

Previously Unreleased Interviews with Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Written by Staff Writer

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To mark the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday this year, WNYC is making available four interviews with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. that have never been released in their entirety.

These interviews were conducted by reporter Eleanor Fischer for a Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) documentary series entitled Project 62. She sat down with Dr. King in Atlanta in 1961, and followed up again in 1967. When she passed away in 2008, her raw interview tapes were left to the WNYC Archives. Now WNYC is releasing the full tapes.

While the sentiments and positions Dr. King puts forth are not unknown, the tapes represent an opportunity to hear the great orator at length in a more conversational tone. Ms. Fischer, seasoned journalist, challenges Dr. King at certain points, giving him the chance to put forth his beliefs with his characteristic conviction, intelligence, and faith.

Tape One includes Dr. King discussing his childhood, his first experiences of racism (at 5, when his white neighbors stopped playing with him & his brother), his call to ministry, his thoughts on blending religion & politics, the Social Gospel, his growing attraction to non-violence, and his thoughts on Brown vs. Board of Education

Tape Two includes more specifics about the Montgomery bus boycott, the threats and fear, how to stay strong in the face of fear. Dr. King responds to criticism that he has not taken part in enough direct action. In a section particularly relevant to today's political process, Dr. King talks pragmatically of his arrest the previous year for driving without a valid license in Georgia, and

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the intervention by then Presidential candidate John F. Kennedy and his brother, Robert F. Kennedy. He agrees that it was probably a politically motivated move to gain black votes but argues there is nothing wrong with the combination of political expediency that is morally sound.

Tape Three includes Dr. King discussing his philosophical differences with black nationalism and why he believes it is doomed to fail. He reasserts his belief in integration and the importance of voting. He discusses the varying challenges and issues with southern whites and northern white liberals. He asserts that civil disobedience and non-violence can be an effective tactic in dealing with a range of issues, from employment to housing to the anti-nuclear movement.

Tape Four (recorded in 1967) Here Dr. King is expressing his opposition to the Vietnam War, and notes that a disproportionate number of blacks are fighting in what he feels is an immoral war. King argues that we have to test draft laws by challenging them, saying, "People must have a right to oppose a particular war even though they are not pacifists and even though they will not oppose war in general." Dr. King says he is prepared to go to jail for violating the draft laws and views it as an extension of his civil rights work. Dr. King expresses concern that we will have more Vietnams in African, Latin America and Asia. We are not here to police the world, says the civil rights leader, arguing we have the economic resources to revive the world, not police it. King comments on the case of Mohammad Ali and the draft and says that Ali has a right to claim conscientious objector status.

The full tapes are available for on-demand streaming at:

<http://www.wnyc.org/blogs/archives/2013/jan/15/previously-unreleased-interviews-reverend-dr-martin-luther-king-jr/>

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