

ENG 390

Assignment 4

4 pages

Readings:

- Martin Luther King, "Letter from Birmingham Jail" (handout)
- Read ONE of the following short texts:
 - Richard Rodriguez, "Aria: A Memoir of a Bilingual Childhood" (handout)
 - Excerpt from *I am Malala* (handout)
 - Mike Rose, "I just wanna be Average" (handout)
 - Rachel Aviv, "Wrong Answer" (handout)
 - Megan Garber, "They Took a Knee" (print from online at <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2017/09/why-the-nfl-is-protesting/540927/>)

This is a synthesis assignment, which asks you to read and understand different viewpoints and evidence to reach your own well-informed position. Your paper should use the ideas and information from "Letter from Birmingham Jail" and your chosen short memoir to respond to ONE of the following prompts:

1. In all four memoirs, people were put into situations that forced them to work around or against existing social order and/or law. All four of these people responded somewhat differently yet all four felt justified in their choices and compelled to act, similar to Martin Luther King. What were the significant actions of your chosen figure, and what was this person passionate about and why? What ideas and assumptions led your figure to feel justified in his/her actions?
2. Think of an example in your own life or in the world of a situation that seems unjust or unfair to you. After you describe this situation and explain why you feel it's unjust, argue for at least one possible response that might help right this situation. Then, explain an alternate response that also might right the situation, but that you feel would be ethically or morally wrong, and explain why it would be wrong. Consider the actions of King and draw from your memoir reading to generate and support ideas.
3. The Atlanta school teachers described in "Wrong Answer" were so committed to the success of their students and their communities that they broke the law to change the answers on their students' standardized tests, tests that these teachers felt were not fairly designed for students who were already subject to social, racial, and economic inequality. Based on your reading of "Letter from Birmingham Jail," do you think the Atlanta school teachers' actions were justified? In other words, would Martin Luther King support these teachers' law breaking as civil disobedience?

The best papers will:

- Show that you've carefully read these texts and that you've fully digested all the different viewpoints and evidence.
- Show that you're really thinking about these topics and haven't settled for easy answers. You don't need to provide an either/or answer. Just make sure you clearly state your own position and explain why you think this way.
- Be written so that someone not in our class could understand it. Use key terms and phrases from the texts to clarify your ideas. Use both paraphrasing and quoting to explain ideas from the texts.
- Refer to the texts in all paragraphs of the paper, including the introduction and conclusion.
- Use a clear and effective organizational structure.

- Explain why your argument matters in the conclusion. Why should your readers care about what you have to say?
- Use clear and specific language and be easy to read and understand.
- Be proofread carefully and virtually error free, following MLA format for document design and in-text citations.