



**MSPC** | Maxwell Street  
Presbyterian Church  
*social justice committee*

Dismantling Systemic Racism  
Movie/Documentary Viewing 2019: Selma

For Reflection: There are a lot of parallels between the writings of Martin Luther King Jr. and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. But also, their lives corresponded in many ways. Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German pastor and theologian known for his opposition to National Socialism, more commonly known as Nazism. His ties to the July 20, 1944, conspiracy to overthrow the Nazi regime led to his execution in 1945. His writings on Christianity's role in the secular world are still widely influential today.

Many activists today are asking that we reflect on the situation in Nazi Germany when considering our own culture and problems. Much of what happened in Nazi Germany was legal, so many faith leaders had no choice but to engage the political system. It seems like an extreme comparison, but the point is to help frame our posture to the world as people of faith. As Christians, we remain human beings living with at least part of ourselves grounded in this world. We do not live totally separate from the political, economic, and social systems of this world and as disciples of Jesus Christ we are called to work towards justice. We cannot help but live in such a way that our faith affects the political, economic, and social parts of our lives. In Nazi Germany, it was apparent to Bonhoeffer that he must challenge the systems at hand in the name of justice and in solidarity with the suffering. May his life and words in quotes below illumine our reflection on the leadership and life of Martin Luther King Jr. and many others during the Civil Rights Movement.

What are your reactions to the film? Focus on your emotions at this moment. Take deep breaths and an honest inventory of what you're feeling without any shame attached.

"Nothing that we despise in other men is inherently absent from ourselves. We must learn to regard people less in the light of what they do or don't do, and more in light of what they suffer."

Did Dr. King's leadership benefit Americans who were not black? How? How are we affected by movements for justice happening today?

"Being free means 'being free for the other,' because the other has bound me to him. Only in relationship with the other am I free"

One of the basic tenets of nonviolent direct action is to make the oppressor face the inconsistency between the oppressors' ideals and the oppressors' actions. How did the Selma march use this principle? Is it difficult to maintain integrity between our beliefs/words and our actions?

"Things do exist that are worth standing up for without compromise. To me it seems that peace and social justice are such things, as is Christ himself."

"I discovered later, and I'm still discovering right up to this moment, that it is only by living completely in this world that one learns to have faith. By this-worldliness I mean living unreservedly in life's duties, problems, successes and failures. In so doing we throw ourselves completely into the arms of God, taking seriously, not our own sufferings, but those of God in the world. That, I think, is faith."

How is activism a necessity for people of minority groups? For people who are a part of any combination of majority groups (In America: white, male, cisgender, heterosexual, able-bodied), is it a privilege to choose to participate in activism or not? If so, how does this change how we engage?

"We are not to simply bandage the wounds of victims beneath the wheels of injustice, we are to drive a spoke into the wheel itself."

How do justice movements transcend lines of division? Does this observation transform our beliefs in any way, especially how we understand salvation?

"While we exert ourselves to grow beyond our humanity, to leave the human behind us, God becomes human; and we must recognize that God wills that we be human, real human beings. While we distinguish between pious and godless, good and evil, noble and base, God loves real people without distinction."

When protesting and working for peace seems to be in vain, do you ever feel like calling it quits? Or, do you find it overwhelming to get involved with justice movements? What motivates you to keep pressing on or to try to engage that is rooted in your faith?

"But the Christian also knows that he not only cannot and dare not be anxious, but that there is no need for him to be so. Neither anxiety nor work can secure his daily bread, for bread is the gift of the Father."