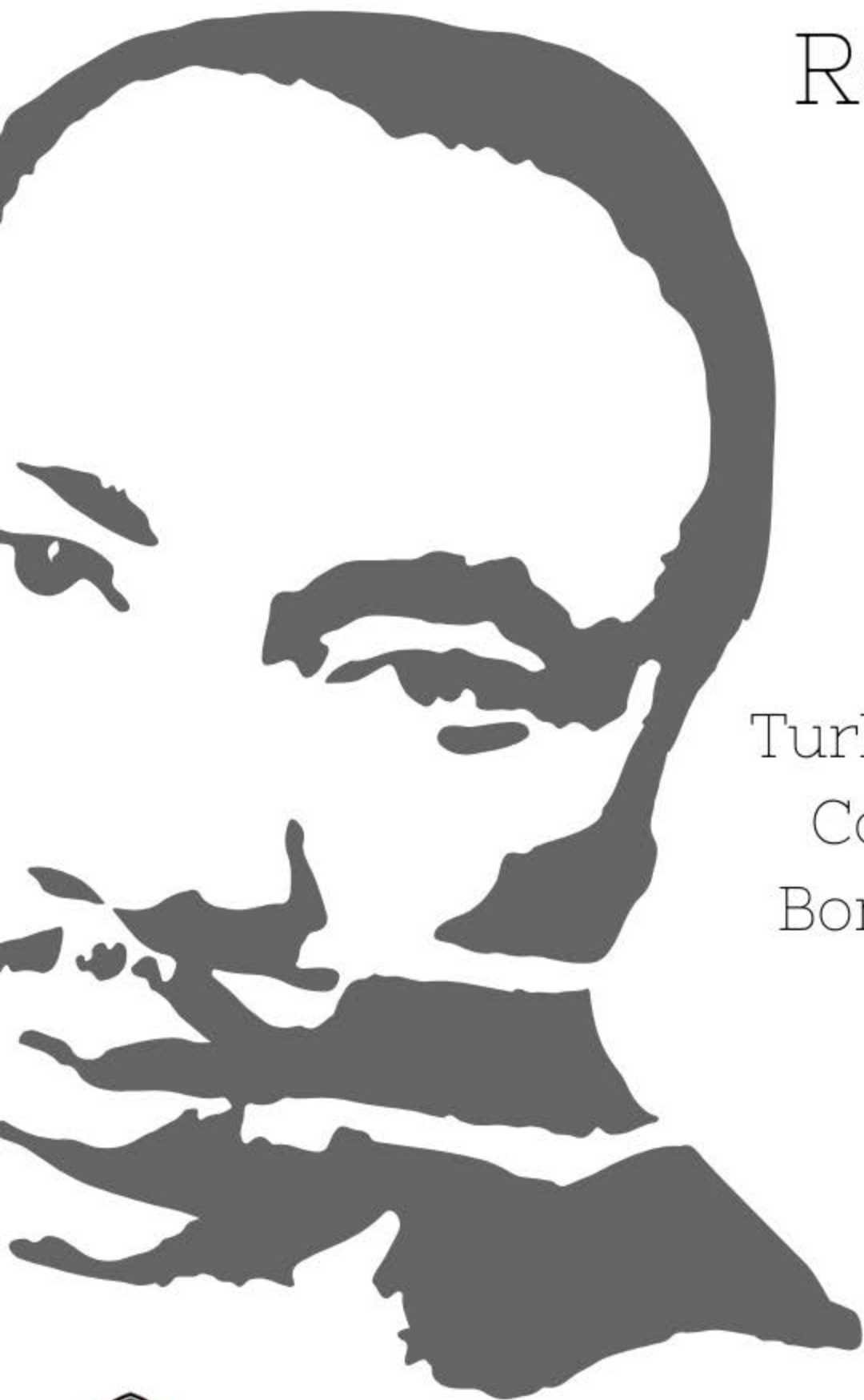


# MARTIN LUTHER KING JR DAY

## Reflection Guide



Rhodes College  
Turley Memphis Center for  
Community Engagement  
Bonner Center for Service

January 20, 2025



THE LYNNE AND HENRY TURLEY  
**MEMPHIS CENTER**  
FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT





**IN THE END,  
WE WILL REMEMBER  
NOT THE WORDS  
OF OUR ENEMIES,  
BUT THE SILENCE  
OF OUR FRIENDS.**

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

## THE MAN

Today Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is revered as a hero by most. Remembered and studied for his involvement and leadership in the equality movement, standing for all people regardless of “race, color, creed, or national origin” he is remembered worldwide for his speeches like the “I Have a Dream” speech and his assassination.

Dr. King was a highly contentious figure and nearly 75% of Americans polled disapproved of him at the time of his assassination April 4, 1968. The 1968 Civil Rights Act was the last major piece of legislation guaranteeing equal protection to all and King’s assassination prompted widespread riots that pressured the government to sign the bill into law.

Dr. King’s platform of nonviolence was a major component of his heroization in an era of frequent public unrest, violent riots, and lethal racial violence against Black communities. That ideology was and is utilized to push the moral majority for nonreactive, nonradical activism.

While Dr. King was nonviolent he was not nondisruptive which can be displayed by his 29 arrests. He was able to accomplish much through his style of operationalized activism across Southern states and into a national platform, meeting with leaders at home and abroad to discuss race relations, nonviolence, and liberation struggles around the world.





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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.

## THE HISTORY

15 years following the murder of Dr. King, President Ronald Reagan signed a bill into law making the third Monday of January a national holiday to celebrate the life and work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The original campaign started just four days after his death, proposed as a bill that was rejected by the House. It would take several more years before Congress would recognize the holiday while some states decreed the holiday on their own in the meantime. A bill was finally passed by both the House and the Senate on November 8, 1983, the first national celebration took place January 20, 1986 although some states continued to boycott the holiday.

In 1994, the holiday became the King Holiday and Service Act, designating the King Holiday as a national day of volunteer service. Instead of a day off from work or school, Congress asked Americans of all backgrounds and ages to celebrate Dr. King's legacy by turning community concerns into citizen action.

Rhodes College mirrors this concept and support a day of community action to bring together people from all walks of life, breaking down barriers, building relationships, and serving the communities that surround us everyday.

A large crowd of people is walking in a parade on a city street. In the background, an American flag is visible. The crowd is diverse in age and attire, with many people wearing hats and suits. The scene is captured from a slightly elevated angle, showing the flow of the parade down the street.

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True peace is not merely the absence of tension; it is the presence of justice.

## THE LEGACY TODAY

2023 Pew Research suggests that just over 80% of adults polled in the United States say that Martin Luther King Jr. has had a positive impact on the country, with 47% saying Dr. King has had a very positive impact. 38% suggests their own views on racial equality have been influenced by King's legacy.

On this MLK Jr. Day of service consider not only why you serve but what your commitment to service will be for the remainder of this year. Consider making a pledge to continue to serve individually or with a group for ongoing civic engagement while at Rhodes and at home.

Consider Dr. King's principles of unity, respect, service, peace, and justice during and after you complete your service project for the day/week.

Talk about the community need that your service addressed and how it's impacted by systems around it.

Consider how misinformation to that need has impacted your own ideas and awareness prior to now.

Seek continued growth in your own understanding of the complexities of those ideas.

Utilize your awareness, education, and experience to dismantle and disrupt through civic engagement.



## GETTING INVOLVED

Show up for the city! There are multiple ways to get involved and experience true enrichment and engagement. Start today and then see how you can continue to show up and make a difference.

For more MLK Day resources, visit <http://www.mlkday.gov/>

Review local opportunities through Volunteer Odyssey [here](#), or use the QR Code below.

You can also visit Rhodes Engage all year long for current and upcoming opportunities to stay engagement or email [Service @Rhodes.edu](mailto:Service@Rhodes.edu).





