

# Emerson Student Council's Civil Rights Project 2008-2015

## *Keeping The Dream Alive*

At the February 1, 2008, Emerson Student Council meeting, then-Physical Education Teacher Alice Wardlow proposed a Black History Month Project. She suggested that Student Council research 24 parts of her timeline of the Civil Rights Movement and present their reports to the school during an assembly. A motion was made by our sixth grade secretary, seconded, and voted unanimously. All council members and several of their classmates chose parts of the timeline to research on their own time, as well as Mrs. Ivins' power hour groups from 5th and 6th grades as part of their reading and writing lessons. Mrs. Marcia Gorlaski, our music teacher, taught the classes freedom songs to sing during the assembly on March 14th at 9:35 a.m.

The presenters met with Mrs. Ivins to verify their reports, and then record or videotape them with their visual aids such as posters, skits, and songs as accompaniment. She compiled and produced a DVD of this entire timeline which was aired during the March 14th "Keeping the Dream Alive" assembly. Their Posters were displayed in the Emerson gym.

There were several re-enactments of events such as the Rosa Parks incident which we filmed on our school bus (and was covered by the Bucks County Courier Times) and the sit-ins at the lunch counters filmed in our school cafeteria.

Another highlight of the project was our sixth grade Student Council reporter interviewing J.D. Mullane, writer for the Bucks County Courier Times, about the Myer's family. They were the first African-American family to move to Levittown. In 1957, Levittown was a "closed community" and sales of the new homes were not open to Black families. The Myers' acquired their home from a private sale which sparked riots from 500 Levittown residents. The family was terrorized and threatened, as well as the kind neighbors who tried to help. Bill and Daisy Myers and their family tolerated crowds jeering, cars honking, mailboxes slammed, rocks and cigarettes thrown at their house breaking their picture window, and much more. Crosses were burned at neighbors' houses as well as vandalism. Mr. Mullane covered the events years later as Levittown apologized to Daisy Myers as it prepared for its 50th anniversary. Mr. Mullane became a friend to Daisy Myers and we were thankful to have him visit Emerson for our interview. For more information, be sure to read "Sticks 'n Stones" written by Daisy Myers about her turmoil in Levittown. It can be borrowed from the Levittown Library. Student Council purchased a copy for our own school library as well as four other Civil Rights books appropriate for elementary students.

The assembly on March 14th was an incredible tribute to those involved in the Civil Rights Movement. Students and teachers from grades 2 through 6 were in attendance as well as several guests, including Mrs. Gerlach from our School Board. The DVD was aired continuously on Election Day, April 22nd, in the Emerson lobby for guest voters to view. We later uploaded the video to our schooltube channel (in four parts) as a resource in teaching Civil Rights history to all students, and in keeping the dream alive! (Click links to view).

## US Civil Rights Movement Timeline on Schooltube



[Part One: 1500-1955](#)



[Part Two: 1957-1960](#)

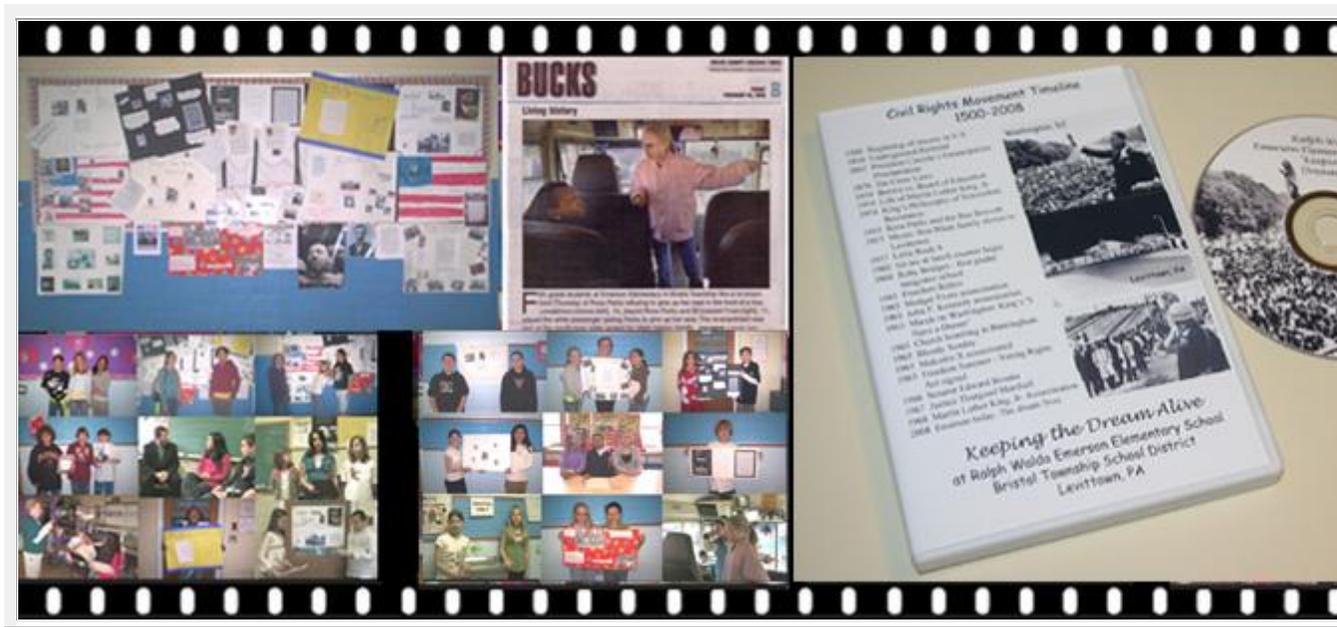


[Part Three: 1961-1963](#)



[Part Four: 1965-2008](#)

1500	<b>Beginning of slavery in U.S.</b>
1810	<b>Underground Railroad - Harriet Tubman</b>
1863	<b>President Lincoln issues the Emancipation Proclamation</b>
1876	<b>Jim Crow Laws (Laws of Segregation - separate fountains, bathrooms, etc.)</b>
1954	<b>Brown vs. Board of Education - Desegregation of Schools</b>
1954	<b>Life of Martin Luther King, Jr.</b>
1954	<b>Martin Luther King Jr.'s Philosophy of Nonviolent Resistance</b>
1955	<b>Rosa Parks and the Bus Boycott</b>
1957	<b>Myers family discrimination - first Black family moves to Levittown</b>
1957	<b>Nine black students attend Little Rock High School</b>
1960	<b>Sit-ins at lunch counter begin</b>
1960	<b>Ruby Bridges - first grader integrates school system</b>
1961	<b>Freedom Riders; Supreme Court: Segregation unconstitutional in transportation facilities</b>
1963	<b>Civil Rights leader Medgar Evers killed by snipers bullet</b>
1963	<b>John F. Kennedy - friend of Civil Rights cause also killed</b>
1963	<b>March on Washington - Martin Luther King, Jr. "I Have a Dream" speech</b>
1963	<b>Church bombing in Birmingham - 4 young black girls die</b>
1965	<b>March from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama demanding voting rights (Bloody Sunday)</b>
1965	<b>Malcolm X assassinated - militant side of civil rights movement</b>
1965	<b>Freedom Summer - Voting Rights Act signed</b>
1966	<b>Edward Brooke - first black US senator elected</b>
1967	<b>Thurgood Marshall first black to be named to Supreme Court</b>
1968	<b>Assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.</b>
2008	<b>Emerson today with thanks to the Civil Rights leaders</b>



On August 24th, 2009, Mrs. Ivins traveled to Washington, DC, to take part in the launch of the Kids for King Project. The founders of the planned Martin Luther King Memorial in DC, along with the U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, the NEA, NBA, National PTA, and Travelers are supporting the "dream" to educate younger children in the Civil Rights Movement. Mrs. Ivins was proud to present their President Harry Johnson, and Secretary Duncan, with copies of the Emerson Civil Rights DVD.

In March 2010, Student Council promoted the Kids for King Initiative Contest open to 3rd-6th graders in the form of an essay, artwork or short dvd video about King's ideals. All 24 members of Student Council participated in the contest. In July 2010 several of our members received honorable mention for their projects along with prizes. But two members won first place in the category of essays for students in grades 3rd-5th and 6th-8th nation-wide! They and their families received an all-expense paid trip to Washington, DC, for a tour of the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial being constructed. They also received tickets to the unveiling of the Memorial upon its completion, a laptop, a Tommy Hilfiger wardrobe, and several other prizes! We are very proud of all of our students in Student Council. They have been learning and living by the ideals of Martin Luther King, and emanate his goodness to make his dream a reality.

Student Council was thrilled in 2012 to make the trip to Washington, D.C. to visit all the memorials, including Martin Luther King, Jr. See our group photo on the next page.

We continue to honor King and his dream each year on the Friday before his honored day in January, by hosting Multi-Cultural Day. Staff and students dress in colors or symbols of their heritage to showcase the many cultures living (and learning) in harmony. We also host a soup drive to benefit our local food bank as part of his Day of Service.

