

## Green Blog 1.19.12

You might wonder, what is a reference about Martin Luther King, Jr. doing on my Green Blog that has been thus far devoted to the early growth and development of our school's West End Garden [that's just the temporary name—as soon as I receive some significant underwriting, I'm going to rename the Garden for that person or for whomever that person names as deserving of being forever honored].

Here's the MLK connection—it's simple: MLK, Jr. of course symbolizes social justice; and social justice requires people to be aware and conscientious about each other and about the world and environment in which we live; and we need our youngest students to be exposed to that which provides beauty and sustenance in our world—yes, we're talking about the world itself, the garden and all that we envision this garden to be and all that it will mean for BYDS students. The garden is so tiny right now in scope—but it will grow and expand and be a wonderful learning lab for our youngest children.

On Monday, January 16, on MLK day, I was in Atlanta at the North American Jewish Day School Conference, but I also was lucky enough to get a good vantage of the MLK Day Parade in Atlanta, which was entirely a Foot Parade (meaning no floats). Right up there leading the marchers were members of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s family—they were just a few feet away from my outstretched arm holding my blackberry camera.



**This pic shows MLK III (MLK, Jr.'s oldest son, left, in the cap), Christine King Farris (MLK, Jr.'s only surviving sibling), and Dexter Scott King (MLK, Jr.'s younger son)—leading the Atlanta MLK Day Parade.**

And here are a few more shots of the MLK Day Parade on Monday:



The connection between MLK, Jr. and the historic mission of the Jewish people was certainly not lost on the conference—in fact, Rabbi Baylinson, who hooked arms with MLK, Jr. at one of the marches in the 1960's in Alabama, gave a talk about the connection between MLK Day and when it usually falls on the Torah cycle—right after Parsha Shemot, with the emergence of Moses and the launch of his mission. Rabbi Baylinson spoke about the core of our collective Jewish purpose, which is that of justice and truth, emancipation from slavery/persecution, and strength in collective identity; he spoke about how Martin Luther King had inspired scores of significant rabbis across America to join in his movement.

Kids who get to feel the dirt in their hands when they plant their seeds and bulbs, and get to watch this process of life take place, are experiencing a heightened awareness of the world around them. When there is interaction with nature, there is a penetration of the real world, an experience that will always be a vital beckoning, crying out to pull them from the screen time that will pervade so much of their days, months, and years to come. Nature contains the essence of truth and justice.

[Check back from time to time to read Mr. E's Green Blog--Mr. Elieff is Head of School at Beth Yeshurun Day School in Houston, a preschool through fifth grade Jewish day school and a member of the Schechter Day School Network.]