



As we celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday, we remember his trailblazing activism and soaring vision for a just America. We are left with the eloquence of his words that continue to guide us forward as we strive to become a more perfect union. Here are 17 quotes from MLK's famous speeches and writings about education, justice, hope, perseverance and freedom.

**#1** "Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education."

—“*The Purpose of Education*” from *Morehouse College student newspaper, The Maroon Tiger, 1947*

**#2** “If we are not careful, our colleges will produce a group of close-minded, unscientific, illogical propagandists, consumed with immoral acts. Be careful, 'brethren!' Be careful, teachers!”

—“*The Purpose of Education*” from *Morehouse College student newspaper, The Maroon Tiger, 1947*

**#3** "True peace is not merely the absence of tension; it is the presence of justice."

—from *Stride Toward Freedom*, 1958

**#4** "Science investigates; religion interprets. Science gives man knowledge, which is power; religion gives man wisdom, which is control. Science deals mainly with facts; religion deals mainly with values. The two are not rivals."

—from “A Tough Mind and a Tender Heart,” August 30, 1959

**#5** "The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy."

—from *Strength to Love*, 1963

**#6** "We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor, it must be demanded by the oppressed."

—from 'Letter From Birmingham Jail,' April 16, 1963

**#7** "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."

—from 'Letter from Birmingham, Alabama Jail', April 16, 1963

**#8** "Out of the mountain of despair, a stone of hope."

—from "I Have A Dream" speech, Washington, D.C., August 28, 1963

**#9** "We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of Now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism. Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy."

—from "I Have A Dream" speech in Washington, D.C., August 28, 1963

**#10** "Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that."

—from *Strength to Love*, 1963

**#11** "I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word in reality. This is why right, temporarily defeated, is stronger than evil triumphant."

—from Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech, Oslo, Norway, 1964.

**#12** "The time is always right to do what is right."

—from Oberlin College Commencement speech, 1965

**#13** "The contemporary tendency in our society is to base our distribution on scarcity, which has vanished, and to compress our abundance into the overfed mouths of the middle and upper classes until they gag with superfluity. If democracy is to have breadth of meaning, it is necessary to adjust this inequity. It is not only moral, but it is also intelligent. We are wasting and degrading human life by clinging to archaic thinking."

—from "Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?" 1967

**#14** "Be a bush if you can't be a tree. If you can't be a highway, just be a trail. If you can't be a sun, be a star. For it isn't by size that you win or fail. Be the best of whatever you are."

—from speech before a group of students at Barratt Junior High School in Philadelphia, October 26, 1967

**#15** "For when people get caught up with that which is right and they are willing to sacrifice for it, there is no stopping point short of victory."

—from "I've Been To The Mountain Top," April 3, 1968

**#16** "All we say to America is, 'Be true to what you said on paper.' If I lived in China or even Russia, or any totalitarian country, maybe I could understand the denial of certain basic First Amendment privileges, because they hadn't committed themselves to that over there. But somewhere I read of the freedom of assembly. Somewhere I read of the freedom of speech. Somewhere I read of the freedom of the press. Somewhere I read that the greatness of America is the right to protest for right."

—from "I've Been To The Mountain Top," April 3, 1968

**#17** "We've got some difficult days ahead. But it really doesn't matter with me now because I've been to the mountaintop . . . I've looked over and I've seen the promised land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight that we as a people will get to the promised land."

—from "I've Been To The Mountain Top," April 3, 1968