



THE INTERSECTIONS OF MLK'S TRIPLE THREATS

WHY DO IT?

- To understand the intersections of what Martin Luther King, Jr. called the “Giant Triplets” of racism, poverty/extreme materialism, and militarism.
- To identify current examples of the intersections of these “giant triplets.”
- To point to the value of doing organizing based on their interconnection and to make clear how challenging them separately makes our work less effective.

TIME

1 hour, or more if you read all or part of the King's “Beyond Vietnam” Speech

MATERIALS

Paper, string, tape, markers/crayons, and items that can be used as props for skits incorporating role-playing.

FACILITATOR PREP

Facilitators should read “Beyond Vietnam” which can be found on many sites on the web such as: bit.ly/BeyondVietnam1. Additionally, bit.ly/BeyondVietnam2 has a Lesson Plan: Martin Luther King, Jr.'s “Beyond Vietnam” with links to the speech, primary source documents including a New York Times editorial against the speech, “Letters to the Editor”, and King’s response.

Facilitators can also look at bit.ly/Call2Conscience. Tavis Smiley Reports examines Martin Luther King, Jr.'s stand against the Vietnam War and the influence of his legacy today. Tavis speaks with scholars and friends of King, including Cornel West, Vincent Harding, and Susannah Heschel.

“I still hear people say that I should not be talking about the rights of lesbian and gay people and I should stick to the issue of racial justice...
But I hasten to remind them that Martin Luther King, Jr. said,
“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

-Coretta Scott King, 25th anniversary luncheon for Lambda Defense and Education Fund, March 31, 1998

The Intersections of MLK’s Triple Threats, from **Movement Building For Allies**
WAR RESISTERS LEAGUE

wrl@warresisters.org

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DIRECTIONS

1. [10 MINS] Review the background and key quotes of Dr. King’s “Beyond Vietnam” speech and the concept of the “Giant Triplets.” Facilitate a discussion drawing on the knowledge in the group. If there is time, more of the speech can be read.

Background: On April 4, 1967, exactly a year before his death, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. gave his “Beyond Vietnam” speech at Riverside Church in New York City. In this controversial speech, which was condemned by many other civil rights leaders, King came out strongly against war and militarism, connecting it with racism and economic injustice: *“When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, extreme materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered.”* Later on in the speech King says, *“Our only hope today lies in our ability to recapture the revolutionary spirit and go out into a sometimes hostile world declaring eternal hostility to poverty, racism, and militarism.”*

In the last year of his life, Martin Luther King, Jr. organized at the intersection of these “Triple Threats.” King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference organized the Poor People’s Campaign to address issues of economic justice. King stated that Congress appropriated “military funds with alacrity and generosity” while “providing poverty funds with miserliness.” King saw this as the next phase of the movement, a nonviolent campaign to push Congress towards creating an “Economic Bill of Rights.”

2. [5 MINS] Split the group into teams of 3-4 people. Ask each team to make a list of current examples of the intersections of the “Giant Triplets.”

Examples could include:

- Military recruitment of low-income youth of color through what is called the “poverty draft.”
- Environmental racism/climate justice—pipelines going through Indigenous land.
- Police militarization in communities of color, and racism throughout the criminal justice system.

3. [15 MINS] Each team picks one example from their list to create a skit or Image Theater* performance that points out the intersections of racism, poverty/ extreme materialism, and militarism. The skit should be 2-3 minutes long at the most.

**Note: Image Theater uses no language, but is the creation of a still image that tells a story through the positions of the bodies involved. For more info, go to <http://www.dramaresource.com/strategies/image-theatre>.*

4. [30 MINS] Each team performs, followed by a debriefing and discussion in the big group on the value of doing organizing based on the interconnections of issues.

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