

# Simply because people refuse to see me: Imagine Minnesota and promise of educational equality

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Dr. Yohuru Williams



Simply because people  
refuse to see me:  
Imagine Minnesota and  
promise of educational  
equality



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The Racial Justice Initiative

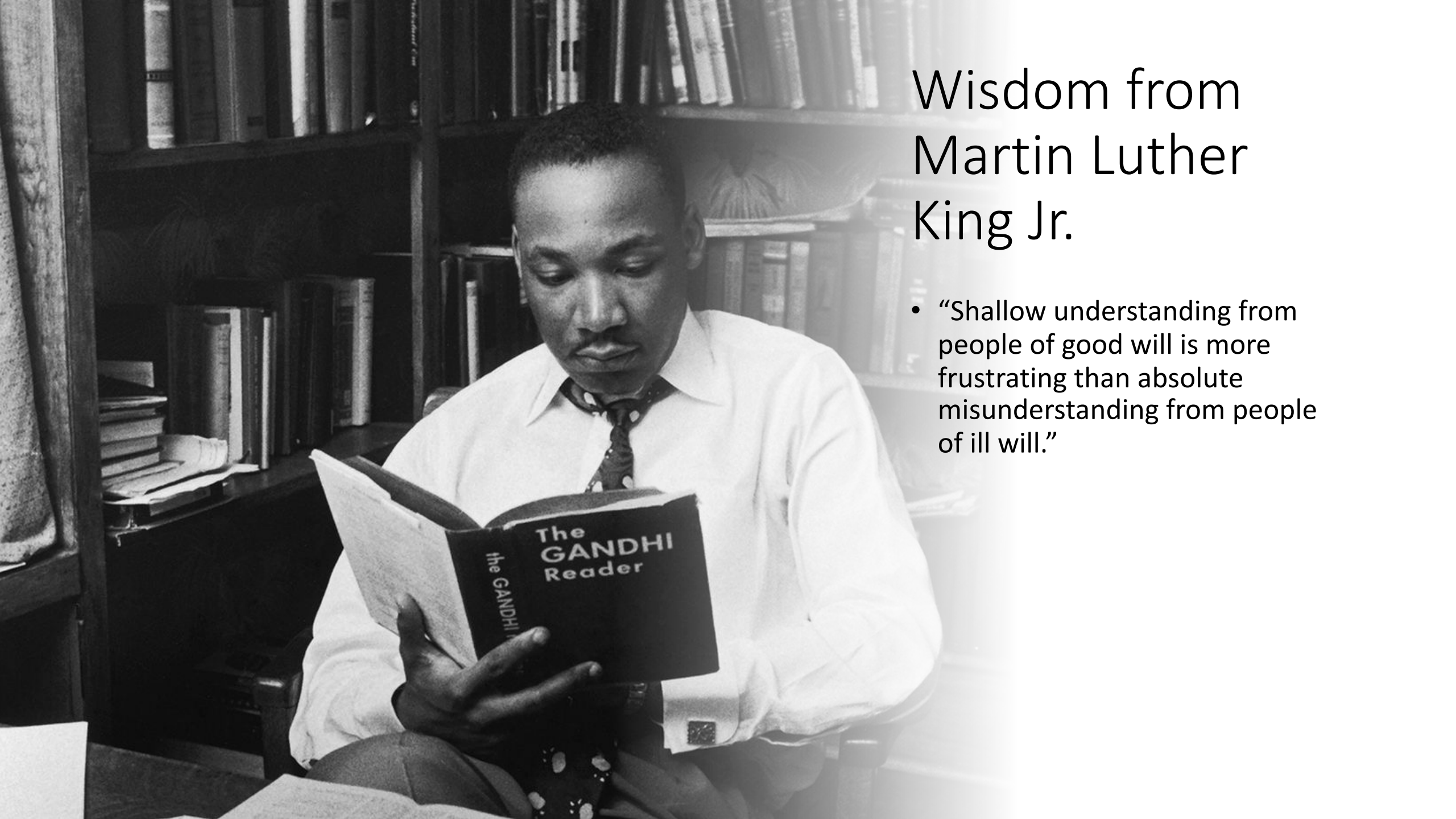
The University of St. Thomas



According to the way we  
see it . . .

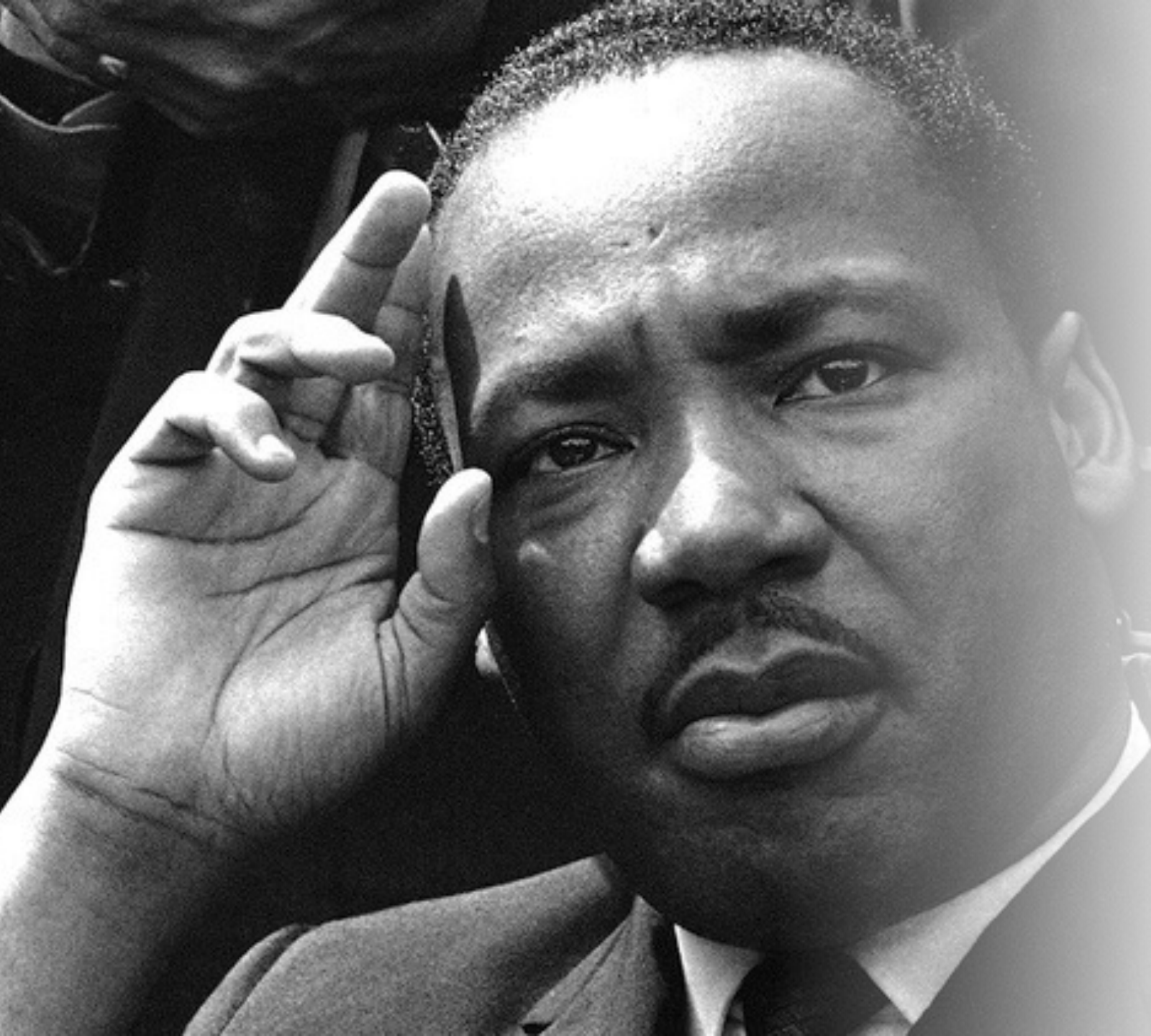
- **“The world changes according to the way people see it, and if you alter, even by a millimeter, the way . . . people look at reality, then you can change it.”**
- **James Baldwin**



A black and white photograph of Martin Luther King Jr. sitting in a library, reading a book titled 'The Gandhi Reader'. He is wearing a white shirt and a patterned tie. The background is filled with bookshelves. A semi-transparent white box on the right side of the image contains the title and a quote.

# Wisdom from Martin Luther King Jr.

- “Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will.”



# MLK Strength to Love Chapter 4: Love in Action

- “... sincerity and conscientiousness in themselves are not enough. History has proven that these noble virtues may degenerate into tragic vices. Nothing in all the world is more dangerous than sincere ignorance and conscientious stupidity.....Devoid of intelligence, goodness and conscientiousness will become brutal forces leading to shameful crucifixions. Never must the Church tire of reminding men that they have a moral responsibility to be intelligent.”

# Reimagine Minnesota: What do we seek to achieve?

## THE GOALS

What do we seek to achieve?

**A COMMITMENT TO CREATE LASTING EQUITY AND EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION FOR ALL STUDENTS.**

*See Me*

+ SEE ALL: WELCOMING CLASSROOMS, SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES

+ SERVE ALL: PERSONALIZED EDUCATION

+ SUPPORT ALL: EQUITABLE RESOURCES



A group of diverse children, including boys and girls of various ethnicities, are sitting on a carpeted floor in a classroom. They are all looking intently at a large sheet of paper held open by an adult's hands in the foreground. The paper contains text, but it is mostly illegible due to the angle and lighting. The children are dressed in casual clothing, and the background shows wooden paneling and some classroom supplies.

See me . . .

# The Shadow of this moment:







The Shadow of this moment . . .

# Six Degrees of Segregation

Residential  
Segregation

Public  
Accommodations

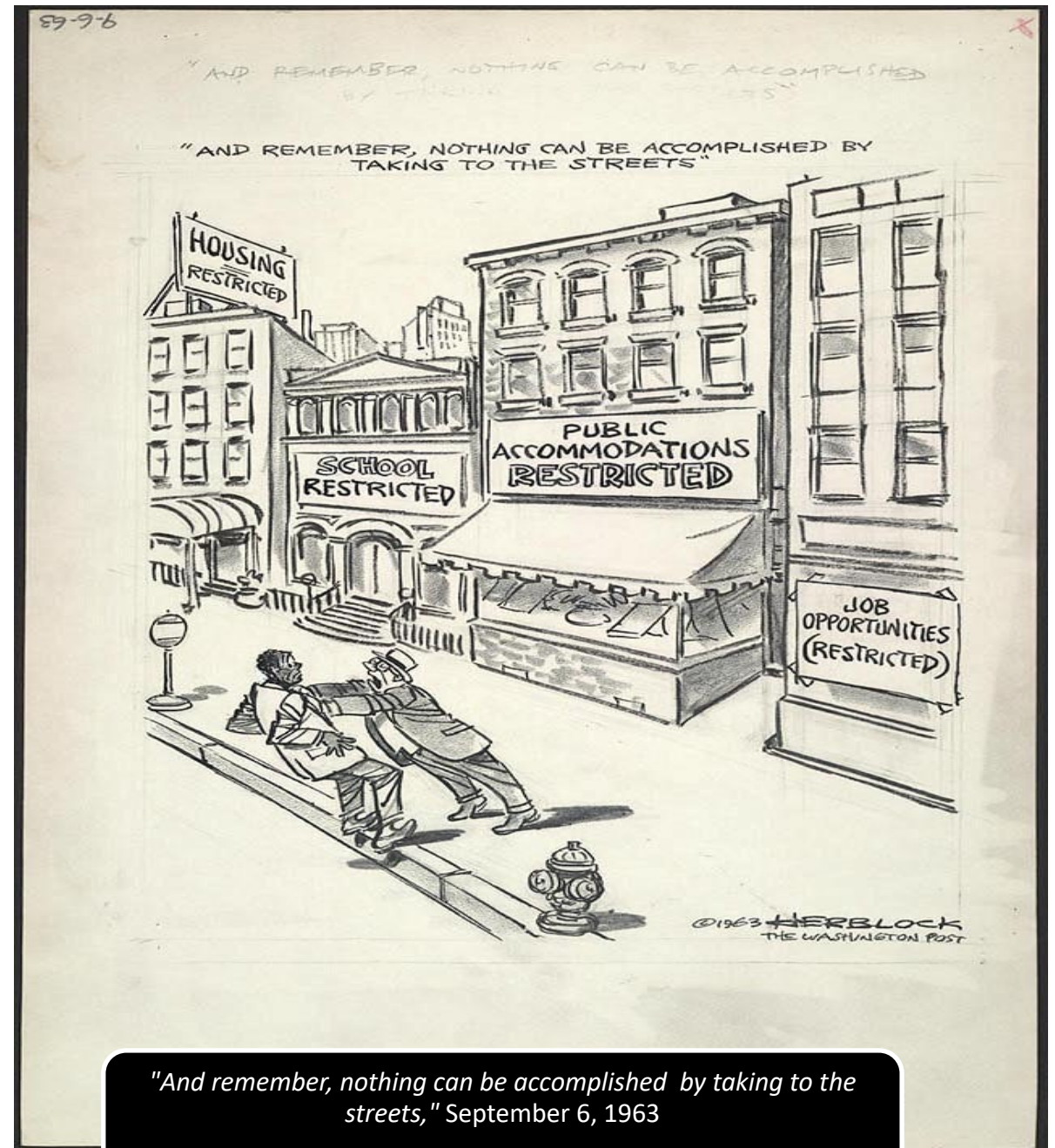
Education

Employment/ Unfair  
Labor Practices

Voting Rights

Jim Crow Justice

Yohuru, Williams, Rethinking the Black Freedom Movement New York: Routledge: (2016).



"And remember, nothing can be accomplished by taking to the streets," September 6, 1963





# The Invisible Program or Programming

- On Dec. 31, 1999 — exactly 15 years ago — TIME was prepared for the worst.
- “As police throughout the world secured emergency bunkers for themselves, the TIME magazine and Time Inc. information-technology staff set up a generator-powered “war room” in the basement of the Time & Life Building, filled with computers and equipment ready to produce the magazine in case of a catastrophic breakdown of electricity and communications,” explained then-assistant managing editor Howard Chua-Eoan, in a note that appeared in the magazine’s commemorative 1/1/00 issue.
- Source: By Lily Rothman, Time Magazine December 31, 2014

# An Old House and an Infrared Light

- “Unaddressed the ruptures and diagonal cracks will not fix themselves. The toxins will not go away but rather, they will spread, leach, mutate, as they already have. When people live in an old house, they come to adjust to the idiosyncrasies and outright dangers skulking in the old structure. . .”Live with it long enough, and the. Unthinkable becomes normal. Exposed over the generations, we learn to believe that the incompressible is the way life is supposed to be.”







Ignorance is not bliss . .

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# What do we seek to achieve?

## THE GOALS

What do we seek to achieve?

**A COMMITMENT TO CREATE LASTING EQUITY AND EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION FOR ALL STUDENTS.**

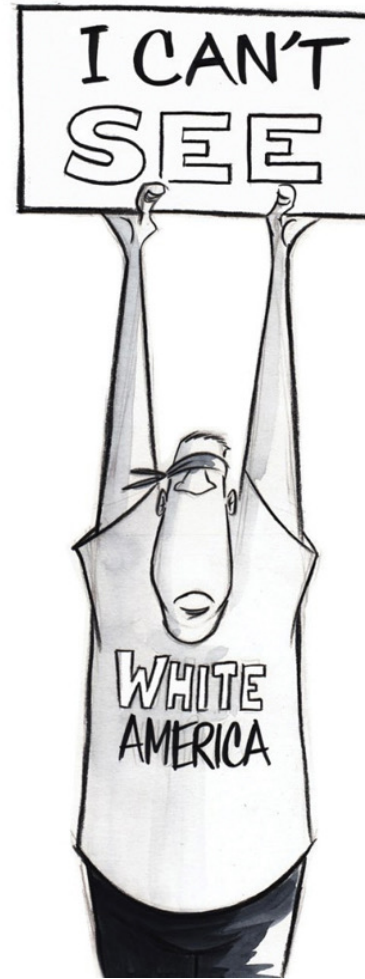
*See Me*

+ SEE ALL: WELCOMING CLASSROOMS, SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES

+ SERVE ALL: PERSONALIZED EDUCATION

+ SUPPORT ALL: EQUITABLE RESOURCES





Invisibility

Belonging must include  
... Tackling the root  
causes of outcome  
disparities

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- **Equity** is promoting justice, impartiality and fairness within the procedures, processes, and distribution of resources by institutions or systems. Tackling equity issues requires an understanding of the root causes of outcome disparities within our society.





# The Importance of being seen



# 2015 *Cruz-Guzman v. State of Minnesota*

- “In the backdrop of the discussions was the 2015 *Cruz-Guzman v. State of Minnesota* lawsuit. The suit alleges that Minnesota’s system of education is not “adequate” under the state Constitution based on the segregation of students of color and students living in poverty in Minneapolis and Saint Paul schools. The plaintiffs are seeking remedies that could include busing, or the creation of a single metropolitan school district.”





# Some Wisdom from Thurgood Marshall before the Supreme Court September 11, 1958

**“Education is not the teaching of the three R's. Education is the teaching of the overall citizenship, to learn to live together with fellow citizens, and above all to learn to obey the law...I do not know of any more horrible destruction of principle of citizenship than to tell young children [in Little Rock] that those of you who withdrew, rather than to go to school with Negroes... 'Come back, all is forgiven, you win.' Therefore, I am not worried about Negro children in these states...I worry about the white children in Little Rock who are told, as young people, that the way to get your rights is to violate the law and defy the lawful authorities. I am worried about their future. I don't worry about the Negro kids' future. They have been struggling with democracy long enough. They know about it.”**





# Core Democratic Values

| NCSS Core Democratic Values   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Life</b> - Each Citizen has the right to the protection of their life.   | <b>Truth</b> - The government and citizens should not lie.  |
| <b>The Pursuit of Happiness</b> - Each citizen can find happiness in their own way, as long as they do not infringe on the rights of others.  | <b>Common Good</b> - Citizens should work together for the good of all. The government should make laws that are good for everyone.   |
| <b>Liberty</b> - Liberty includes the freedom to believe what you want, freedom to choose your own friends, to express your ideas and opinions in public, the right for people to meet in groups, and the right to have any lawful job or business. | <b>Equality</b> - Everyone should get the same treatment regardless of where their parents or grandparents were born, race, religion, or how much money you have, citizens all have political, social, and economic equality. |
| <b>Justice</b> - All people should be treated fairly in getting advantages and disadvantages of our country. No group or person should be favored.  | <b>Diversity</b> - Differences in language, race, religion, dress, food, and heritage are not only allowed but accepted as important.   |
| <b>Popular Sovereignty</b> - The power of the government comes from the people.   | <b>Patriotism</b> - A devotion to our country and the <b>core democratic values</b> .   |



# Inviting Ordinary People (students) to reimagine



## Core Democratic Values

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# Reimagine Minnesota



What initiatives or directions are needed to address the barriers and implement the goals?

Click each box to learn more

Strategy A:

## CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Develop, sustain and evaluate cultural competence for teachers

Strategy D:

## RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Develop and build systemic strategies for recruiting and retaining staff of color

Strategy G:

## COMMUNITY BRIDGES

Build bridges between school and community

Strategy B:

## PERSONALIZED EDUCATION

Prioritize and ensure personalized education with emphasis on acceleration vs. intervention

Strategy E:

## STUDENT VOICE

Elevate student voice and leadership and improve/ensure inclusiveness in the school culture and environment

Strategy H:

## SHARED UNDERSTANDING

Create and sustain consistent shared understanding of equity and high level of skill application for leaders

Strategy C:

## CULTURAL INCLUSIVITY

Develop and implement culturally

Strategy F:

## ADULT BEHAVIORS

Eliminate adult behaviors and policies

Strategy I:

## STATEWIDE FUNDING

Statewide funding that ensures



The Shadow of this moment:  
Changing the way we see reality. . .







Dismantling George Floyd Square June 3, 2021



The Shadow  
of this  
moment . . .





## Trauma

Trauma overwhelm existing meaning systems.  
An event outside the range of human experience.

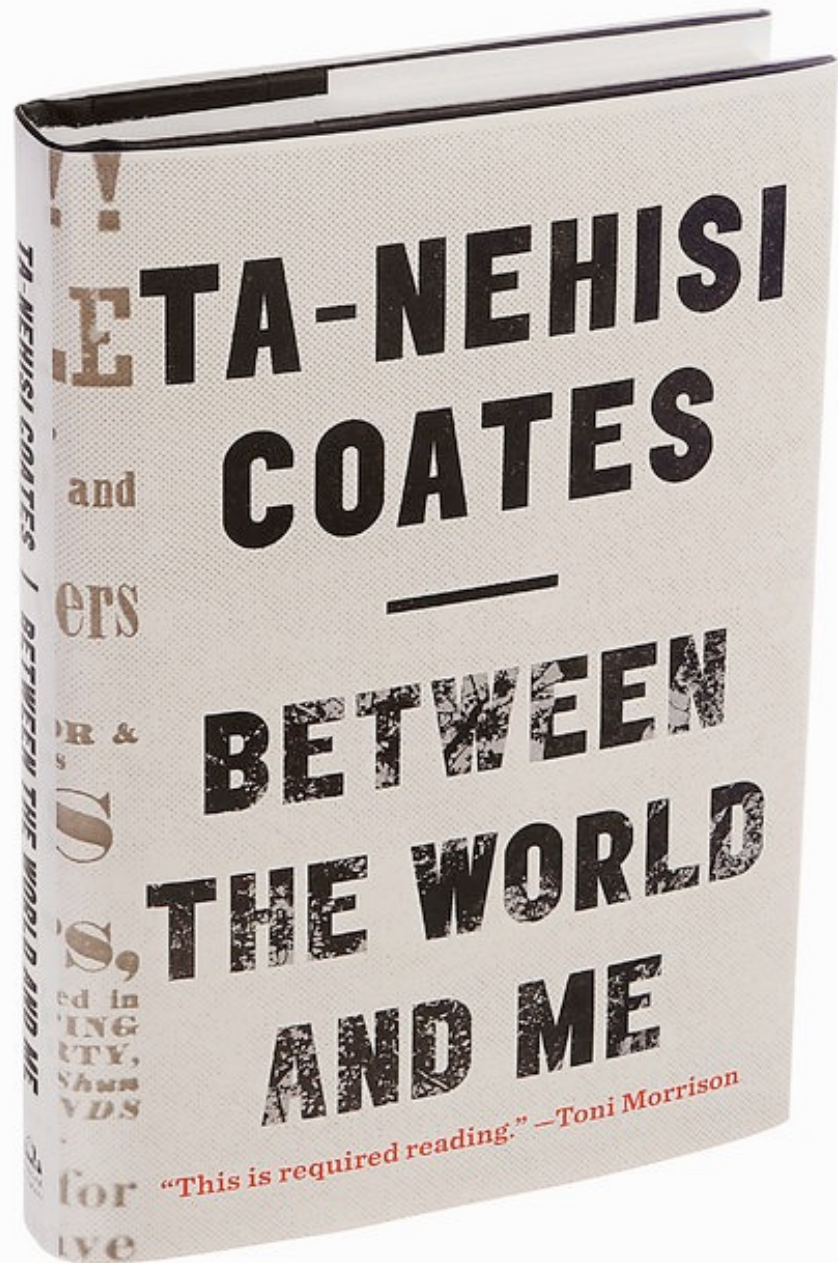
The most significant question then is: what is the range of human experience?

Gender, race, class, ethnicity, religion and more are all components to be considered.

What is traumatic to some is not traumatic to others.

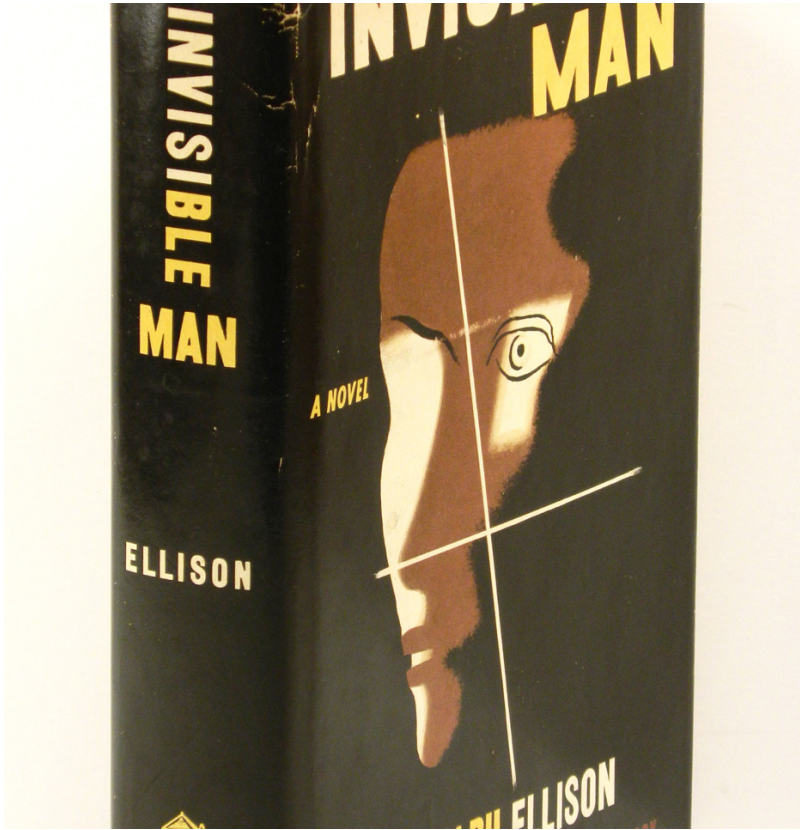
# Wounds Produce Narratives





# Between the World and Me

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Ralph Ellison Invisible Man (1952)





# Black Lives Matter Moments: Ralph Ellison

- “I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me. Like the bodiless heads you see sometimes in circus sideshows, it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass. When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves or figments of their imagination, indeed, everything and anything except me.”
- “I remember that I'm invisible and walk softly so as not awake the sleeping ones. Sometimes it is best not to awaken them; there are few things in the world as dangerous as sleepwalkers.”





# The American Dream, A Raisin in the Sun, (1959)

- WALTER: You wouldn't understand yet, son, but your daddy's gonna make a transaction . . . a business transaction that's going to change our lives. . . . That's how come one day when you 'bout seventeen years old I'll come home . . . I'll pull the car up on the driveway . . . just a plain black Chrysler, I think, with white walls—no—black tires . . . the gardener will be clipping away at the hedges, and he'll say, "Good evening, Mr. Younger." And I'll say, "Hello, Jefferson, how are you this evening?"



# The American Dream, A Raisin in the Sun, (1959)

- And I'll go inside, and Ruth will come downstairs and meet me at the door and we'll kiss each other and she'll take my arm and we'll go up to your room to see you sitting on the floor with the catalogues of all the great schools in America around you. . . . All the great schools in the world! And—and I'll say, all right son—it's your seventeenth birthday, what is it you've decided? . . . Just tell me, what it is you want to be—and you'll be it. . . . Whatever you want to be—Yessir! You just name it, son . . . and I hand you the world!

THE BUFFALO NEWS  
CABLE CARTOONS.COM  
©2008 ADAM  
ZAKS



FRONT OF THE BUS...

# Historical Amnesia



“EVERY DOG (NO  
DISTINCTION OF  
COLOR) HAS HIS  
DAY” 1879

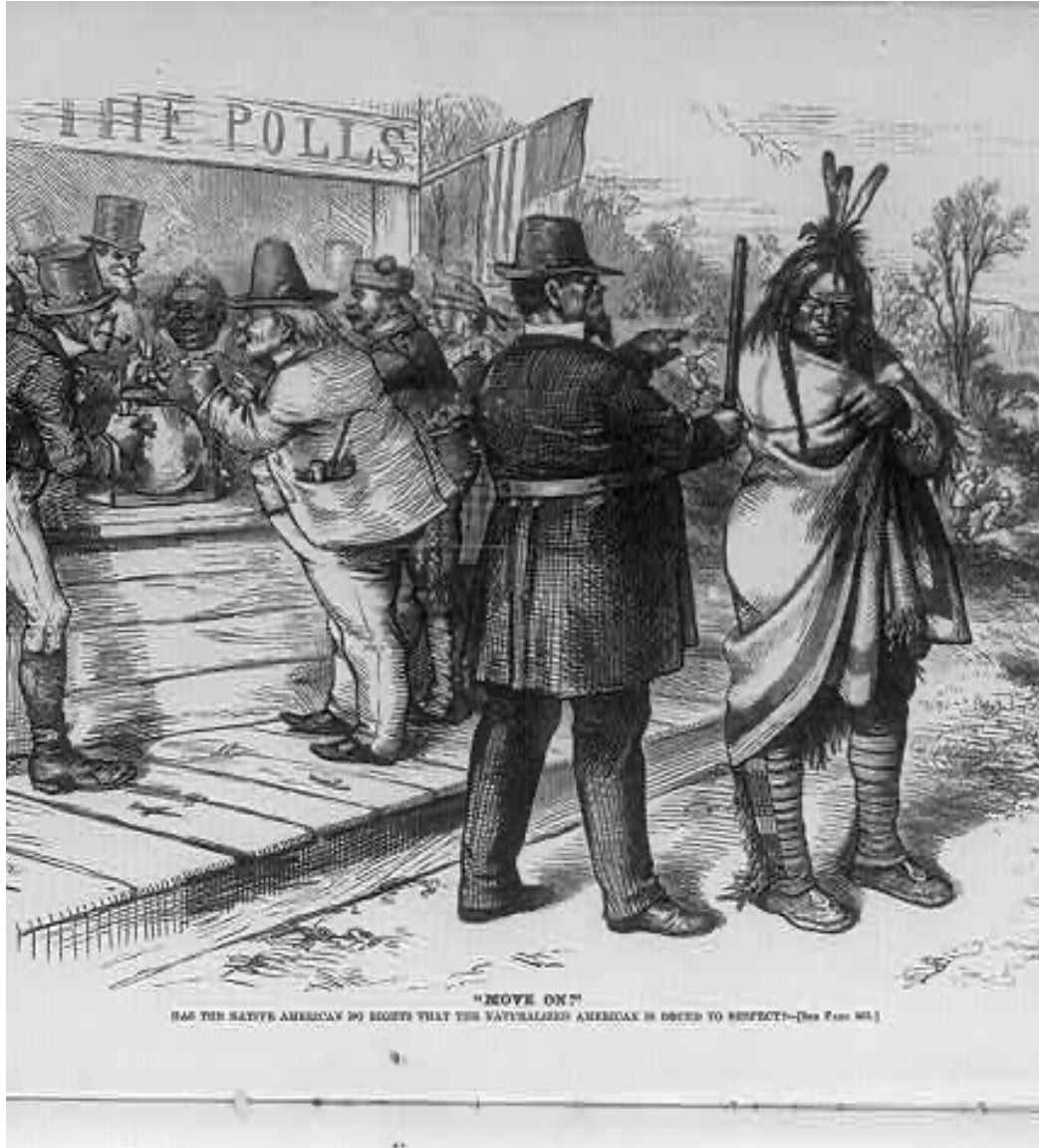




# Words do not pay for my dead people. . .

- “Words do not pay for my dead people. They do not pay for my country, now overrun by white men. They do not protect my father's grave. They do not pay for all my horses and cattle. Good words will not give me back my children. ... Good words will not give my people good health and stop them from dying. Good words will not get my people a home where they can live in peace and take care of themselves. I am tired of talk that comes to nothing. ”






## “Native American”

- A policeman ordering a Native man to “move on” away from a voting poll around which are clustered stereotyped “naturalized” Americans.
- Judge, v. 8, no. 192, 1885 June 20, pp. 8-9.





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Thank you!

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# The Importance of Historical Recovery



- "History, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be unlived, but if faced with courage, need not be lived again."
- Maya Angelou
- "Few will have the greatness to bend history itself; but each of us can work to change a small portion of events, and in the total; of all those acts will be written the history of this generation."
- Robert Kennedy





# Wounds produce Narratives

