



Module 1, Unit 3, Lesson Plan 2

Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC)

(Grades 6-12)

Learning Target/Objectives:

- Discuss the founding of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference

Success Criteria:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the importance of the SCLC by participating in a station activity and passing a quiz

Anchor Text:

- King, Martin Luther, Jr. "To the Southern Christian Leadership Conference." February 4, 1958. Stanford University, The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute. Retrieved from <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/southern-christian-leadership-conference>

Supplemental Resources:

- Bob Fitch. photograph archive. Stanford University Libraries. <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/gandhi-mohandas-k>
- CSPAN. MLK's quote about his trip to India. October 11, 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.c-span.org/video/?c4946593/user-clip-mlks-quote-trip-india>

Lesson Content Overview:

The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) was a Christian-based civil rights organization established in 1957. Initially designed to facilitate the coordinated action of local protest groups in the South, the SCLC would grow into the unifying entity of independent Black churches throughout the South. The SCLC was the strength of the Black church's civil rights activities. On January 10, 1957, founding members elected Dr. King its president. He remained in that role until his death in 1968.

On January 30, 1955, the King family's home was bombed in Montgomery. By the grace of God, the poorly assembled bundle of 12 dynamite sticks did not explode as the fuse sputtered out on King's front porch. In fact, a series of bombings and shootings occurred in Alabama since the December 21, 1956, conclusion of the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Four Black churches in Montgomery and the homes of Revs. Ralph Abernathy and Robert Graetz were targets of dynamitings.

Dr. King addressed the growing crowd of concerned African Americans from his porch. He encouraged them to continue to walk in nonviolence. "We must not return violence under any condition.

I know this is difficult advice to follow, especially since we have been the victims of no less than 10 bombings. But this is the way of Christ; it is the way of the cross. We must somehow believe that unearned suffering is redemptive.”¹ On a divinely inspired mission, King refused to let anything, even death threats, stop him.

At the Prayer Pilgrimage for Freedom on May 17, 1957, King and the SCLC held a program at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C. to arouse the nation's consciousness concerning Black Americans' lack of civil and natural rights. King gave his historic “Give Us the Ballot” speech, which propelled the freedom struggle to an even greater dimension of social, political, and economic consciousness.

A crowd estimated at 50,000 people attended. The event was co-chaired by A. Philip Randolph, Roy Wilkins, and King with the aim of accomplishing the following goals: commemorating the third anniversary of the Supreme Court’s decision on school desegregation, protesting terror and violence in the South, showing unity in the demand for civil rights legislation (especially voting rights), and paying homage to Abraham Lincoln.

*Give us the ballot and we will no longer have to worry the federal government about our basic human rights. Give us the ballot and we will no longer plead to the government for the passage of an anti-lynching law; we will by the power of our vote write the law on the statute books of the South and bring an end to the dastardly acts of the hooded perpetrators of violence.*²

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

As one of the principal speakers, King opened his speech by referring to the Supreme Court’s decision three years earlier (May 17, 1954) in *Brown v. Board of Education*. He stated that the most urgent request by African Americans, from both the executive and legislative branches of the American government, was the right to vote. He then launched into a litany of all the accomplishments possible for African Americans if they had the vote.

Because his list of expected accomplishments all began with the phrase, “Give us the ballot,” King’s address is often called the “Give Us the Ballot” speech. It is one of the most requested documents among his many works.

In addition to his call for suffrage for African Americans, King called for leadership in America from several segments of the population – leadership from the executive and legislative divisions of the federal government in protecting its citizens and providing moral direction, leadership from white liberals in the North by remaining committed to the cause, leadership from white moderates in the South by remaining open-minded, and leadership from the African American community by being calm and firm.

¹ Editor. Clayborne Carson. *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.* Chapter 10: The Expanding Struggle. The King Institute, Stanford University. Retrieved from <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/publications/autobiography-martin-luther-king-jr-contents/chapter-10-expanding-struggle>

² Martin Luther King, Jr. “Give Us the Ballot,” Address Delivered at the Prayer Pilgrimage for Freedom. May 17, 1957. The King Institute, Stanford University. Retrieved from <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/give-us-ballot-address-delivered-prayer-pilgrimage-freedom>

On an international note, King linked the African American struggle for human rights to the African and Asian struggles for independence and freedom. He urged listeners to be nonviolent, to love, to be understanding, to seek harmony, and to keep moving ahead with dignity despite hardships and obstacles.

By August of 1963, the momentum of the Southern movement traveled North to Washington D.C., where nearly 250,000 people gathered to march for freedom, equality, jobs, and voting rights.

Instructional Sequence:

Opener:

Show the [Bob Fitch](#) photograph of Martin Luther King Jr. with a portrait of Gandhi in the background. Ask students if they know who the person in the picture is. Then ask students if they can share comparisons between Gandhi and King. After the conversation, have students watch the [CSPAN clip](#) of King speaking about his trip to India and journalist Isabella Wilkerson providing insight on King's work to dismantle the racial caste system in the United States.

- o **SEL Connection:** "Why would visiting other countries worldwide help provide a new perspective for how policies/laws and traditional practices impact different groups of people within the United States?"

Station Rotations:

The teacher will group students into four cohorts. Four stations should be set up around the classroom to ensure learning in multiple ways. One station will focus on Online Instruction. A second station will allow students to listen to music from the civil rights movement. The third station is teacher-led instruction. The fourth station will be a collaborative activity. Students should spend ten minutes at each station and should take notes along the way.

- o **Station 1 - Online Instruction:** Students will read and summarize Dr. King's sermon titled "To the Southern Christian Leadership Conference," delivered January 30, 1968 and published February 4, 1958.
<https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/southern-christian-leadership-conference>
- o **Station 2 - Music:** Students will listen to music from the Montgomery Bus Boycott ("Ain't Gonna Ride No Bus No More" and "This Little Light of Mine" and "Let Us Break Bread Together").
- o **Station 3 - Teacher-Led Instruction:** The teacher will transition from King's trip to India to his founding of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference by focusing most on defining the civil rights movement (An effort to align state law with federal law, and to see that laws are enforced and discussing King's six principles of nonviolence.
 - King's definition of an "unjust law": a policy that enables a majority population to inflict harm upon a minority population that is not binding on itself. There is a difference in the law.
 - King's definition of a "just law": a policy that compels the majority to follow the same codes as a minority population. There is sameness in the law.
- o **Station 4 - Collaborative Task:** The students will respond to these two questions: "After the success of the Montgomery bus boycott, why do you think it was important to form the SCLC? Why do you think Gandhi was an important model for King to use when developing the vision for the civil rights movement."

Independent Reading Activity:

Students will read the opening of Dr. King's May 17, 1957 speech, "Give Us the Ballot." Ask them to explain what historical event King is talking about.

- o **SEL Connection:** What leadership traits does King exemplify? Do you see yourself possessing any of his qualities? How so?

Formative Assessment:

- **Small Group Collaboration, Document Analysis:** Students will work in small groups of three or four to answer analytical questions about three primary documents and one secondary source document. Questions include:
 - o According to Source D, describe Martin Luther King, Jr.'s message to the members of the SCLC.
 - o What can you infer from Source C about the purpose of the cartoon? Explain your answer.
 - o Explain the values and limitations of Source B in reflecting the SCLC's vision at the end of the 1950s.
 - o "To what extent did the vision of King and the SCLC in 1957 come to fruition by 1965." Explain your answer with reference to Sources A, B and C, and prior knowledge."

Adaptations for Student Needs

IEP:

- Sizes of student groups range
- Students team up with a peer partner, while others would prefer to work individually.
- There is a variety of small-group work
- Chunking information
- Visual cues and wait time
- Visual supports (maps, images, PowerPoint slides, handouts)
- Assessments will be modified, and students given extra time

ELD

- Modified/simplified reading material
- Content-related lists/handouts of key terms
- Text is supported by visuals and connected to real-life experiences