

Perspectives on Civil Rights: Catto and MLK

This resource brings together the lives and Philadelphia-based stories of Octavius V. Catto and Martin Luther King. It is conceptualized to enable teachers in the O.V. Catto education professional development series to expand classroom activities to explore both Catto and MLK together. Often the American Civil Rights story is viewed through singular lenses, not exploring the arch of civil rights activities nor understanding how past and recent events are connected. This resource is compiled to bring attention to local civil rights and heritage sites and landmarks related to both Catto and MLK. It provides contextual frameworks for understanding the history represented in the landmarks, as well as content to enable the exploration of the ideas, actions and works of the two civil rights leaders. The resource also places each man within their respective social context to enable educators to do comparative historical inquiry with students, as well as explore heritage sites in the regions, including neighborhoods.

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Section I: O. V. Catto Sites and Stories

Site 1:

Pennsylvania Historical Marker: Octavius V. Catto, (1839-1871)

Dedicated: 1992

County: Philadelphia

Marker Type: City

Categories: African American, Civil Rights, Civil War, Education, Government & Politics, Military

GPS Coordinates: LNG: -75.15593, LAT: 39.9425

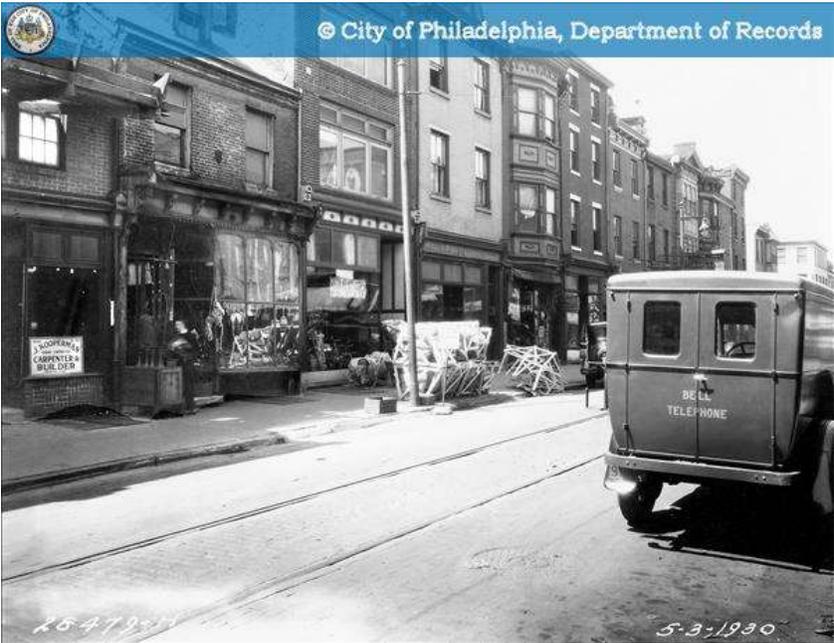
Location: 812 South St., Philadelphia

Marker Text: An early graduate of the Institute for Colored Youth, Catto, who lived here, was an educator, Union army major, and political organizer. In 1871 he was assassinated by rioters while urging Blacks to vote. His death was widely mourned.

At the time of his death, Catto was living in this boarding house with eight people in the 7th Ward. The owners of the home were Thomas and Anna Bundy. The 1870 U.S. Census shows that the tenants were: William and Anna Proctor, who were most likely married and Anna could possibly have been the Bundy's daughter; Octavius, whose name was misspelled (Oadavus); Jos Green; Jessie Bailey; and John Welch. All were African American. All of the lodgers were in their twenties. It is not certain how long Catto lived in the Bundy's home. We do know that by age 21, Catto was no longer residing with his parents. City Directory in 1860 had him listed living away from his parents at 1041 Lombard Street. His father and his mother, along with three of Catto's siblings, were in New Haven, Connecticut, where William Catto, was working as a Presbyterian minister. By 1867, a City Directory has O.V. Catto listed at this location.

The commercial activity on South Street is depicted in the 1930 photo below. By the late 20th Century, this section of South Street was considered a "slum" area. In 1896 DuBois arrived in the black 7th Ward amid "an atmosphere of dirt, drunkenness and crime". The Philadelphia Tribune dubbed the ward "Hell's Acre". In the three decades after DuBois, social service organizations found similar or worsening conditions he had reported...residents of the 7th Ward had insufficient water supply and toilet facilities, defective sanitary equipment, overcrowding, leaky roofs, plaster and paper falling off the walls and windowless rooms. This persistence of poor housing conditions evidenced a pattern of racial segregation and exploitation. Landlords subdivided apartments and frequently whole families lived in a single room. One of the most horrific incidences in the 7th Ward was the collapse of a poorly maintained apartment building in 1936, which killed seven people (including an entire family with children) and injured dozens others. The incident became a catalyst for housing reform in Philadelphia. (see photo below) However, the "reform" resulted in practices which drove African Americans out of the 7th Ward, seeking the new public housing that was being built for them in North Philadelphia under the "racial composition rule". This decline of black population in the 7th Ward also led to the decline of key black institutions.

Twenty-eight years after Catto's death when DuBois conducted his study of the 7th Ward, he listed the 800 Block of South Street (even side) as having only white residences, stores and public buildings. DuBois found 9,675 residents, 54% were born in the mostly upper South, 12.17% were illiterate (compared to 44% in Catto's time) and the average family earned the equivalent of \$7,214 to \$14,300 in today's wages. At its height, the ward had close to 15,000 black residents, along with businesses and an array of social and cultural institutions. The story of the 7th Ward and its further decline into the 20th Century is in Appendix B (*Black Philadelphia after the Philadelphia Negro*).



800 Block South streetscape even side, 1930.



1936 building collapse in 7th Ward on South 15th Street.



Late 20th Century view of 800 block of South Street, late 20th Century, showing the modest rooming house in which O.V. Catto lived from at least 1861 to his death. (Library Company of Philadelphia.)

Site 2:

PA Historical Marker: Jefferson Street Ballparks

Dedicated: Saturday, September 30, 2017

County: Philadelphia

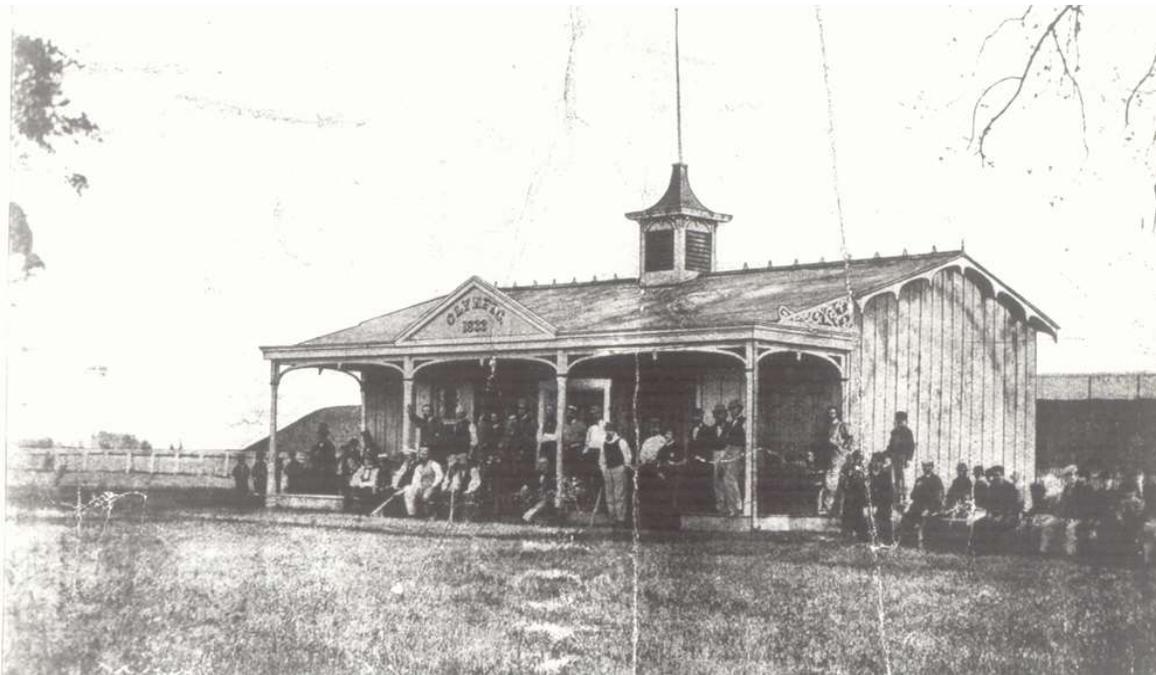
Marker Type: Roadside

Categories: African American, Baseball, Sports & Recreation

GPS Coordinates: LNG: -75.17868, LAT: 39.97844

Location: outside park on Jefferson St. at Bailey St., Philadelphia

Marker Text: The Jefferson Street Grounds and later Athletic Park hosted several monumental games here. Early civil rights activist Octavius Catto captained the Pythians against the white Olympic ball club in 1869 - the first interracial baseball game. The first National League game was also played here in 1876. In operation between 1864 and 1891, the venues saw baseball evolve from an amateur pastime into a competitive professional sport.



“A state historical marker was unveiled Saturday to tell the important story behind the Jefferson Street Ballpark at 1400 N. 26th St. in the city’s North Philadelphia area. People who use the park nowadays might not realize its significance the annuals of baseball. Between 1864 and 1891, the grounds were used by the Olympics, the oldest recognized baseball club. The team played the Pythians in the first interracial game on Sept. 3, 1869. Years later, the park was where the Philadelphia Athletics and Boston Red Caps held the first National League game on April 22, 1876.” (Philadelphia Tribune, October 2, 2017)

Base ball (spelled as two words during Catto’s time) was more than just a game for Catto and his teammates; it was yet another playing field upon which African Americans could challenge and compete for equal participation and recognition. The club’s membership and players were among Philadelphia’s young male black elites. Many were graduates of the Institute for Colored Youth, members of St. Thomas African Episcopal Church and were professionals, including businessmen and teachers. They were also linked together through their work in the Pennsylvania Equal Rights League. Among these teammates and comrade in the civil rights struggle was Catto’s childhood friend, Jacob White, Jr, who became the first African American public school principal in Philadelphia. The story of the Equal Rights League and its efforts to seek parity is in Appendix A (*The Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League and the Northern Struggle for Legal Equality, 1864 – 1877*)

Although there are no known extant records in Catto’s own words about base ball, Catto’s views about race and opportunity are expressed in his speech *Our Alma Mater* (delivered in 1864) in Appendix C. Jacob White and Catto shared many perspectives. White’s discourse with William Still likely reflects Catto’s thinking. See link to Jacob White’s and William Still’s correspondence on base ball:

<https://hsp.org/sites/hsp.org/files/attachments/jcwhiteresponsetostill.pdf>

Site 3:

Pennsylvania Historical Marker: U.S. Colored Troops Grand Review

Dedicated: Saturday, May 06, 2006

County: Dauphin

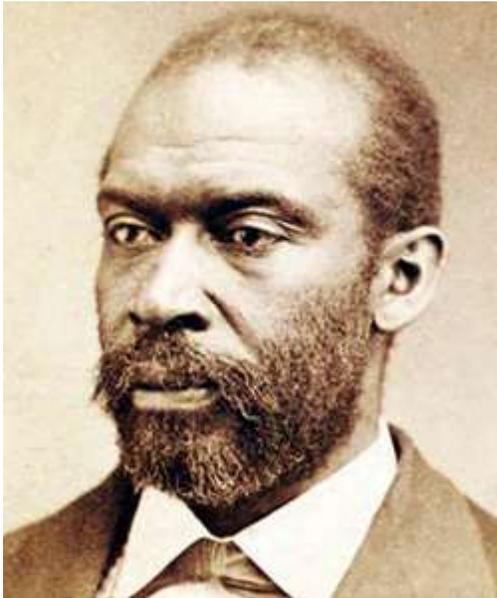
Marker Type: Roadside

Categories: African American, Civil War, Military

GPS Coordinates: LNG: -76.881638, LAT: 40.265249

Location: Soldier"s Grove behind Capitol, Walnut / 7th St. across from State St. Bridge, Harrisburg

Marker Text: Excluded from a May 1865 "Grand Review of the Armies" in Wash., DC, U.S. Colored Troops from Penna. and Mass. regiments assembled here at State & Filbert Sts. on Nov. 14, 1865 for a parade honoring their courage during the Civil War. Grand Marshal T. Morris Chester led them through Harrisburg to Sen. Simon Cameron's Front St. home to be gratefully acknowledged. Octavius Catto, William Howard Day, Gen. JB Kiddoo, & the Rev. Stephen Smith spoke.



Thomas Morris Chester, Grand Marshal, was a prominent Harrisburg resident. He was a classmate of Benjamin Tanner, a friend of Catto, and was a recruiter, like him, of USCTs during the Civil War. He also worked as a war correspondent.

For Catto and others of his time, military service was an important way to demonstrate manhood and civic responsibility. Proving manhood through military service was a central issue and key civil rights strategy among African Americans during this period. Activists during the Civil War argued that military service enabled black men the right to vote. More information about Catto's personal military connections can be found at: <http://www.ushistory.org/catto/philly/dive/military.html>

MEN OF COLOR OF PHILADELPHIA!

The Country Demands your Services. The Enemy is Approaching. You know his object. It is to Subjugate the North and Enslave us. Already many of our Class in this State have been Captured and Carried South to Slavery, Stripes and Mutilation. For our own sake and for the sake of our Common Country we are called upon now to

COME FORWARD!

Let us seize this great opportunity of vindicating our manhood and patriotism through all time. The General Commanding at this post is arranging for the

DEFENCE OF THE CITY!

He will need the aid of every Man who can shoulder a musket or handle a pick. We have assured him of the readiness of our people to do their whole duty in the emergency. We need not ask you to justify us in having made this assurance. The undersigned have been designated a Committee to have this matter in charge. Members of this Committee will sit every day at

BETHEL CHURCH, cor. of 6th & Lombard Streets

AND AT

UNION CHURCH, Coates Street below York Avenue

Their business will be to receive the Names of all Able Bodied Men of Color who are willing to share with others the burdens and duties of Entrenching and Defending the City. Men of Color! you who are able and willing to fight or labor in the work now to be done, call immediately and report yourselves at one or the other of the above named places.

E. D. Bassett,
Wm. Whipper,
D. D. Turner,
Jas. McCrummell,
A. S. Cassey,
A. M. Green,
J. W. Page,
L. R. Seymour,
Rev. J. Underdne,
John W. Price

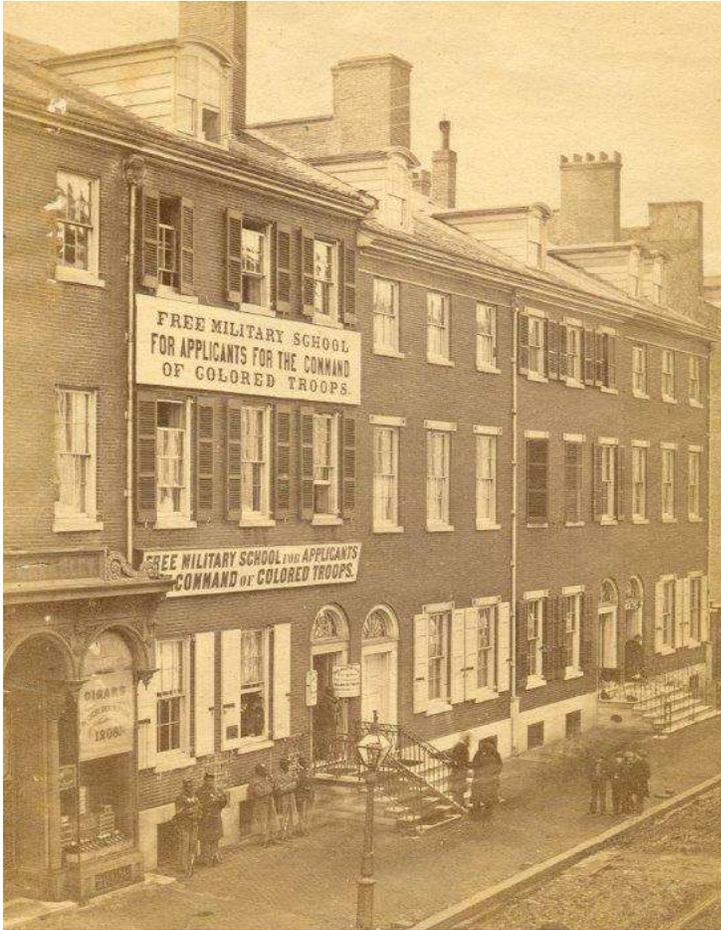
Wm. D. Forten,
Rev. S. Smith,
N. W. Deper,
Dr. J. H. Wilson,
J. W. Cassey,
P. J. Armstrong,
J. W. Simpson,
Rev. J. B. Truaty,

Fred. Douglass,
Rev. J. Asher,
Rev. J. C. Gibbs,
Daniel George,
Robert M. Adger,
Henry M. Cropper,
Rev. J. H. Reeve,
Rev. J. A. Williams,
Rev. A. L. Stanford,
Thomas J. Bowers,

John P. Burr,
Robt. Jones,
O. V. Catto,
Thos. J. Dorsey,
L. D. Child,
Jacob C. White,
Morris Hall,
James Needham,

Jas. R. Gordon,
Samuel Stewart,
David H. Bowser,
Henry Minton,
Daniel Colley,
J. C. White, Jr.,
Rev. J. P. Campbell,
Rev. W. J. Alston,
J. P. Johnson,
Franklin Turner.

USCT Recruitment Poster, listing O.V. Catto, as a recruiter. (Library Company of Philadelphia)



Philadelphia Recruitment Office for the USCT. 1210 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, originally the headquarters and recruiting station of The Supervisory Committee for the Enlistment of Colored Troops and later for The Free Military School for Applicants for the Command of Colored Troops. (The Free Military School was for white officers.) In the picture you can see African American troops with rifles on the sidewalk outside of the building. The temporary Union League clubhouse was three doors to the right at 1216 Chestnut Street.

Site: 4:

City of Philadelphia Public Art: O.V. Catto Memorial at City Hall

“There must come a change...which force upon this Nation...that course which Providence wisely to be directing for the benefit of (all) Peoples “– O.V. Catto, May 10, 1964



A Quest for Parity

Branly Cadet, sculptor

(Official City of Philadelphia Photo)

Cadet's vision was to create a design in dialogue with Philadelphia's City Hall, a prominent and historically significant civic landmark. The memorial immerses viewers in a visual drama, celebrating and presenting O. V. Catto's courage and service to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and the nation. His young life was lost in defense of one of our nation's most precious rights - the right to vote. His efforts left Americans with the Constitutional legal basis that became the foundation for the Modern Civil Rights Movement, by fighting for the passage of the Freedom Amendments (13th, 14th and 15th Amendments).

Section II: MLK Sites and Stories

Site 1:

Pennsylvania Historical Marker: Freedom Now Rally

Dedicated: Saturday, June 19, 2010

County: Philadelphia

Marker Type: Roadside

Categories: African American, Civil Rights, Government & Politics 20th Century

GPS Coordinates: LNG: -75.20232, LAT: 39.96296

Location: intersection of 40th St., Lancaster Ave., and Haverford Ave., Philadelphia

Marker Text: On August 3, 1965, Dr. Martin Luther King addressed a crowd of 10,000 at this intersection. His “Freedom Now” tour to Philadelphia, Chicago, Cleveland, and Boston was in gratitude for support given to his Southern Christian Leadership Conference. King brought his message into northern Black neighborhoods, supporting local civil rights efforts and raising funds. His goal was to empower the formation of a coalition to address their common concerns.



Throughout the sixties, MLK often returned to Philadelphia to give speeches at local universities and churches, as well as visit his close mentor Reverend J. Pius Barbour at Calvary Baptist Church in Chester.

This mural of King at 40th Street and Lancaster Avenue helps mark the site of the historic speech during one of his national “Freedom Now” rallies. Despite the problems facing blacks -- in Philadelphia, and around the

nation -- in 1965, there was something of an air of a victory tour for King's "Freedom Now" rallies, which hit a number of Northern cities during what became the long, hot summer of that year. In less than a year's time before King rallied in Philadelphia's Mantua section, the civil rights leader had won the Nobel Peace Prize and led the legendary Selma-to-Montgomery march; in just a few days (Aug. 6, 1965), he would stand next to then-President Lyndon Johnson as he signed the Voting Rights Act, the second major piece of civil rights legislation in just two years.

Two years later, MLK returned to Philadelphia for his last "Freedom Tour". Months later, he was assassinated on April 4, 1968.

SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP FOUNDATION



Harry Belafonte

**Presents
STARS
FOR
FREEDOM
Featuring
HARRY BELAFONTE**



Dr. Martin Luther King



Aretha Franklin



Marlon Brando

Greetings From Dr. Martin Luther King

- Aretha Franklin
- Sidney Poitier
- Marlon Brando
- Joan Baez
- Nipsey Russell

Coming To Your City Soon!

San Francisco	Oct. 15	8:30 p.m.
Oakland-Alameda Coliseum		Belafonte & Baez
Houston	Oct. 17	8:30 p.m.
Sam Houston Coliseum		Belafonte— Franklin—Baez
Chicago	Oct. 20	8:30 p.m.
International Amphitheatre		Belafonte & Franklin
Cleveland	Oct. 21	8:30 p.m.
Public Auditorium		Belafonte & Franklin
Washington	Oct. 23	8:30 p.m.
Washington Coliseum		Belafonte—Poitier Franklin—Russell
Philadelphia	Oct. 26	8:30 p.m.
Spectrum		Belafonte—Poitier Franklin—Russell
Boston	Oct. 27	8:30 p.m.
Boston Garden		Belafonte & Poitier



Nipsey Russell

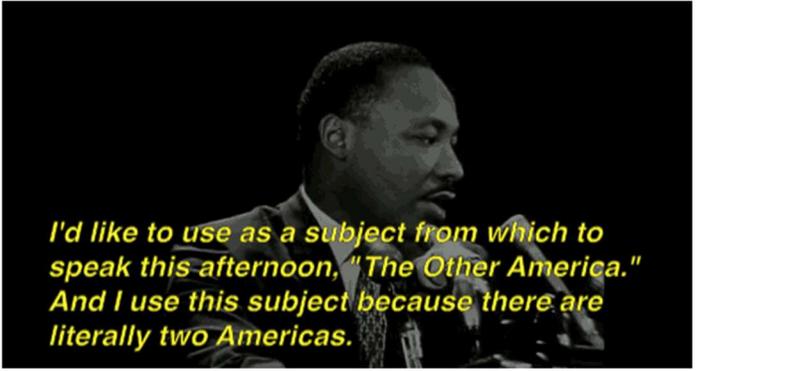


Sidney Poitier



Joan Baez

National poster for the Freedom Tour, 1967. The Philadelphia program was held at the Spectrum. Before the rally, MLK spoke at St. Joseph's College (now University) at the invitation of the Student Government and at Barratt Junior High at the invitation of its administrative leaders. Link to the Barratt speech at: <http://www.phillymag.com/news/2016/01/18/mlk-speaks-philadelphia-middle-school/>



I'd like to use as a subject from which to speak this afternoon, "The Other America." And I use this subject because there are literally two Americas.

Text of "The Other America" speech (as presented at Stanford, April 1967) is in Appendix D.

THE STANFORD DAILY
 EDITORIAL: DA 1-2300 EXT. 4632; BUSINESS: DA 7-4150
 STANFORD, CALIFORNIA, MONDAY, April 17, 1967
 VOLUME 131, NUMBER 40

Stone Tops Trimbur For Vice-Presidency

Bill Stone has been elected to fill the vacancy on the daily newspaper. He was elected by a vote of 544 to 494 over the incumbent, John Trimbur.

Martin Luther King Sets 'True Equality' As Goal

Dr. King said there are several forces blocking the Negro's path to "true equality." While he said, "A new sense of the old dream," he said, "The Negro is economically worse off than the average white man in the country. The Negro is the poorest of the poor. The unemployment rate is twice the white average."

'Sense Of Direction Needed' King Views Vietnam, Education

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Peace Corps Seeks Volunteers For New Western Samoa Project

Stanford students will have their first chance to volunteer for the Peace Corps in a new project in Western Samoa. The project is a two-year program to help develop the country's economy and infrastructure.

Two Communities In Conflict: Stanford Vies With Palo Alto

Stanford was once very prominent in Palo Alto affairs. It took and had a long time to get back to the center of the community. The city and the university have been in conflict over various issues, including the location of the new library and the expansion of the city.

Peace March

Forty thousand marchers in a parade to March King, held five miles in San Francisco. The march was held on the anniversary of Dr. King's death and was a part of the nationwide Spring Mobilization to End the War in Vietnam.



In many cities, MLK was joined by other celebrities. Here with Muhammad Ali.

King's last published statement, *A Testament of Hope*, was published in the January 1969 *Playboy* issues in memoriam to MLK and RFK. (copy in Appendix) In this essay, King made several mentions of the Vietnam War and its negative impact on social justice in America. King also points to a way out of America's racial turmoil and into "the promise land of equality". By April 1967, King had fallen off the list of most-admired Americans as tallied by Gallup every year because of his opposition to the War. By then, 168 major newspapers denounced him.

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Site 2:

Pennsylvania Historical Marker: Girard College Civil Rights Landmark

Dedicated: 1992

County: Philadelphia

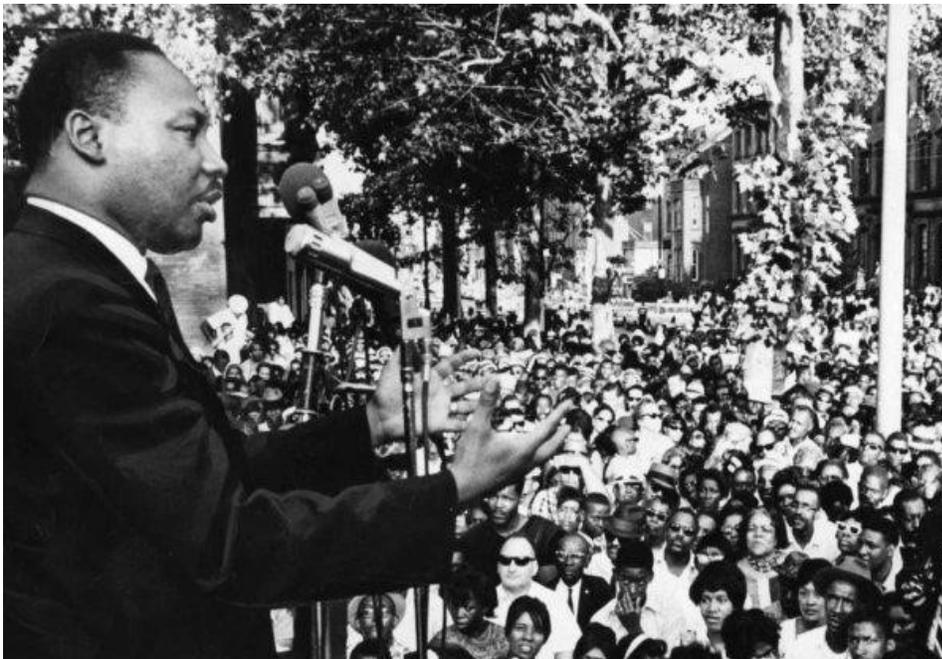
Marker Type: City

Categories: African American, Civil Rights, Education, Government & Politics, Professions & Vocations

GPS Coordinates: LNG: -75.16986, LAT: 39.97312

Location: NE corner, Corinthian and Girard Aves., Philadelphia

Marker Text: In 1930s, lawyer Raymond Pace Alexander challenged the school's restriction (mandated by Stephen Girard's 1831 will) to poor white orphans. Attorney Cecil B. Moore later went to the federal courts; by a 1968 ruling the school was opened to all races.



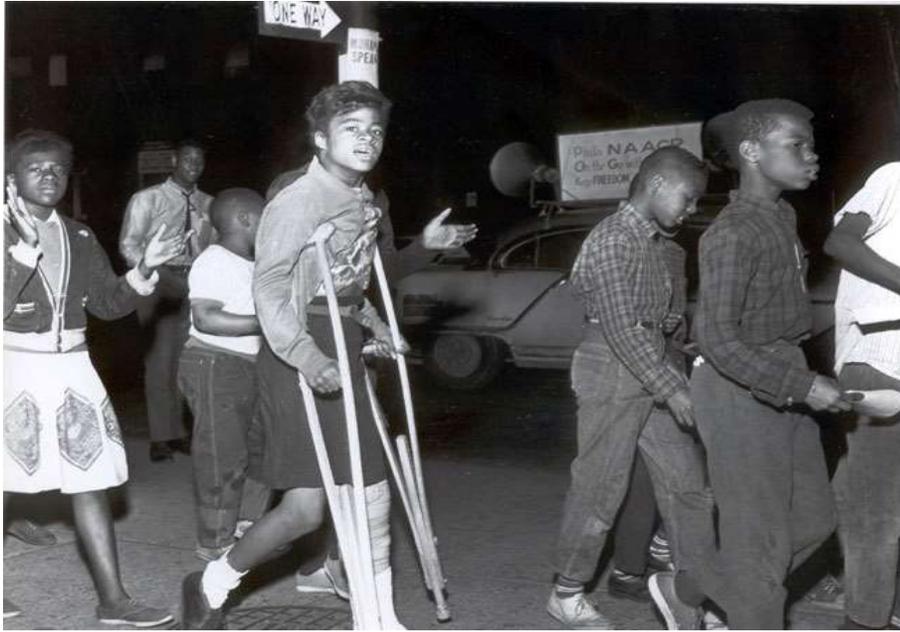
MLK addressing the crowd outside of Girard College in August 1965.



Cecil B. Moore (center) with Martin Luther King during the struggle to desegregate Girard College (1965).



Protesters outside the walls of Girard College, 1965.



Youth protesters at Girard College, 1965, John Franklin Photograph Collection, African American Museum of Philadelphia

It is MLK's connection to the Girard College desegregation that today, Girard College serves as ground zero for Philadelphia's MLK commemorations.

Site 3:

Pennsylvania Historical Marker: Martin Luther King, Jr.

Dedicated: Saturday, January 14, 1984

County: Delaware

Marker Type: City

Categories: African American, Civil Rights, Religion

GPS Coordinates: LNG: -75.3779, LAT: 39.8373

Location: Calvary Baptist Church, 1616 W. 2nd St. (PA 291), at Baker St., Chester

Marker Text: King lived three years in this community and ministered under the mentorship of J. Pius Barbour. He graduated from Crozer Theological Seminary, 1951. A leader of the 1963 March on Washington, King won a Nobel Peace Prize, 1964.



MLK had many deep and enduring connections to the Philadelphia region. While attending seminary, MLK grew close to Reverend J. Pius Barbour, the pastor at Calvary Baptist Church. He often had meals at the reverend's house and served as a student pastor at his church. When MLK later received the Nobel Prize, he immediately returned to visit Barbour. A mirror in which he looked into and said, "Who am I?" still hangs in the church.

Site 4:

Pennsylvania Historical Marker: Martin Luther King, Jr.

Dedicated: Monday, July 27, 1992

County: Delaware

Marker Type: City

Categories: African American, Civil Rights, Religion

GPS Coordinates: LNG: -75.37086, LAT: 39.85593

Location: Crozer-Chester Medical Center, One Medical Center Blvd., behind parking lot, at Old Main, Upland

Marker Text: Minister & civil rights leader. Here at Crozer Theological Seminary, he earned his Bachelor of Divinity degree, 1951. King's three years here were a key period in shaping his philosophy of nonviolent social change. Awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, 1964.



At Crozer Seminary, MLK graduated first in his class in 1951, despite getting a “C” grade in public speaking.

Site 5:

Pennsylvania Historical Marker: Mildred Scott Olmsted (1890-1990)

Dedicated: Sunday, September 13, 2015

County: Delaware

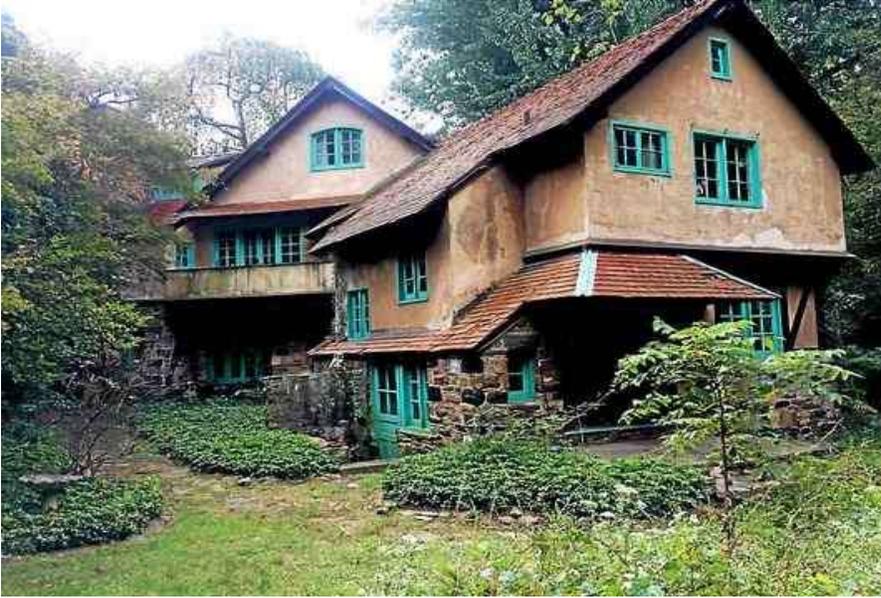
Marker Type: Roadside

Categories: Civil Rights, Government & Politics 20th Century, Religion, Women

GPS Coordinates: LNG: -75.38773, LAT: 39.89913

Location: 41 Rose Valley Rd., Rose Valley

Marker Text: An antiwar campaigner and women’s and civil rights activist, Olmsted traveled the world on behalf of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom. WILPF’s advocacy was consistent with her Quaker beliefs. She headed the national WILPF organization for over 40 years and received a Lifetime Achievement Award for her efforts. She and her husband hosted leaders such as Jane Addams, Bayard Rustin and Martin Luther King in their home here.



Olmstead home in Rose Valley.



A pacifist, suffragette, and civil rights activist, Mildred Scott Olmstead, died in 1990 at the age of 99. A graduate of Smith College, she was best known as a leading voice in the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom in the U.S. (Swarthmore Peace Collection)

Section III: Frameworks for Historical Inquiry

Exploring O.V. Catto and MLK together provides a broad lens for examining America's Civil Rights history. Through this lens, teachers can engage students with texts, stories and images that present American Civil Rights in a larger context than contemporary or modern times. It is a chance to understand how generations of African Americans built communities and produced leaders over time that built upon successive social justice efforts. It is also a lens that helps students and teachers explore how efforts were shaped by the social world and context of their respective times. Such learning activities enable to have students apply a broad knowledge of civil rights activities in the United States, understand how social and cultural assumptions, beliefs and conditions shape such efforts, and evaluate modern social justice efforts and possible solutions.

Some suggested historical inquiry for exploring Catto and MLK:

1. How are Catto's and MLK's agendas and strategies similar and different? How did they use or forge alliances?
2. Discuss whether Catto can be considered the MLK of his time?
3. How did Catto's effort provide a foundation for MLK's effort?
4. What was the "American Dream" that each man envisioned? (Use Catto's *Alma Mater* speech with King's *The Other America* speech).
5. Why was enduring success challenging for African Americans? What were the obstacles? What issues and challenges remain today?

Appendices

- Appendix A – *The Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League and the Northern Struggle for Legal Equality, 1864 – 1877*, Hugh Davis, **Pa Magazine of History and Biography**
- Appendix B – *Black Philadelphia after the Philadelphia Negro*, Marcus Anthony Hunter, **Context Magazine**
- Appendix C – Catto Speech: *Our Alma Mater*, delivered 1864 (Historical Society of PA)
- Appendix D – MLK Speech: *The Other America*, delivered throughout 1967 on the Freedom Tour.
- Appendix E – MLK’s Last Published Statement: *A Testament of Hope*, published January 1969 in **Playboy**.