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# HSLIC News - LibGuides at University of New Mexico

## Reflections on Martin Luther King Jr.'s Legacy

by Amy Weig Pickering on January 17th, 2022 | [0 Comments](#)

What does the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday mean to you? Are you happy that you have a day off from work? Do you take time to reflect on the work Dr. King did in his lifetime to advance the Civil Rights of African-Americans as well as other people of color? Perhaps you are trying to figure out how the teachings of Dr. King apply to what is happening in our world today.

[The Civil Rights Act of 1964](#) was the most inclusive legislation passed which prohibited discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex or national origin. In addition, this act also outlawed discrimination in public accommodations and federally funded programs. It also strengthened the enforcement of voting rights and the desegregation of schools. Dr. King was extremely instrumental in getting this vital piece of legislation passed.

In 1965 [The Voting Rights Act](#) was passed which removed barriers for Black voters in the South. It banned polling taxes, literacy tests, as well as other restrictions. Although we have made strides with civil rights, we still have a ways to go. In 2013, the Supreme Court effectively struck down the heart of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 which freed nine states (mostly Southern) to change their election laws without advance federal approval.

Currently, numerous states within this country are in the process of revising their voter laws. Some states have looked to expand their voting process by making it easier for eligible voters. However, numerous states have enacted legislation to make it more difficult for people of color to vote. The belief as to why these changes should be made are rooted in racism around voter turn-out.

At the time of writing, Congress is proposing [The Freedom to Vote Act](#), which is considered the most comprehensive democracy reform act enacted in decades. The primary focus of this bill is to have a national standard for how states conduct their federal elections and to ensure all Americans have equal access to the ballot box.

As we can see, there still is plenty of work to be done. What lessons can we take away from Dr. King? How can we work on some small level to protect a fundamental American right? Please take some time today to reflect on what Martin Luther King Jr. Day represents, the work that still needs to be done, and what we can do to honor his legacy.





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