



Professor Brian Ward has researched and written about Martin Luther King Jr.'s visit to Newcastle

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Martin Luther King's Newcastle visit remembered on anniversary of his birth

School children in London will mark Martin Luther King Jr. Day by learning about the UK's connections with the US civil rights activist, thanks to a visit by a US history expert from Northumbria University.

Brian Ward, Professor in American Studies at Northumbria, has carried out extensive research into Dr King's time in the UK, especially his visit to Newcastle upon Tyne in 1967 – his only visit outside of London.

Professor Ward will visit schools in Ilford, Brixton and Vauxhall tomorrow to tell pupils about a 'lost' speech he discovered, given by Dr King during his Newcastle visit, in which he discussed the global challenges of racism, poverty and war and called for stronger laws against discrimination in the UK.

The school visits have been organised in collaboration with the US Embassy and will take place the day after Martin Luther King Jr. Day – which marks the anniversary of Dr King's birth.

During his research Professor Ward discovered film footage of a forgotten speech, given by Dr King while accepting an honorary degree from Newcastle University in 1967 – the year before his assassination.

The speech and Professor Ward's book, *Martin Luther King in Newcastle upon Tyne: The African American Freedom Struggle and Race Relations in the North East of England*, formed the foundation of Newcastle's Freedom City 2017 celebrations – a city-wide event marking the 50th anniversary of Dr King's visit and the region's extensive connections with the African American freedom struggle.

Speaking about the relevance of Dr King's words today, Professor Ward said: "Martin Luther King Jr. Day provides us with a great opportunity to reflect on Dr King's work in confronting racial inequality in the US, but also to honour his memory by confronting injustice and discrimination wherever it exists in the world today."

Ambassador Woody Johnson of the US Embassy said: "The courage, determination and vision of great Americans like Dr Martin Luther King Jr. and his struggle for justice at any cost is an inspiration to the world.

"These kinds of leaders are rare and we celebrate Dr King's unprecedented level of social impact and achievement.

"So I am proud that the American Embassy has partnered with Northumbria University's Professor Ward, England's leading scholar on Dr King and his relationship with the United Kingdom, to share this history with a new generation of British students."

Martin Luther King Jr. Day, also known as MLK Day, is a national holiday in

the US, held on the third Monday in January every year to mark the birthday of Martin Luther King Jr.

Find out more about [Professor Brian Ward's research](#) into Martin Luther King Jr.

Northumbria University has one of the largest teams in Europe dedicated to the study of the Americas. Members of the University's [American Studies Research Group](#) have particular strengths in the study of race, diplomacy, presidential and congressional politics, civil rights, music, periodical culture, environmental history, American and transatlantic modernist literature, the Civil War and Reconstruction, the transnational significance of the US South, feminist and queer literary theory, and the development of California.

Following the success of Northumbria's established [American Studies BA \(Hons\) degree](#), this year the University is launching two new joint degrees – [History and American Studies BA \(Hons\)](#) and [English Literature and American Studies BA \(Hons\)](#).

Find out more by coming along to Northumbria University's [upcoming Open Days](#) on 26 and 27 June 2020.

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[Professor Brian Ward on Martin Luther King Jr.](#) from [Northumbria University](#) on [Vimeo](#).

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