

"Not a day off, but a day on..."
Proposal for Reform of Celebrations of the
Martin Luther King, Jr. National Holiday at Wartburg College

Rationale: Each year, the Wartburg College community experiences the same struggles: a lack of social awareness and respect for diversity. We, a group of concerned students with varied affiliations and ethnic backgrounds, desire these qualities in ourselves as well as in those with whom we interact. For that reason, we request an entire day dedicated to studying pertinent racial and social issues on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. Issues faced both on our campus and throughout the world should be addressed in this academic setting. We expect our peers and ourselves to be educated about issues so that the quality of life throughout the world will improve.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day: The minimal and marginalized observance of the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday sends a strong message to the student body that issues of social justice do not need to be integrated into everyday life. The results of this attitude have been visibly reflected among the student body. For example, racial slurs have caused problems within the residential community each of the three last semesters.

Dr. King was a proponent of the unity and equality of all races, and his work has become a legacy of such magnitude that Congress declared a national holiday in his honor. His impact on our individual lives, our communities, and our country cannot be denied. Celebrating this day already established within society will reinforce the message of his own significance and the seriousness of the issues for which he stood. His actions are critical starting points for dialogue and action pertaining to social issues in the future. Discussions on social injustice, the relationship of church and state, race relations, and activism, even in an academic setting, are clearly relevant to Dr. King's life as well as ours, on campus and beyond.

But An Entire Day? By concentrating activities into one entire day, the college will place ardent emphasis on the issues discussed. Many classes and work-study positions are scheduled during convocation times and keep students from attending the valuable programs currently offered. While other organizations and activities also face these scheduling problems, the issues discussed in relation to King are essential to relationships and responsibilities each student will encounter throughout his/her lifetime.

The programming for this day would support Wartburg College's commitment to fostering students with lifelong learning skills for leadership and service. We would be reinforcing our character as an institution by recognizing achievements in civil rights through educational forums and venues rather than adding the vacation day typical of most institutions. We applaud the activities already organized in the days surrounding Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, but we exhort the college as an institution to honor the sanctity of the day itself by not conducting its business as usual.

Making Up For A "Lost Day": Though we do not view this day as a "lost day," changes will have to be made to the current class schedule. We believe professors could incorporate the day into their curriculum by discussing their course themes in the context of these social issues, or require participation in service learning events to complete course work. Either of these options should alleviate the need to add another day to the schedule. Significant learning can

and will occur through these alternative methods. For more suggestions, please refer to the "Possible Activities" section below.

Accountability: In order to prevent a second Outfly from occurring, some students may need to be compelled to attend the sessions. We acknowledge this, but also believe this could be resolved through class requirements on attendance or extra credit, if instituted. Otherwise, attendance at these sessions could become a requirement for graduation. Setting precedence, Waldorf College gives a Humanities credit which requires attendance at three of four convocations each semester as well as participation in cultural activities. Slips with the student's name and a brief description of the activity are collected and recorded. If the student fails to meet the requirements, they receive an F for .25 credits (using the traditional credit system). Similar programs are in place at benchmark schools such as Luther and Central. It should be feasible to establish a similar system at Wartburg College. This may be most ideally implemented along with the new Wartburg Plan next fall.

Possible Activities/ Ways to Organize the Day: As evidenced by the petition and the students initiating this push for change, the student body is interested in alternative means of learning on this day. The petitioners would be willing to organize sessions, booths, displays, and activities similar to those for other celebrations. Also, involving academic departments in organizing sessions relating social/racial issues to the students' field of study would make these fields more applicable to students' lives. Since some issues, such as racial slurs, directly concern residential life, another option would be for residence halls to hold special programs on diversity living. In addition, floors could volunteer at area social service organizations as a group, strengthening community within the halls. Another suggestion would be to form a committee of delegates from all campus organizations to plan the day in conjunction with faculty and staff. Or, an "organization-in-charge" could rotate from year to year, putting a new group in charge of recruiting support from other organizations each year. There is no shortage of ideas for activities relating to any social issue. The task will be to decide who is responsible for finalizing the schedule of events.

Point/Counterpoint:

Dr. King stressed education, wouldn't this plan contradict what he stood for?

It would be a day of education. The "day off" mentality is not what we are promoting, but rather an alternative, more hands-on look at contemporary issues.

The government established the holiday, but why should Wartburg do more?

Students need to be more aware of the struggle people faced just two generations ago. In the rural Midwest, many people naively assume that everyone is treated equally throughout the world. Section 169j of Chapter 9 of Title 36 of the United States Code, reads as follows:

The Congress finds that -

(1) January 20, 1986, marks the first observance of the Federal legal holiday, established by Public Law 98-144, honoring the birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr.;

(2) such holiday should serve as a time for Americans to reflect on the principles of racial equality and nonviolent social change espoused by Martin Luther King, Jr.; and

(3) it is appropriate for the Federal Government to coordinate efforts with Americans of diverse backgrounds and with private organizations in the observance of the Federal legal holiday honoring Martin Luther King, Jr.

(quoted from <http://www.multipull.com/drkingday/philo.html>)

With the approval of the federal government, it is more than appropriate for a church-affiliated school in a geographical area that does not fully realize the level of national inequality to encourage discussion and reflection on King's day, whether discussing the issue of race inequality or other pertinent social issues.

Students do not attend convocations without being required to, why would they attend a day of learning?

Instead of spending one hour sitting in an auditorium and listening to a speaker that may or may not be able to relate to the individual, students can be more actively involved in the organization of this day. Creativity will be necessary for success, but activities which keep the students moving such as service, informational fairs, and active participation in the organization process, can better hold students' interest. Relevance to students' lives also needs to be the focus of all activities for the day. Being able to discuss sensitive social issues in academic and rational manner is a valuable skill. If practical applications are stressed with the learning, as is sometimes forgotten or under-emphasized in traditional classroom learning, students will find that they want to be there.

My course or field of study does not lend itself very well to a discussion of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s work. How can I make his teachings and/or a discussion of racial and social issues more applicable to my classroom?

No professor should be able to state that other cultures have had no influence on her or his academic discipline. We particularly exhort the music and hard science departments to take upon themselves the challenge of representing minority scientists and misuse of science to justify racism and other forms of social injustice; minority performers and composers; and the cultural and ethnic traditions inherent to the music we perform and study at this institution today.

Wartburg College is a respected institution. The problems within our community are minor compared to the level of misunderstanding and lack of responsibility within the entirety of society. By focusing on issues similar to those for which King fought, the students will contemplate their importance to their lives and application to their fields of study. Students will also witness the impact one person can have within society. The day will frustrate, inspire, and educate, but most importantly, it will compel students to investigate an issue they cannot afford to ignore.

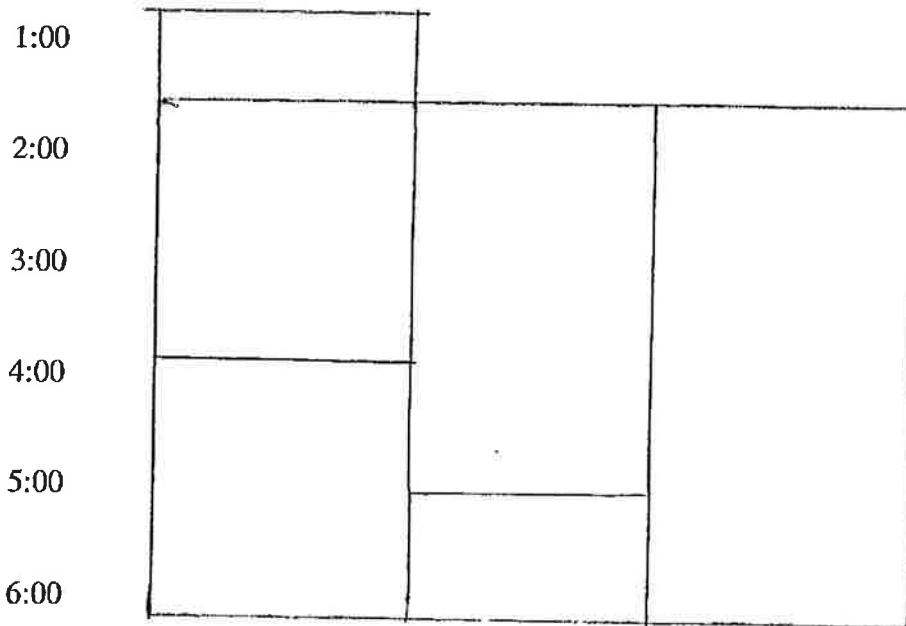
MLK Framework

Goal: The goal of the revised college schedule for the MLK National Holiday is to encourage students to participate in service and alternative educational activities that honor the life and work of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Following the recommendation of the King National Holiday Commission and in keeping with Wartburg's own mission, service shall be primary.

Programming: Faculty and staff advisors to the MLK planning effort are committed to empowering student leadership of the celebration. Within this framework, students will have primary responsibility for the program and activities on the holiday and surrounding days.

Schedule: For the King Holiday, the college will follow the "Thanksgiving Wednesday" schedule. Under this schedule, all classes are reduced to 50 minutes with a 10 minute break between classes. There is no chapel, and the last classes of the day (those that normally start at 2:30) end at 1:35 pm.

Based on this schedule, several different types of activities are possible using 2,3, or 4 hour blocks.



2-hour slots – race dialogues, presentations, doc. films and discussion


3-hour slots – films and discussion, service activities

4-hour slots – longer films, service activities

Artist Series: The culmination of the King Holiday celebration is a concert by Simon Estes at 8 pm

Memorandum

To: All Faculty

From: Ferol Menzel, Dean of the Faculty 

Subject: Proposal to Amend the Academic Calendar for
Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday

In May, both EPC and Faculty Council reviewed a proposal by Lake Lambert to amend the academic calendar for the Martin Luther King National Holiday on Monday, January 15, 2001. This proposal emerged from conversations initiated by President Ohle and in response to student proposals about the holiday. EPC responded favorably to the proposals, and Faculty Council decided to put them before the faculty for a formal vote.

The first proposal would amend the academic calendar to provide for an "Ash Wednesday schedule" on Monday, January 15, 2001. This involves shortening two morning class (9:00 class dismiss at 9:50 and 10:45 classes convene at 11:00) to allow for an extended chapel period. A normal class schedule resumes at 12:00 p.m., and no afternoon classes, labs, or practices are affected. The expanded chapel time will allow for MLK Convocation to be held during the day in this time slot. The Convocation Committee has already made a decision to hold the King Convocation on the holiday Monday, but the current plan is for the event to be in the evening. With this minor change to the academic calendar, the King Convocation could be held on the holiday Monday, and the entire college community would be able to attend. Our scheduled speaker, Dr. Peter Paris, is available for this time, and the campus chaplains are supportive of this move.

The second proposal would endorse a Student Life effort to program service and alternative educational activities for the afternoon of the King holiday. This proposal would offer official college activities to interested students during the afternoon of the holiday Monday. Activities might include service projects, speakers, films and/or other educational activities. Students would choose whether or not to miss classes, labs or practices to participate in these activities. Individual faculty will determine whether to classify absences as excused or unexcused.

Motions for these two proposals will be made at the faculty meeting on Tuesday, October 10. I recommend that these proposals be discussion items for upcoming Group meetings. ~~If you would like to review a complete copy of Lake's proposals and~~
~~rationales, email him directly.~~

Proposal and petition for extending Chapel service on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birthday.

What did you do on Dec. 31st? What did you do on Feb. 14th? What did you do on March 17th? What did you do on Jan. 15th?

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was a great man, he stood for peace and equality. Throughout his life he had to fight and struggle, but through it all he never used violence. He fought all his battles with love and non-violence. Since Jan. 20, 1986, the United States of America has honored him with Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. This celebration is observed on the Monday following his actual birthday, Jan. 15th. I believe that here on the Wartburg campus, we could do much more to honor this great man. I propose to have an extended Chapel service in the morning on the day of observance. An extended chapel service would mean shortening two class sessions, such as we already do for Ash Wednesday.

	<u>Regular schedule</u>	<u>Extended Chapel</u>
Classes end	10:05am	9:50am
Chapel begins	10:15am	10:00am
Chapel ends	10:35am	10:50am
Classes start	10:45am	11:00am

The extended chapel service would allow for a special guest speaker and special music to commemorate this special day.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. gave his life for peace, equality and justice--for all people. We should give more than a moment of silence. The questions in the introduction make it clear how much attention is paid to this national holiday. Everyone can remember special days like New Year's Eve, Valentines Day and St. Patrick's Day, but few can remember Dr. King's birthday. Wartburg College should join the rest of the country and ~~make Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday more meaningful to this campus and~~ community. It will send a positive message to the campus that Wartburg really does value diversity and equality. Dr. Aretha B. Pigford states, "Within the last fifteen years, it has

been trendy and politically correct to express a commitment to diversity. Expertly crafted policy statements, student creeds, and institutional mission statements reflect this trend.

Too often, however, a lack of action to support these statements had reduced those words to nothing more than, to use a biblical phrase, sounding brass and tinkling cymbals.”

Commitment can be measured only in terms of action, not words. I agree whole-heartedly with Dr. Pigford, Professor of Educational Administration at the University of South Carolina-Columbia.

Wartburg’s mission statement declares, “Wartburg College is dedicated to challenging and nurturing students for lives of leadership and service as a spirited expression of their faith and learning.” The vision statement proclaims, “Wartburg, as a community of faith and learning, helps students discover and claim their callings- connecting their learning with faith and values, their understanding of themselves and their gifts, their perspective on life and the future, and the opportunities for participating in church, community, and the larger society in purposeful and meaningful ways.” The distinctive character of a Wartburg education is marked by six dynamic interactions:

A rigorous academic program and an emphasis on "living your learning."

A dedication to the liberal arts and a concern for usefulness and careers.

A focus on the future and an appreciation for history and heritage.

A commitment to leadership built on a tradition of service to others.

A spirit of exploration and discovery and a foundation of faith and values.

A global outreach and Midwestern roots.

Dr. King lived these same values and principles. His faith and hope for the future and commitment to serving others exemplifies exactly those principles that Wartburg espouses.

In response to your first response to this proposal, Wartburg does not do enough as a whole for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s National Birthday celebration. The evening Chapel service that is usually held are not attended by faculty and staff due to family

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obligations. The faculty that are here on campus cannot attend due to night classes still being held. There are a lot of students that can't attend either and I have heard their frustrations. Wartburg need to participate as a whole and we have to start somewhere. We are not asking for the entire day off. We just want more time to celebrate in chapel as a community as a whole.

I have the support of key faculty, staff and students regarding this matter including Prof. Lake Lambert, Ethics Chairperson; Pastor Larry Trachte, Campus Pastor; and Rickey Hall, Director of Student Diversity. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted again,

Meloyne Wimbley

"When does any of us ever do enough?" - Barbara Jordan

Just like a tree that's planted by the waters, I shall not be moved!!

P.S. Teresa Honeycutt (Mocha) has written a poem that express the feelings of those supporting this proposal. Please read the attached poem.