



The Mountaintop

Enrichment Guide

MTC's 2021 guide was adapted by Nitasha Rajoo with permission from Milwaukee Repertory Theatre ([available here](#)). Hazel Venzon performed additional research.

Updated and resources compiled for 2024 by Ksenia Broda-Milian, with additional material by Maggie Seymour reproduced with permission from Trinity Repertory Company ([available here](#)).

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Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre is proud to call Manitoba home. Royal MTC is located in Winnipeg on Treaty 1, the traditional territory of the Anishinaabeg, Cree, Oji-Cree and Dakota people, and the National Homeland of the Red River Métis. We are thankful for the benefits sharing this land has afforded us, acknowledge the responsibilities of the Treaties, and embrace the opportunity to partner with Indigenous communities in the spirit of reconciliation and collaboration.

The Role of the Audience

Theatre needs its audience! We are happy to have you here. Every staff person, actor, and crew member backstage plays an important part in your experience, and you also have a role in the experience of cast, crew and the people around you.

Arrive Early: Please make sure you give yourself enough time to find your seat before the performance starts. Latecomers may not be admitted to a performance. We ask schools and other groups to arrive at least 20-30 minutes before the show.

Cell Phones and Other Electronic Devices: Please **turn off** your cell phone/mp3 player /gaming system/camera/smart watch. Texting, surfing, and gaming during performances is very distracting for the performers and other audience members. Using cameras and recording devices during a performance is **never** allowed.

Talking During the Performance: Even when you whisper, you can be heard by performers and people around you. Unless it is a relaxed performance, disruptive patrons will be removed from the theatre. Please wait until after the performance to share your words with others.

Food/Drinks: Food and outside drinks are not allowed in the theatre. When there is an intermission, snacks and drinks may be available for purchase. There is complimentary water in the lobby.

Dress: There is no dress code at the Royal MTC, but we respectfully ask you not to wear hats in the theatre. We strive to be a scent-free environment and thank all patrons for their cooperation.

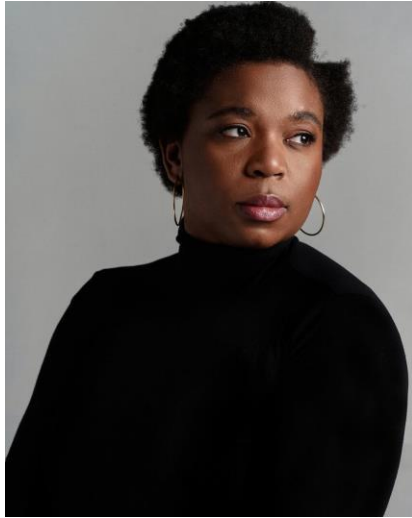
Leaving During the Performance: If you leave the theatre during a performance, you will be readmitted at the discretion of Front of House staff. If readmitted, you may be placed in an empty seat at the back of the auditorium instead of your original seat.

Being Asked to Leave: The theatre staff has, and will exercise, the right to ask any member of the audience to leave if that person is being inappropriate or disruptive including (but not limited to): talking, using devices that produce light or sound, and deliberately interfering with an actor or the performance (tripping, throwing items on or near the stage, etc.).

Talkbacks: A short question and answer period with the actors takes place after student matinees, first Tuesday evening shows, and some public matinees. While watching the show, make a mental note of questions to ask the actors about the production or life in the theatre. Our artists deserve to be treated with respect! It's okay to have a negative opinion, but this is your chance to ask questions and understand the performance or process, not to criticize. If you have a concern, see the house manager after the show and they will make sure your feedback gets to the appropriate Royal MTC staff.

Enjoy the show: Laugh, cry, gasp – responding to the performance is part of the nature of theatre! As you get involved in the story, try to balance your reactions with respecting the people around you. The curtain call is part of the performance too – it gives you a chance to thank all the artists for their hard work with applause, and for them to thank you for your attention. We all appreciate when you stay at your seat and join in the applause!

Playwright Biography



Katori Hall is a playwright and performer from Memphis, Tennessee. Her work has been produced on Broadway, in London's West End, and in regional theaters throughout the United States.

As an African-American growing up in a predominately white neighborhood, Hall was very aware of racial issues and the legacy of the civil rights movement as a child. She was raised in a working-class household, the youngest of four daughters. In 2003, she graduated from Columbia University and continued her training at Harvard and Julliard.

While training as an actor at Columbia, Hall felt a lack of roles for African-American women. At that moment, she knew she had to write. While studying for her Masters degree at Harvard's American Repertory Theatre, Hall was inspired by other Black playwrights like Lynn Nottage and Suzan-Lori Parks.

Hall's published plays include *The Mountaintop*, *Hoodoo Love*, *Hurt Village*, and *Saturday Night/Sunday Morning*, and *Tina: The Tina Turner Musical*. Hall has won a Pulitzer Prize, Olivier Award, the Lorraine Hansberry Playwriting Award, and been nominated for two Tony awards (among many other accolades).

The Mountaintop was inspired by Hall's mother, Carrie Mae Golden. In 1968, Carrie Mae asked her mother if she could go to hear Dr. King speak at the Mason Temple. Her mother did not let her go because she feared that the church would be bombed. The female character in *The Mountaintop*, Camae (short for Carrie Mae), is named for Katori Hall's mother, giving her the chance she never had to meet Dr. King.

Adapted with permission from Milwaukee Repertory Theater's *The Mountaintop* Study Guide

Related Resource Links: Find out more about works and awards at [Katori Hall's website](#) and read a [short article about Carrie Mae](#) from the Guardian. Katori Hall speaks [more about writing The Mountaintop](#) in Columbia Magazine and about [storytelling and articulating Black life](#) in Harvard Magazine.

See the entire creative team and cast for Royal MTC's production, including their biographies, [on our website](#), where you can also download the Ovation program.

Characters and Setting

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. – Civil Rights leader

Camae – A maid at the Lorraine Motel

April 3, 1968. Room 306 at the Lorraine Motel, Memphis, Tennessee.



Left: Memphis shown in relation to other cities significant to Dr. King's life. Right: The Lorraine Motel, now part of the National Civil Rights Museum. Below: Set design maquette (model) for *The Mountaintop* by Brian Perchaluk.



Content Overview

This section may contain spoilers.

Strong language. This play deals with issues of oppression including racism, sexism, and homophobia. Mature content includes sexual innuendo, descriptions of violence and hate speech, and conversations about death and dying. Cigarette smoking is depicted onstage.

Plot Summary

From Milwaukee Repertory Theater's *The Mountaintop* Study Guide (2012).

After his "I've Been to the Mountaintop" speech, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., retires to his room in the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee. He is tired, overwrought, in need of clarity, and deeply questioning both the success of and his value to the Civil Rights movement.

Camae, a beautiful young hotel maid, enters. She is as awed by Dr. King's fame as he is by her beauty. The chemistry between them sparks immediately, and Dr. King invites her to sit and talk for a while. Their ensuing conversation, lasting throughout the long night, covers topics both personal and political—from Dr. King's children, to the Memphis Sanitation Strike, to a debate about violent versus non-violent revolution.

As the evening progresses, Camae grows more mysterious, revealing thoughts and events about which only Dr. King could know. As it becomes increasingly clear that Camae is more than just an ordinary maid, she leads Dr. King through a powerful, vivid exploration of his life and legacy on what would become his final night on earth.



Ray Strachan. Set by Brian Perchaluk, costumes by Rachel Forbes, lights & photo by Hugh Conacher

Synopsis

This section contains spoilers.

By Maggie Seymour for Trinity Repertory Company

The show opens with Martin Luther King Jr. calling after his friend Ralph to pick him up some Pall Mall cigarettes. As he reenters the room, he attempts to write a new speech. He soon phones down to room service for a cup of coffee. Camae arrives with the coffee very quickly. King invites her into the room and they chitchat about the storm, God, and Mason Temple. He asks her for a cigarette and she pulls out a Pall Mall and lights it for him. King convinces Camae to smoke just one cigarette with him, much to her chagrin as it is only her first day and she doesn't quite know the workplace protocol on smoking with guests. King comments on her beauty and Camae begins cussing, immediately after feeling very guilty for having cussed in front of a preacher, when the phone rings. It is King's wife, Corrie. He chats with her and fibs about drinking tea. The phone is passed to his daughter Bernice, who has been having trouble sleeping. Wishing her a goodnight, he hangs up the phone and returns to Camae. She reprimands him for lying, they discuss her name, and King asks her for her advice on his mustache. They share her last cigarette and King pulls out tomorrow's paper, reading the date, April 4.

Reading, King reveals that people are worried for his safety and his own home has even been bombed. As the thunder cracks, King jumps and his breath becomes labored. He reveals the sound of thunder does scare him quite deeply because it sounds like...fireworks. King calls Camae pretty a second time as they begin to discuss the state of Detroit and the people there. Camae reveals she believes that walking or marching is not making any difference and it is about time people started making moves that are more serious. King asks her if she is an honorary Panther and expresses his frustration over the exploitation of riots for colored televisions. He tells her about the Sanitation March and how this peaceful protest turned into an opportunity for looting. He talks about how he was whisked away though he badly wanted to stay, and mentions a young man, Larry Payne, who had been recently killed.



Cherissa Richards
and Ray Strachan.
Set by Brian
Perchaluk, costumes
by Rachel Forbes,
lighting and photo by
Hugh Conacher

King begins to wonder why his best friend, Ralph, has not yet returned. Camae teaches him how to smoke and soon shows him exactly what she would do if she were in his position. Her message for her imaginary crowd is for the Black man to build his own life and community outside of the white society. She states that there is nothing that the white man has that the Black man needs, so, "fuck the white man". He hears what she is saying and recognizes how tired he is. Camae asks how it is that we are all the same. King responds that we are all scared.

King worries about Ralph and Camae pulls out a new pack of Pall Malls. They begin to talk about the differences in the Black community and the social hierarchy. King tells Camae if she were a man she would be Malcolm X, prompting her to call to the heavens and tell Malcolm X what King thinks of him. She laughs and King is terrified. King tells her he doesn't like the way she talks about God, and she says God doesn't mind. Camae reveals that Malcolm is in heaven and that King will see him there soon, that God is a woman, and that God likes King. Thunder rolls and King grabs at his heart exclaiming, "I can't breathe". Camae gets very worked up as King also begins to lose his cool. She calls him Michael, his birth name, and tries her best to calm him, but this only agitates him more. He accuses her of being in the CIA and stalking him. He attempts to throw her out, opening the door to his hotel room, but a wall of snow barricades him in.

Camae reveals that she is in fact an angel who has been sent to help King to the other side. She tells King his daughter had prayed that he should not die alone. Camae was God's way of answering those prayers. King begs to stay. He claims his work is not yet finished, that he has too much left to do on earth and is not ready to die. He recognizes that he had begged for a break, for sweet release, but when faced with the prospect of death he retracted those pleas. He talks about plans and begs for more time. Camae agrees to call God and puts King on the phone with her. King begins talking with God and soon devolves into yelling at Her, and God hangs up. King and Camae have a pillow fight. King begins to cry and asks Camae to hold him. Camae reveals her back-story as King attempts to call his wife or leave directions for his followers. He asks when it will happen, if it will hurt, and if she will be there. She takes care of everything and brings King to "the mountaintop" as she reveals the future to him. She shows him each person who carries on the baton, each world event and painful time. King makes one last speech. Camae puts her hand on his shoulder, telling him it is "Time."

Context and Related Resources

Adapted from Milwaukee Repertory Theater's The Mountaintop Study Guide (2012).

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. led the American Civil Rights Movement from December, 1955 to April 4, 1968, preaching a philosophy of non-violent protest, grassroots organizing, and civil disobedience.

- Dr. King was born into a religious family, and named Michael when he was born. His grandfather and father were

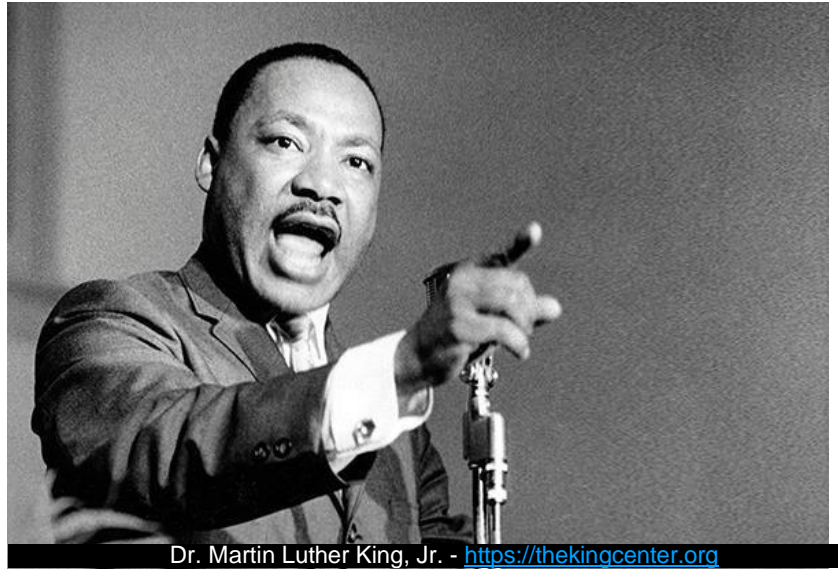
pastors of the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia. After an inspiring trip to Germany, his father changed his and his 5-year-old son's first names to Martin Luther. Dr. King drew on his faith for his principles and spoke frequently about his duty to God.

- Dr. King attended segregated public schools in Georgia, and then attended Morehouse College, an African-American institution in Atlanta, from which both his father and grandfather had graduated. Dr. King then studied theology for three years at the Crozer Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania where he was elected president of a predominantly white senior class. He then enrolled in graduate studies at Boston University, completing his residence for the doctorate in 1953.

- In Boston, he met and married Coretta Scott, a young woman studying at the New England Conservatory of Music. They would have two sons and two daughters.

- By 1954, Dr. King was a member of the executive committee of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and the pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama. When the Montgomery bus boycott began in 1955, Dr. King became one of the leaders of the movement.

- The Montgomery bus boycott became one of the most successful non-violent demonstrations in modern history. During the boycott, King was arrested and his home was bombed, but he emerged as a great leader of the non-

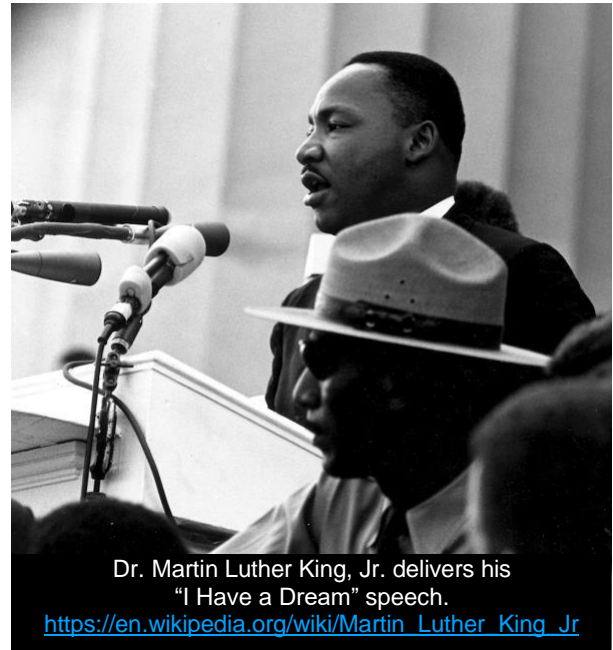


Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. - <https://thekingcenter.org>



violent civil rights movement. The boycott lasted 382 days and ended with a Supreme Court decision declaring bus segregation unconstitutional.

- In 1957, Dr. King was elected president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), formed to provide leadership for the growing civil rights movement. For the next eleven years, Dr. King travelled the country speaking over twenty-five hundred times, leading protests, and acting against injustice. He wrote “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” a manifesto for the civil rights movement, following his arrest during a protest in Birmingham; he told over 250,000 people “I Have a Dream” during a march in Washington, D.C.; and he led thousands in marches from Selma to Montgomery. At the age of thirty-five, Dr. King became the youngest person to win a Nobel Peace Prize. He gave the prize money to the Civil Rights Movement.



- On April 3, 1968, in Memphis, Tennessee, to support a sanitation workers’ strike, Dr. King delivered the speech “I have been to The Mountaintop”. The following day, April 4, 1968 he was assassinated.

- The news shook the nation. Dr. King remains a symbol of non-violence across the world and he is the only non-president to have a memorial on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.

Related Resource Links: Read an [excerpt of Dr. King’s father’s autobiography](#), about his son’s death; a 2020 article features [interviews with King’s children](#) about their father’s views and more recent racism.

The Southern Poverty Law Centre podcast [“Teaching Hard History”](#) has a [season about the civil rights movement](#) and [episode about Dr. King “as the man, not just the hero.”](#)

Learning for Justice has gathered [over 20 resources about Dr. King](#) including lessons, texts, and podcasts to incorporate into teaching.

Civil Rights Movement Timeline

With the end of slavery in the United States came a new set of laws treating African-Americans as second-class citizens. For over ninety years, the “Jim Crow Laws” enforced racial segregation in education, housing, transportation, and public facilities.

The Civil Rights Movement struggled in the 1920s and 1930s. By the mid-1950s, the federal government began to support Civil Rights activists. In 1954, in *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Supreme Court ruled that “separate but equal” school facilities were unconstitutional, ordering integration in public schools. In the decade that followed, Civil Rights activists, led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., fought a hard battle for equal rights. With the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Civil Rights Act of 1968, the civil rights of all Americans were established by law.

1954 U.S. Supreme Court declares school segregation unconstitutional in **Brown v. Board of Education** ruling.



1955 Rosa Parks refuses to move to the back of a bus in Montgomery, Alabama, as required by city ordinance; the **Montgomery Bus Boycott** follows, and the bus segregation ordinance is eventually declared unconstitutional.

1957 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. helps found the **Southern Christian Leadership Conference** to work for full equality for African-Americans.

1957 The federal government uses the military to uphold African-Americans’ civil rights as soldiers escort nine Black students to desegregate **Little Rock High School**.

1960 At the **Greensboro Sit-in**, four Black college students refuse to move from the lunch counter of a Greensboro, NC, restaurant where black patrons are not served, launching sit-ins across the South.



1962 **Malcolm X** becomes the National Minister of the Nation of Islam. He rejects the non-violent Civil Rights Movement and preaches African-American separatism and securing equal rights through “any means necessary.”

1963 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivers his “**I Have a Dream**” speech to hundreds of thousands of supporters during the March on Washington, the largest Civil Rights march in history.



1963 Arrested for a protest in Birmingham, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., writes the “**Letter from a Birmingham Jail**,” a manifesto for the Civil Rights Movement.

1964 Congress passes the **Civil Rights Act**, giving the federal government powers to prosecute discrimination based on race in employment, voting and education.



1965 A year after splitting with the Nation of Islam, **Malcom X is assassinated** in New York City.

1965 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., organizes a **march from Selma to Montgomery**, Alabama. Police beat and teargas protesters; the images are shown on television across the country.

1965 The **Voting Rights Act is passed**, outlawing the practices used to disenfranchise African-American voters.

1966 Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seales found the **Black Panther Party**, a radical black power group.

1967 **Thurgood Marshall** becomes the first African-American justice on the Supreme Court.

1968 **Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., is assassinated**. The event sparks riots across the country.

1968 **The Poor People’s March on Washington**, a march against poverty planned by King before his death, goes on.

Related Resource Links: Timelines with different emphases are available online. [The Jim Crow Museum timeline](#) has concise entries about many events, large and small, throughout the entire movement; a [timeline from PBS](#) selects fewer milestones and goes into more detail; and [History.com](#) covers civil rights from the 1940s-60s.

Civil Rights in Canada

While *The Mountaintop* is a reimagining of the last night of an African-American civil rights icon, the movement was not limited to that country. Here is a greatly abridged version of the situation in Canada at the time of *The Mountaintop*, and some historical context.

Although Canada did not have Jim Crow laws formalizing discrimination, it was still pervasive. Laws supported white supremacy by “accepting the conditions that allowed it to thrive,” with businesses allowed to refuse service to whoever they wished. Economic and social inequality was deeply entrenched, with stereotypes that Canada was a “white country” (Waters). Black residents were treated as “a reserve force of labour” having come to the country mostly as enslaved people, refugees, or fugitives, employed in segregated roles and paid less than white workers (Calliste). There were intersectional aspects as well: until the late 1950s most Black women’s only available employment was domestic work. The scale of violence in the American south was not widely seen in the northern states or in Canada, but discrimination against Black Canadians was still real and significant.

Many Black Canadians were engaged in anti-discrimination activism in the early 20th century, including in protests against screenings of racist films as early as 1915, and after World War II they took advantage of the international interest and press attention being paid to prejudice and rights. Pride growing out of the military service of Black Canadians, movements for African and Caribbean independence, South African apartheid, founding of the UN, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the American civil rights movement all contributed to growth of rights activism in Canada. Some activists supported the American movement, and adopted tactics and language from the US. There was a growing sense that racism was a problem no matter where it occurred, leading to collaboration across the US-Canada border.

In the 1940s-1970s, the civil rights movement in Canada focused on education, employment, and housing. There was a long history of advocacy for equality in employment. The Order of Sleeping Car Porters, founded in 1917, was an important organization by Black men working on railroads to fight discrimination. They later joined with the American-based Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, who sent a member to assist in organizing a chapter of the NAACP in Montreal. Throughout the 1940s, five more cities developed chapters and had some success in the field of employment equality through the 1950s and 60s (Calliste). The Canadian League for the Advancement of Colored People (CLACP) was formed in the 1920s, focusing more on charity than advocacy. During the war CLACP linked with the porters, and began to advocate for legislation that banned discrimination. The Nova Scotia

Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) emerged in 1945 and became well-known after leading the fundraising efforts for Viola Desmond's legal defense when she refused to acknowledge segregated seating at a movie theatre. Sit-ins at businesses were a frequent tactic in Canada to prove the ongoing presence of discrimination, as were tests to gather evidence that Black and white people were being treated differently when it came to apartment rentals, golf course use, employment, unequal grading practices at university, and more. Marches were less common in Canada than the US, but "occasionally organized with the dual aim of supporting global anti-racism and highlighting Canadian issues" (Waters).

Black Canadians paid attention to American postwar events, with stories such as the lynching of Emmett Till being reported in Canada by Black community newspapers like Carrie Best's *The Clarion*. Major Canadian newspapers and television networks also followed events of the American civil rights movement. Awareness translated into support for the American movement with many Canadian organizations assisting with funds, leading memorial services, protesting segregationist Americans who appeared as speakers in Canada, and holding sympathy protests marching on the US consulate. There were fewer reports on Canadian discrimination in the American media, but some were made on racism, poverty, and employment, while others highlighted Canadian progress to encourage similar steps in America.

The Black Power movement in the 1960s-70s began to focus on identity, history, and culture. American members of the movement visited Canada to mobilize Canadians, and students began to organize conferences in Canada. Burnley "Rocky" Jones was a leader in community organizing in Nova Scotia. His vision was similar to the Black Power advocates, which emphasized connections to oppressed peoples in other countries, and he arranged for Black Panther members to visit Canada.

Overall, the movement in Canada was seen much more on the local level than as a sweeping national movement, developing through local leadership and participation, and achieving results in specific communities. However, there was recognition that activism didn't stop at the border. There were many personal connections between activists as well as some official ones, such as Martin Luther King Jr. being invited to deliver a speech in Windsor by the Canadian Council of Christians and Jews in 1962. While the most prominent and obvious positions of leadership in both Canada and the US were held by men, women played essential roles in anti-discrimination organizations in both countries. More about grassroots organizing has been published in the last few decades, finally bringing their roles to light. Women wrote newspaper columns blending political and domestic issues, battled against racist literature in schools, hosted exhibitions on Black history and culture, and created women's clubs that served as social safety nets and challenged discrimination in daily life.

Related Resource Links: [Read an article](#) reminding us that Canada's Black history differs from the US including events to learn more about. The Turner Consulting Group has created a [comprehensive timeline of Black history in Canada](#) featuring profiles, government action, legislation, and social milestones.

The Canadian Encyclopedia features an article about [The Rights Revolution in Canada](#) (1945-1980s) at the grassroots and legislative level. It also has a [collection of Black History in Canada articles](#) including [overview of 1900-1960](#) and specific pieces about figures and institutions. The Canadian Museum for Human Rights has a [collection of stories on Black history and human rights](#) to explore, including an [overview of Canadian civil rights trailblazers](#); and [women of Canada's civil rights movement are featured in this article](#) free to download.

Interview with Original Director Audrey Dwyer

What inspires and excites you to direct The Mountaintop?

I'm inspired by Katori Hall's story and how she uses Realism and Black Magical Realism to get her story across. I'm very excited by the theatricality she's asking us to play with. I'm inspired by the theme of transformation.

Can you share your artistic insight into the production?

I feel that at the heart of this play is the need for transformation. The play, itself, transforms. I feel that Katori Hall is not only asking questions about racial justice, civil rights, war and legacy. She is examining the route that one must take in order to transform oneself. From human to heavenly body and from life to death are two that are clear within the play.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is a Black Civil Rights Leader who is reverently studied in schools. What is it about Dr. King in this play that you hope audiences take away?

He was a human, just like you and me. Katori's version of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is shown warts and all. He's not perfect. That was very important to her.

The play is set in 1968. Are there aspects of this play, and of this production, that will resonate with our current state of the world?

We are at a crossroads and have been at a crossroads since long before 1968. Looking back at the past allows us to examine what has changed and what has stayed the same. This production asks us to look inside ourselves to figure out what we need to do in the short time we're on the planet - how to be more empathetic people, how to take action no matter how uncomfortable it may feel and what is necessary for us to create a better world for those who come after us.

Glossary and Mentions

Baton – an object passed off between team members in a relay race.

“I know I have dropped this baton so many times over this race.” – King

Bougie – derived from “bourgeois”; a derogatory term describing someone who aspires to be of higher class.

“Well, let me school you, you bougie Negro. I don’t need a PhD to give you some knowledge, understand?” – Camae

Catchin’ flies – behaving as though in a state of drunkenness.

“Cause these white folks here ‘bout to be catchin’ flies now the way they be acting wit’ Negroes these days.” – Camae

Diatribes – a bitter verbal attack or criticism “Not too many maids spouting off well- formed diatribes like that.” – King

Incognegro – a derogatory term playing on “incognito” referring to an African-American who tries to hide their African heritage

“An incognegro. A spy.” – King

Injunction – a legal order commanding a person or group of persons to do or not do a particular action

“The city said it was seeking the injunction as a means of protecting Dr. King...” – King

Jesse Jackson – a protégé of King and leader of the civil rights movement who ran for president twice and served as a shadow US senator.

Larry Payne – a 16-year-old African-American boy, fatally shot by Memphis Police during the a march in support of sanitation strike. 60 people were reported injured and 276 arrested. “[Violence] just gives these police an excuse to shoot innocent folks. Like that boy... that 16-year-old boy they shot... Larry Payne. Larry Payne. Larry Payne. I’ll never forget his name.” – King

Malcolm X – an African-American Muslim minister, public speaker, and human rights activist; he was assassinated in February 1965 “I know God liked Malcolm X. And you woulda liked him, too. He didn’t drink. Smoke. Cuss.” – Camae

Martyr – a person who suffers or is killed while defending a principle, belief, cause, or idea “You’ll be a man-made martyr. No, better yet! A saint!” – Camae

Oratorical – a characteristic of someone with eloquent and superior public speaking ability “Well...tell me... How are my ‘oratorical skills’— see y’en thank I knew them words?” – Camae

Panther – a reference to the Black Panther Party, an African-American revolutionary group active from 1966 until 1982.

“So are you an honorary Panther?” – King

Preponderance – carrying superior weight, power, or importance
“We have gathered here today to deal with a serious issue. It is an issue of great preponderance” – Camae

Promised Land – in the Bible, the land promised by God to Abraham; also, a place or situation believed to hold ultimate happiness
“I have plans. Lots of plans in my head and in my heart and my people need me. They need me. I need to see them to the Promised Land.” – King

Poor People’s Campaign – a campaign organized by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference to address the issues of economic justice and housing for America’s poor
“The plan. It’s all in the works. The Poor People’s Campaign!” – King

Ralph – Reverend Ralph David Abernathy Sr. was a civil rights leader and Dr. King’s colleague and close friend.

“Sending tapes to my wife” – The FBI tried to discredit King by revealing his private life, trying to demonstrate that he had numerous extramarital affairs. They sent reports of these to reporters, funders, partners, and King’s family as well as anonymous letters to King blackmailing him. In 1964 a package was sent with tape recordings that were supposedly evidence of affairs and a letter saying “there is only one thing left for you to do... you know what it is.” King interpreted this as meant to convince him to commit suicide.

Siddity – a term for someone who is pretentious or conceited
“You can call me siddity all you like, I want me a Pall Mall.” – King

Spook – a term for a spy; also, a derogatory term for an African-American “Well, you’re not gonna catch me again! Where the hell is Ralph?/Ralph! I got a spook!” – King

Square – a term for a cigarette
“You ain’t gone leave me here to work through the night wit nothin’ to smoke on. ... All I got is one square left.” – Camae

Discussion and Writing Prompts

Pre-Show

- How do you define a leader? What attributes make a good leader?
- Who are exceptional leaders in the world today? (Think about your immediate community, the national community and the global community.)
- Who is Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.?
- Why is he remembered in history?
- During his speech *I've Been to the Mountaintop* Dr. King said: "Only when it is dark enough can we see the stars." What do you think this means?

Post-Show:

- What are five adjectives you would use to describe Camae and Dr. King? Are there any that overlap?
- Think about the line "Don't know where in the race we are, but pick up that baton and pass, pass, pass it along." Why is this line significant?
- What props or set pieces played a symbolic role in the production?
- What are your opinions on Camae and Martin Luther King's relationship? Did your view on their relationship change during the play? When?
- Towards the end of the play, we see images and text of moments in history that affect the Civil Rights Movement – what else would you add to it?

Suggested Classroom Activities

Pre-Show Knowledge Check: What do we know about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.?

Ask students these true or false questions. When finished, go through the answers and have students mark their own papers. Discuss what was surprising. What do we know or not know about Dr. King? Why do you think that's the case?

- Martin Luther King was born Michael King.
 - True: His birth name was Michael King Jr. born on January 15, 1929. After being inspired on a trip to Germany, his father Michael Sr. changed both his and his 5-year-old son's first name to Martin Luther.
- Martin Luther King smoked cigarettes.
 - True: Dr. King was a regular smoker, although there are no pictures to back this up. He hid his habit from the public.
- Martin Luther King went to college at the age of 10.
 - False: He was 15. King was such a gifted student that he skipped grades nine and 12 before enrolling in 1944 at Morehouse College, the alma mater of his father and maternal grandfather.
- Martin Luther King Jr. was a pastor.
 - True. At age 25, in 1954, King was called as pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama.

- Martin Luther King Day is celebrated in the United States.
 - True: In 1983 President Ronald Reagan signed a bill that created a federal holiday to honour King. The holiday, first commemorated in 1986, is celebrated on the third Monday in January, close to the civil rights leader's January 15 birthday.
- He had six kids.
 - False: He had four children: Martin Luther King III, Dexter King, Yolanda King and Bernice King with wife Coretta Scott King.
- Martin Luther King went to jail.
 - True: He was imprisoned 29 times
- At the age of 35, Martin Luther King, Jr., was the youngest man to receive the Nobel Peace Prize.
 - True: His prize included a cheque for \$54,123, which he donated to various organizations – Congress on Racial Equality (CORE), the NAACP, National Council of Negro Women, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and others – to aid in the progress of the civil rights movement.

Costume Creation

The purpose of the costumes is not only to clothe the performer but to communicate their character to the audience and reflect the style, mood and setting of the production. If you do this activity **before seeing the show**, read the plot summary as a group (not the full synopsis, to avoid spoilers!) You may also wish to share some photos of the setting, room 306 of the Lorraine Motel.

If you choose to do this activity **after seeing the show**, students will have a fuller idea of the characters, but should be reminded that while Rachel Forbes' costume design is great, it is not the only way to portray the characters, and encouraged to use their own creativity and new ideas.

Working individually or as a group, students should consider the following:

- What colours do you associate with each costume? Use any media to create a colour palette for the set and characters. Do Camae or King blend into the background of the room or stand out? Do they contrast with each other or are their palettes aligned?
- Where does each costume piece fall on the spectrum of simple vs elaborate, well-maintained vs worn?

- The space that a character takes up can be conveyed by their costume's silhouette or shape. What is looser or tighter? What kind of volume does each costume have?
- Would the costumes change as the show goes on? Are pieces added or removed?
- Once all these character traits are considered, then do some research on the historical context of the 1960s to determine what pieces might actually have been worn. How could you use or adapt these to fit the character choices you've made?

Create the costume by sketching it ([generic body forms available here](#) for proportion) or making a collage that shows colour, texture, shape, and references. You can include pieces of fabric as examples.

After seeing the performance, discuss what choices were made for the design elements in the MTC production (set, costume, lighting, sound, video). What did you do/would you have done differently? Why do you think the choices were made?

“I've Been to the Mountaintop”

On April 3, 1968, Martin Luther King Jr. gave what would be his last speech before his assassination in Memphis, Tennessee, the following day. He addressed protestors who had gathered to fight for the safety and wage rights of Memphis sanitation workers, many of whom were Black.

His message – support for a strike among sanitation workers who were demanding better safety standards and wages – emphasized the need for the demonstration, the importance of nonviolent protest and the power of economic withdrawal.

Related Resource Links: The events leading up to the workers' strike, this speech, and Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination are clearly laid out in the Southern Poverty Law Centre's [timeline of Dr. King's last campaign](#).

Have students read or listen to the Mountaintop speech. [You can find a full transcript and audio of the speech at Speakola.](#)

Consider and discuss:

- What is Dr. King's state of mind as he delivers this speech?
- What is the mountain a metaphor for? What other literary devices can you identify in the speech?
- Dr. King mentions God many times in this speech – what connection is there to between his faith and the Civil Rights movement?

When someone uses language to effectively argue a point or impress an audience, it is called *rhetoric*. Have students listen to or read The Mountaintop and compare to Amanda Gorman's [The Hill We Climb \(video available here\)](#).

Consider and discuss:

- What poetic devices are being used?
- What imagery is illustrated in the speeches?
- What moments stand out?
- Thinking about the key message from both speeches: If you had to edit both speeches down to 10 lines, what would they be? Five lines? One line? Be prepared to justify why you chose these lines.

Some key lines in The Mountaintop speech:

"It is no longer a choice between violence and nonviolence in this world; it's nonviolence or nonexistence."

"Let us rise up tonight with a greater readiness. Let us stand with a greater determination. And let us move on in these powerful days, these days of challenge to make America what it ought to be. We have an opportunity to make America a better nation. And I want to thank God, once more, for allowing me to be here with you."

"...the world is all messed up. The nation is sick. Trouble is in the land; confusion all around."

"Something is happening in our world. The masses of people are rising up. And wherever they are assembled today, whether they are in Johannesburg, South Africa; Nairobi, Kenya; Accra, Ghana; New York City; Atlanta, Georgia; Jackson, Mississippi; or Memphis, Tennessee – the cry is always the same: "We want to be free."

"The issue is injustice."

"Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And 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!"

Know It All – Improv Exercise

By Maggie Seymour for Trinity Repertory Company

This exercise could be done as a full class or in smaller groups. One person will step into the middle of the circle or in front of the group. This person will then be given an absurd thought/ belief/statement and must defend that statement with as much thought and logic as possible.

For example, Person A steps into the circle and the group decides they must defend the idea that all pants should be made of tinfoil. Person A must then explain how tinfoil is easier to recycle, how this will simplify clothing options and breakdown the social hierarchy, how tinfoil is more economically efficient, etc. Person A can develop any reasoning they choose. They must sell it wholeheartedly and it must have logic to it, even if that logic is false.

Speak the Speech

Create your own piece of writing that persuades an audience to believe your position. It can be short, but should be specific and work to get the audience on the speaker's side. The Mountaintop and the Hill we Climb from the earlier exercise could be used as a basis for figures of speech. Other examples to explore could include Interrogate what makes a motivational speech. How does it start? How does it end? How does it build? What were the most important moments? When did you feel most engaged? What moments stood out to the audience? How do you keep the energy moving forward? Who are some of the greatest motivational speakers and what do they all have in common?

Then, practice saying it incorporating the following vocal techniques:

- **Articulation** – How clearly you pronounce words and sounds.
- **Projection / Volume** – How loudly or quietly you speak.
- **Intonation** – Conveys the emotion of the character.
- **Pace** – Speed of dialogue, fast or slow
- **Pause** – Creating impact with silence/ heightening tension
- **Emphasis** – Stress given to a word to indicate importance

Present your unique, compelling speech and convey the message to your class.

Teachers may choose to have students explore topics to “pass Dr. King’s baton” such as What issues affect Black people in our world today? What issues affect young people in our world today? What issues affect you in our world today? or may open the floor to more simple topics with lower stakes such as the weather or living with a sibling.

Humanizing History

By Maggie Seymour for Trinity Repertory Company

Much like the style of *Hamilton*, this play attempts to humanize a figure that history has cast in a singular light. For this exercise brainstorm another historical figure and find a way to humanize them as well. It can be any historical figure, but the goal is to find/create/develop a side of this person that society might not have seen. This play gives a historically courageous man a bout of deep-seated fear. When picking a figure consider how this person might be more dimensional than the history books have room to describe. Pick any historical figure and write a behind the scenes, when the curtain goes down side of them. They could be an evil figure who really loved their wife, a hero who had no time for his childhood best friend.

Encourage the class to share their ideas. How does this change your understanding of what this person is most well known for? What is the most important thing to know about this person? How would this person feel if they knew you were telling this story? Why has history kept this side of the person hidden for so long?

Phone Call Reflection

By Maggie Seymour for Trinity Repertory Company

In this play, Dr. King gets to have a telephone call with God. He talks with her about her plans, her choices, and his future.

For this exercise, each student will write a silent reflection on one phone call. They are given the chance to make one call to someone they truly admire. This person can be living, dead, historical, fictional, whomever, but encourage the students to choose someone they idolize and with whom they would not otherwise have a chance to talk.

The students can develop the questions they might ask, as well as the responses they might receive. Encourage the students to think about why they chose this person, what they hope to get out of the conversation, and how they might end the call.

Encourage the students to think deeply as this is a personal exercise and does not need to be shared with the class.

Without sharing the pieces, discuss as a class or in small groups:

- Did this person live up to your expectations?
- How was this person different from what you had expected?
- Would you and this person be friends?
- What do you and this person have in common?
- What surprised you about your imagined conversation?

Cherissa Richards
and Ray Strachan.
Set by Brian
Perchaluk,
costumes by
Rachel Forbes,
lights and photo by
Hugh Conacher



Additional Classroom Materials and Resources

Manitoba Education has put together an [extensive collection for educators on Black History and Anti-Racism in Canada](#) encompassing books and films for various age groups, internet resources, and ways to integrate these topics into curriculum. You can explore it on the website or download a PDF. This also includes a support document on [Creating Racism-Free Schools through Critical/Courageous Conversations on Race](#).

Manitoba Association for Rights and Liberties offers classroom workshops as well as tools for teachers to facilitate activities in their own classrooms. [Reach out here to connect with MARL](#).

The See Different in-school program from the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion offers free teacher toolkits for classroom or extra-curricular programming. Each of the five toolkits contains:

- Professional development learning resources
- A facilitator manual for each activity
- Student handouts, and
- A corresponding PowerPoint presentation that includes embedded multi-media resources (e.g. videos and images).

The toolkit topics range from early introductions to diversity and identity, to exploring privilege, to becoming an ally. More information is available here: <https://ccdi.ca/campaigns/see-different/> and the kits can be downloaded for free here: <https://ccdi.ca/toolkits/>

Teaching While White: Audio and resource lists for all episodes available at <https://www.teachingwhilewhite.org/podcast/>

[Strong and Free podcast](#) from Historica Canada is a 6 part series of Black Canadians thriving and contributing to building the country.

The Canadian Museum for Human Rights has videos and a teaching guide for their series [Pass the Mic: Let's Talk About Racism](#).

Historica Canada has published a [Black History in Canada Education Guide](#) with links to other resources (some also featured in this Enrichment Guide) and lesson plans.

The Manitoba Teachers Society has collected [resources for Black History Month](#).

Parris consulting has published a [timeline of racist events and legislation](#) in Canada involving multiple cultures for use as an educational tool.

Curriculum Connections

Attending Royal MTC's production of *The Mountaintop* and discussing it, or participating in some of the suggested or similar activities, will fit into the Manitoba curricula in Drama, English Language Arts, Social Studies, History, Global Issues, and Music.

Drama/Theatre

Making: The learner develops language and practices for making drama/theatre.

DR-M1: The learner develops competencies for using the tools and techniques of body, mind, and voice in a variety of contexts.

Creating: The learner generates, develops, and communicates ideas for creating drama/theatre.

DR-CR1: The learner generates ideas from a variety of sources for creating drama/theatre.

DR-CR2: The learner experiments with, develops, and uses ideas for creating drama/theatre.

Connecting: The learner develops understandings about the significance of the dramatic arts by making connections to various times, places, social groups, and cultures.

DR-C1: The learner develops understandings about people and practices in the dramatic arts.

DR-C2: The learner develops understanding about the influence and impact of the dramatic arts.

Responding: The learner uses critical reflection to inform drama/theatre learning and to develop agency and identity.

DR-R1: The learner generates initial reactions to drama/ theatre experiences.

DR-R2: The learner critically observes and describes drama/ theatre experiences.

DR-R3: The learner analyzes and interprets drama/ theatre experiences.

DR-R4: The learner applies new understandings about drama/ theatre to construct identity and to act in transformative ways.

English Language Arts (Senior 1 through 4)

General Learning Outcome 1: Explore thoughts, ideas, feelings, and experiences.

Express ideas 1.1.1

Consider others' ideas 1.1.2

Experiment with language and forms 1.1.3

Develop understanding 1.2.1

Explain opinions 1.2.2

Combine ideas 1.2.3

General Learning Outcome 2: Comprehend and respond personally and critically to oral, print, and other media texts.

Prior knowledge 2.1.1

Experience various texts 2.2.1
Connect self, texts, and culture 2.2.2
Appreciate the artistry of texts 2.2.3
Forms and genres 2.3.1
Experiment with language 2.3.4
General Learning Outcome 3: Manage ideas and information.
Make sense of information 3.2.5
General Learning Outcome 5: Celebrate and build community.
Cooperate with others 5.1.1
Work in groups 5.1.2
Share and compare responses 5.2.1
Appreciate diversity 5.2.3

Social Studies

All Grades - Social Studies Skills

Critical and Creative Thinking

Communication

Grade 9 Cluster 1: Diversity and Pluralism in Canada

9.1.2 Human Rights

9.1.3 Living Together in Canada

9.1.4 Integration and Pluralism

Grade 10 American History Units II and V

Grade 11 History of Canada

While the content of *The Mountaintop* is different than that studied in the Grade 11 curriculum, attending, discussing, and/or doing an activity about the play could correlate with Key Concepts of Historical Thinking:

- establish historical significance
- identify continuity and change
- analyze cause and consequence
- take historical perspectives
- understand ethical dimensions of history

Grade 12 Global Issues: Citizenship and Sustainability

Attending, discussing, and/or doing an activity about the play, particularly in regard to privilege and power, could correlate with Pillars of Learning and Enduring

Understandings:

Learning to Know

Seek knowledge from diverse sources and perspectives.

Use creative, critical, and systems thinking to address complex questions.

Explore alternative approaches to issues without fear of challenging status quo.

Learning to Do

Cultivate and share personal skills, talents, and gifts.

Demonstrate care and respect through language and actions.

Be an empowered and committed agent of change.

Learning to Be

Be willing to contribute to the present and future well-being of all.

Be introspective and self-aware.

Acquire a strong sense of self-knowledge and personal identity.

Accept and express multiple identities, allegiances, and influences.

Know how to be and how to live with others in shared spaces.

Learning to Live Together

Respect diversity and value equity.

Respect the inherent, inalienable, and universal nature of human rights.

Understanding: Political systems distribute power, privilege, and wealth in different ways, some more justly than others.

Understanding: A just society respects human diversity and recognizes universal, equal, and unalienable human rights.

Mental Health Resources

Some of the content in *The Mountaintop* may be distressing or triggering. Here are some resources should you need assistance.

For immediate help in a mental health crisis:

KLINIC Crisis Line: Winnipeg 204-786-8686; toll-free Manitoba 1-888-322-3019

24/7 Manitoba Suicide Prevention and Support Line: 1-877-435-7170

Manitoba Farm, Rural, and Northern Support Services: 1-866-367-3276 24/7

Hope for Wellness Indigenous Peoples Helpline: 1-855-242-3310 24/7

Winnipeg Crisis Stabilization Unit: 204-940-3633 24/7

Winnipeg Mobile Crisis Service: 204-940-1781 24/7

Winnipeg Youth Mobile Crisis Team: 204-949-4777, 1-888-383-2776

Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868 or text 686868 24/7

KLINIC Community Health - <http://klinik.mb.ca>

Provides health care, counselling, and education as well as a crisis line (suicide as well as sexual assault) for people of every age, background, ethnicity, gender identity, and socio-economic circumstance. Clinic's crisis lines" open to people of all ages, genders and backgrounds. **You do not have to be in crisis or suicidal to call.** Calling the Crisis Lines can be a good place to start when trying to sort out a problem. Clinic can also refer you to other services or programs.

MB Farm, Rural and Northern Support Services offers free, confidential, non-judgmental counselling for anyone living on a Manitoba farm or in a rural or northern community: 1-866-367-3276 or 204-571-4180. Live chat and resources online at <https://supportline.ca>

BIPOC Mental Health Worker List is a free open-source resource for Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour-identifying individuals seeking low-barrier BIPOC therapists, counsellors, and mental health workers in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

https://ninecircles.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/BIPOC-MENTAL-HEALTH-WORKER-LIST-8-x-11-in_compressed-2.pdf

BIPOC Mental Health Resource Guide includes links, apps, books, and podcasts. Please note that this is an American publication, so helplines and directories are not tailored to Canadians.

https://ncaaorg.s3.amazonaws.com/ssi/mental/SSI_BIPOCMHResourceGuide.pdf

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