



**NAME: HELEN LEWIS  
JOHNSON**

AGE: 80

CITY: HUMBLE

**MY REACTION TO THE DAY WHEN MARTIN LUTHER KING  
JR. WAS ASSASSINATED**

1. Tell me what your first thoughts are when you think about the day MLK was assassinated on April 4, 1968 (whether you remember it as an adult when it happened,

as a child when it happened, or after being told about it through the history books or from your parents or grandparents).

I was enjoying being home with my four children while on a Spring Break from my studies in Psychology and Sociology at Texas Southern University when the tragic news of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr's assassination aired on national television. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., himself, had prepared the world for his assassination upon delivering his famous Mountaintop speech the day before. He was saying farewell as if someone had notified him of his imminent demise. Like most admirers and followers of Dr. King, I was saddened, hurt, disappointed, and angry. Thoughts of Malcolm X and his teachings about the interweaving of violence into the fabric of American capitalism and democracy flashed through my mind. I wondered, "How could a man who advocated so strongly for non-violence, inclusion, peace, and freedom for all people have met such a tragic end?"

## 2. What does this tragic day mean to you personally?

April 4, 2022, is a day to commemorate the life of our great Champion of Civil Rights, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Ironically, the day falls within the Lenten period when followers of Christ are fasting, repenting, and praying for God's grace and guidance in making them personally more mindful of the things that are just, righteous, kind, and true.

In remembrance of Dr. Martin Luther King's assassination, America should reflect upon the life and legacy of Dr. King who was too gentle to be cruel, too loving to hate, too concerned to be silent, and too forgiving to seek revenge. There would be no need for organizations to fight discrimination and injustice if we treated everyone as equals regardless of race, color, creed, religion, and gender." Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

## 3. James Earl Ray was a known racist who promoted hatred...MLK was a champion of peace between all races -- what message can be shared with the world about something so terrible that took place between 2 people on the opposite end of how they viewed race and unity?

Few Black people believed James Earl Ray assassinated Dr. King, although he was a confessed racist. Instead, we felt Dr. King's death was orchestrated by a faction of the U.S. government in collaboration with the Mafia. James Earl Ray was merely a pawn in the game of institutionalized racism, mind manipulation, and control. His disdain for the lack people and hatred toward them made him easy prey to take the fall for the

assassination. The racist groups he supported deceived him and left him in prison. Ray voiced his innocence for years before his death on April 23, 1998. He died an angry and bitter man who denounced the United States as his country. His ashes were flown to Ireland, home of his maternal family. Conversely, Dr. King died knowing he had done all he could to foster brotherly love, mutual respect for everyone, peaceful protest, and the desire for a better world. He was given a funeral fit for a U.S. president.

4. What lessons do you want society to learn about this anniversary?

On the anniversary of Dr. King's assassination, we must remember that high ideals, love and compassion for all people, and the courage to speak out against injustices of all kinds will force our countries and their leaders to condemn corruption, racial hatred, and unfairness at all levels.

5. Remembering this anniversary is important symbolically, but what action or actions can be taken to make sure there is a change in society and not just symbolism? (Whether that's educating the younger generation, the Black Lives Matter movement, protesting injustices, etc.)

- i. Change in society must focus on anti-racism.
  - a. Identify and expose acts of racism when they occur.
  - b. Review, identify and overturn laws that support voter suppression, unwarranted police aggression, false arrests, unfair hiring practices, legislative redistricting, less for school districts with people of color student ratio, funding school districts, predatory lending, and housing discrimination.
  - c. Protest television programs, movies, and books portraying Black people in racially stereotypical roles.
  - d. Expose unfairness in the privatization of prisons.
  - e. Protest judges with a history of discrimination in sentencing against Black and Latinos.
- ii. Change in society should include

- f. Encouraging more people of color to run for political office at the Federal, State, County, and City levels.
- g. Ensuring People of Color have entrepreneurial opportunities.
- h. Providing training programs to teach minority businesses how to grow and thrive.

EDUCATION ABOUT BLACK HISTORY SHOULD BEGIN IN THE HOMES, CHURCHES, AND COMMUNITY AGENCIES. AMERICAN HISTORY BOOKS SHOULD INCLUDE BLACK HISTORY AS IT OCCURRED DURING THE PERIOD STUDIED. WHITE AND BLACK STUDENTS MUST READ ABOUT THE UNFAIR AND CRUEL TREATMENT OF BLACK PEOPLE IN THE COLONIES FROM 1619 FORWARD. BOOKS SHOULD TALK ABOUT FREE BLACK PEOPLE WHO OWNED WHITE AND BLACK SLAVES, NOT JUST SLAVE-OWNERS OF ENSLAVED BLACK PEOPLE.



Permission is given to Black Heritage Society 4/5/2022