

# Martin Luther King, Barack Obama and the Civil Rights Movement. The Legacy of Vincent Harding

Global Research News Hour Episode 68

By [Michael Welch](#)

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*"There were five years of King's life before he was assassinated and in those years he was not talking about "I have a dream." He was saying, among other things, that there are three terrible triple evils that my country must overcome if we are to become the country that we were meant to be. One, and everybody expected that, racism must be dealt with. Two, materialism and the denigration and exploitation of the poor, must be dealt with. And three, militarism must be dealt with, or we will end up simply being another dying imperial power. And the question is, can my brother Barack enter into that ancestry?"*

-Dr. Vincent Harding, April 2, 2009

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Length (58:59)

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On Monday May 19, 2014, a veteran of the Southern Freedom Movement, known to most as the Civil Rights Movement, passed away from an aneurysm while on a speaking tour in Philadelphia. He was 82.

Harding was born and grew up in New York City. He obtained a B.A. in History from City College of New York in 1952, a M.S. in journalism from Columbia University in 1953, and advanced degrees in History from the University of Chicago in 1956 and in 1965. Dr. Harding served as senior academic consultant for the PBS television series [Eyes On The Prize](#).

He taught at numerous institutions throughout the United States and eventually served as Emeritus Professor of Religion and Social Transformation at the Iliff School of Theology in Denver, Colorado.

In 1960, he and his wife Rosemarie Freeney Harding moved to Atlanta, Georgia where they started up Mennonite House, an interracial volunteer service centre and gathering place for the Southern Freedom Movement. In the turbulent years that followed Harding would be

involved in anti-segregation campaigns as a counsellor and participant.

It was during this time when he came to meet and work with Dr. Martin Luther King. The two would become close associates. It was Dr. Harding who is credited with drafting one of King's most famous and arguably most relevant speeches. "[A Time to Break Silence](#)" was a no-holds barred condemnation of the Vietnam War. King delivered this speech at Riverside Church in New York City, exactly one year to the day before King was assassinated.

In addition to authoring numerous articles and books including [Martin Luther King: The Inconvenient Hero](#), Vincent Harding was a significant behind the scenes player, pacifist, and social justice advocate during an important period in American history.

*This week's Global Research News Hour pays tribute to Dr. Harding's life and legacy by airing a speech he gave at the University of Winnipeg on April 2, 2009. The talk was entitled [Martin Luther King and Barack Obama's Other Ancestors](#). It was a tour of some of the less talked about influences on the American Civil Rights Movement and addressed the question of whether America's first black president truly was the fulfillment of Martin Luther King's dream.*

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