strike. He was cut down by an assassin's bullet on April 4, 1968.

He is survived by his wife, Coretta, and four children: Yolanda, Martin III, Dexter, and Bernice.

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

## Pre-performance (younger students)

- We will be seeing a play that tells the story of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. What is a “play?” **(Story told/performed by actors; set gives us hints about location; lighting can tell us time of day and sometimes location; costumes help define characters; sets, props, and costumes can establish time period and location)**
- Is the person we are going to see in the play really Dr. King?
- If the person we are about to see is not really Dr. King but rather an actor portraying or pretending to be Dr. King, does that mean that the actor is just making things up? Did the things we are about to see in the play really happen? Are the words the actor will speaking actually the words Dr. King used. **(Almost all of *Dr. King’s Dream* comes from Dr. King’s books, lectures, and sermons.)**
- What do we mean when we speak of our “imagination?” How might using our imagination help us as we watch this play? **(Often Dr. King will speak to characters who are not really on the stage; sometimes the location changes although the physical set may not, i.e. Dr King will walk to the podium for a speech and we know that he is now in a church or at the Lincoln Memorial; imagination will help will help us “see” the events that Dr. King is talking about.)**
- What do we already know about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.?
- What are a few more things that we would like to know about Dr. King that we can watch for during the play?

## Post Performance (younger students)

- You’ve told someone that you just saw a play about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and they ask “Who’s Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.?” In a few sentences, how would you answer that question?
- Can each of you remember three new things that you learned about Dr. King?
- How did Dr. King achieve his success? **(Includes his education, his speeches and demonstrations; the help of other people; his hard work; the influence of mentors and role models such as Gandhi and his father.)**
- How did he solve problems? **(Non-violence and hard work.)**
- When did the events in the play occur? How old were your parents at this time? Your grandparents? Was your school already built? A local sports stadium, freeway, or other landmark?
- Is Dr. King still alive?
- Why do you think Dr. King did all the things he did?

**(Parenthetical material is not meant to be “the answer” but possible touch points for discussion.)**

## Pre-performance (older students)

- We will be seeing a play about civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. How does a play differ from a film or television program? What advantages/disadvantages does each have?**(Film allows for a more fluid shift from scene to scene and between time periods; film allows for larger casts and more expansive panoramas - and, yes, car chases and crashes and explosions; because a play is not driven by visual images as much as film is, the play will focus on character development and story more; a play is more demanding on the audience members, who must work to follow the story and understand characters; the play demands that the audience members use their own sense of imagination; in film the director has control of the camera so the audience will see exactly what the director wants them to see and *only* what he/she wants them to see.)**
- It is said that the actor and the audience are the two most important elements in theater. What is the role of the audience? How does the audience influence the play? **(A play changes in subtle ways from performance to performance. The actor is very aware of the audience and when the audience is making the effort to follow the story and**

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

understand the characters it encourages the actors to give a better performance. If audience members are talking, being disruptive, or just not paying attention it can be difficult for the actor to concentrate and it can make the actor wonder if this audience really wants his/her best effort.)

- What are the skills we develop as audience members? How can these skills help us? **(We learn focus and concentration; develop analytical skills; we expand the breadth of our knowledge; and, we develop our imagination. These are the same skills we will need to apply in the classroom, business meetings, sports training sessions, and so on.)**
- What do we already know about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.? The time period in which Dr. King lived?
- What are a few things that we hope to learn about Dr. King from this play?
- What are our expectations about this play. How will the story be told? What will the staging be like? Will it be a comedy, a drama, a musical, a farce, or tragedy?

### Post Performance (older students)

- In one paragraph answer the question "Who was Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.?"
- What were the most important accomplishments of Dr. King? **(Ph.D. from Boston University, organization of the Montgomery bus boycott, Nobel Peace Prize, the "I Have A Dream" speech and the March on Washington.)**
- What influence do you think the time period Dr. King lived in had on him? **(The Great Depression, World War II, the integration of Major League Baseball, Hubert Humphrey's speech at '48 Democratic Convention, Truman integrating the armed forces, The Cold War, Brown v. Board.)**
- What influences did the places Dr. King lived and visited have on him? **(His time studying in Boston, his visit to India and travels in Europe, his pastorship in Montgomery - in the "Heart of Dixie.")**
- What would you say the philosophy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was? What maxims did he live by? **(Many of his speeches have recurring theme that are, in a sense, maxims - "I Have A Dream," "Give Us The Vote," and "How Long? Not long!")**
- Who were his major influences or mentors?
- Would Dr. King's accomplishments have been equally as impressive if he had not been black but had been white, Hmong, Hispanic, Japanese-American, etc.? **(Ph.D. from Boston University, Nobel Peace Prize, received by U.S. presidents and other world leaders, the many marches, speeches, and demonstrations, his scholarly papers and books.)**
- What can we learn from this play about Dr. King's life? Why should we have taken the time to watch a play about him? **(We must realize that this was a very special individual because he succeeded in spite of the obstacles that were placed in front of him and the opportunities he was denied all because of his race. We can use him as a role model to help us overcome obstacles in our own lives. We all need role models who are people of color and or women because we cannot allow ourselves to associate success with a single race and/or gender. We must strive to remove the barriers open opportunities for people of both genders and all races for when they are allowed to succeed we all benefit.)**

## BOOKS & WEBSITES

### BOOKS

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- Shuker, Nancy. *Martin Luther King*. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1985.

### WEBSITES

<http://www.stanford.edu/group/King>

Users can scan this Stanford University archive of the Civil Rights leader for transcripts of speeches, personal papers. Multi-media including Dr. King's speeches. Lesson plans for teachers. Excellent site.

<http://www.seattletimes.com/mlk>

Join in discovering the role this Civil Rights hero played in shaping America. Visit the electronic classroom. Teacher-friendly study guide and an interactive quiz on Dr. King. Very good site.

<http://www.lib.iupui.edu/libinfo/mlkjr.html>

Short biography and good bibliography on Dr. King.

[http://encarta.msn.com/content\\_761557424/KingMartinLutherJr.html](http://encarta.msn.com/content_761557424/KingMartinLutherJr.html)

The Encarta site with excellent links and multi-media clips of King.

# ADVANCED RESOURCES

## **AfroAmerican Studies in the University of Minnesota Libraries**

<http://subject.lib.umn.edu/afrostu.html>

This site has a really good bibliography of bibliographies.

## **Amistad Research Center**

<http://www.tulane.edu/~amistad>

The Amistad Research Center on the Tulane University campus is a manuscripts library for the study of ethnic history and culture and race relations in the United States. While the focus is national, the holdings are international in scope. Researchers who use these resources find information about social, economic, and political history that leads to new interpretations of history.

Amistad is among the largest of the nation's repositories specializing in the history of African Americans. Papers of African Americans and records of organizations and institutions of the African American community make up about 90 percent of the Center's holdings. The other 10 percent, significant in number and content, contains documentation on Native Americans, Puerto Ricans, Chicanos, Asian Americans, European immigrants, and Appalachian whites. The Center also holds records related to other Protestant denominations, Roman Catholicism, and Judaism, as well as many more collections that are entirely secular in origin.

## **The Givens Collection of African American Literature**

<http://special.lib.umn.edu/rare/givens>

The Archie Givens, Sr. Collection of African American Literature seeks to collect, preserve and promote the use of books and manuscript material that document the literary history and cultures of African Americans. Housed in the Special Collections and Rare Books department of the University of Minnesota Libraries, the Givens Collection includes rare books, literary manuscripts, correspondence, pamphlets, photographs, playbills, ephemera, magazines, audiovisual media, and the like. The collection is available for research by students, faculty, staff, and the general public. Besides supporting research and teaching, items in the collection assist in the promotion of other outreach activities, such as exhibitions, public presentations, class presentations, and tours.

## **Moorland Spingarn Library at Howard University**

<http://www.founders.howard.edu/moorlandspingarn/public.htm>

The Moorland Spingarn Research Center (MSRC) is recognized as one of the world's largest and most comprehensive repositories for the documentation of the history and culture of people of African descent in Africa, the Americas, and other parts of the world. As one of Howard University's major research facilities, the MSRC collects, preserves, and makes available for research a wide range of resources chronicling the African American experience.

Its collections include more than 175,000 bound volumes and tens of thousands of journals, periodicals, and newspapers; more than 17,000 feet of manuscript and archival collections; nearly 1000 audio tapes; hundreds of artifacts; 100,000 prints, photographs, maps, and other graphic items. The collections are used by scholars, museums, students, and other researchers from Howard University and throughout the world. Information provided by the MSRC is regularly used in exhibitions, video productions, news programming, and a wide range of publications.

## **Ohio State University Black Studies Library**

<http://www.lib.ohiostate.edu/bslweb/bibs.html>

Dedicated on November 10, 1971, The Black Studies Library (BSL) maintains a wide collection of materials concerning the cultures of SubSaharan Africa and African-America. BSL provides an interdisciplinary and international collection of materials, from books, journals, periodicals and serials to electronic resources such as video, audio and World Wide Web connections through our BSL web

## ADVANCED RESOURCES

site. Reflecting the wide diversity of Afrocentric communities, the BSL collection covers almost every subject area as they relate to these communities. The BSL staff is available for assistance in using online research tools as well as one to one library instruction for locating resources throughout the University Libraries and the greater community.

### **Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture of the New York Public Libraries**

<http://www.nypl.org/research/sc/sc.html>

The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture is a national research library devoted to collecting, preserving and providing access to resources documenting the experiences of peoples of African descent throughout the world. The Center's collections first won international acclaim in 1926 when the personal collection of the distinguished Puerto Rican-born Black scholar and bibliophile, Arturo Alfonso Schomburg, was added to the Division of Negro Literature, History and Prints of the 135th Street Branch of The New York Public Library. Schomburg served as curator from 1932 until his death in 1938. Renamed in his honor in 1940, the collection grew steadily through the years. In 1972 it was designated as one of The Research Libraries of The New York Public Library and became the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. Today, the Schomburg Center contains over 5,000,000 items and provides services and programs for constituents from the United States and abroad.

The Center provides access to and professional reference assistance in the use of its collections to the scholarly community and the general public through five research divisions, each managing materials in specific formats but with broad subject focus. The Center's collections include art objects, audio and videotapes, books, manuscripts, motion picture films, newspapers, periodicals, photographs, prints, recorded music discs and sheet music.

The Schomburg Center facilitates access to these holdings through mail and telephone reference services, participation in national computerized databases and publication of bibliographies and other finding aids. The Schomburg Center promotes the study of the histories and cultures of peoples of African descent and interprets its collections through exhibitions, publications and educational, scholarly and cultural programs.

### **The Vivian G. Harsh Research Collection of Afro-American History and Literature**

<http://www.chipublib.org/002branches/woodson/wnharsh.html>

Vivian Harsh (1890-1960), the first African American librarian in the Chicago Public Library system, was named head of the George Cleveland Hall branch in 1932. She immediately began establishing a "Special Negro Collection" which became an integral part of the branch's community service. While developing this collection as a research and programming center for Chicago's community of African American scholars and activists, Harsh won the support and assistance of such leaders and writers as Richard Wright, Ama Bontemps, Langston Hughes, and Horace Cayton.

Assisted by the pioneering African American children's librarian, Charlemae Hill Rollins, the collection became an extraordinary meeting place that helped develop the work of many African American thinkers in the "Bronzeville" era of the 1930's and 1940's. In recent years, however, this space became inadequate to house the growing volume of African American history materials held in the Harsh Research Collection. In 1992, land adjacent to the Woodson Regional Library was purchased and a new wing was added in 1998 bringing the total square footage to 25,000. The refurbished and expanded Harsh opened on January 25, 1999.

The largest African American history and literature collection in the Midwest, the Harsh Collection contains a wealth of precious documentation of the African American experience. Special bibliographies have been prepared to assist researchers with many topics. Its holdings. Among the most significant and unique materials at the Harsh Research Collection are its manuscript holdings.