

Dream on

Racial tensions still flare as we honor Martin Luther King Jr.

Racial equality in America has come a long way over the last 150 years. The recent tragic deaths of African-American men and boys at the hands of police, and the sometimes violent demonstrations following them, indicate that there is still some distance to go.

On Monday, America honors a man who played a key role in the progress that has been made, Martin Luther



KEVIN O'NEILL

InSites

King Jr. Dr. King, who espoused nonviolent means to achieve equality, was assassinated for his efforts. The movie "Selma" recently opened. It portrays the events around the 1965 march for voting rights in Alabama, which he helped organize.

Platform for change

This confluence of current events, history and popular culture seems like a good time to look at some websites dedicated to equal rights for all. The Internet is a wildly popular platform for groups and individuals with wide-ranging beliefs in how people of different races, genders, religions, sexual orientation, etc. are alike or different, and how they should be treated because of these alleged similarities or differences.

The beliefs touted online run the gamut from beautiful to downright despicable. Some sites advocate for equality, but the language and focus of the messages are so demographically tilted, or angry, that they can be alienating to someone from outside the "group."

I found three websites with similar missions but slightly different focuses. They all have records of success — and inclusion — in their

efforts to advance equality. Interestingly, while Dr. King was not directly involved with these organizations, all three have achieved results with nonviolent advocacy and effective use of the legal system. I'm sure the good doctor would have approved.

NAACP

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, **NAACP.org**, was founded in 1909 and claims to be the oldest, largest and most widely recognized civil-rights organization. The group was formed by a group of whites in Illinois who were appalled by lynchings and other violent acts against African-Americans. The group's goal is to remove all barriers of racial discrimination through the democratic process.

Advocacy by the NAACP was instrumental in key civil rights milestones, such as the Supreme Court ruling in Brown vs. Board of Education; the Civil Rights Acts of 1957, 1964 and 1968; and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

The smartly designed website has features on current issues, history, advocacy and supporting the group's efforts through membership or donations. The issues covered include civic engagement, economic opportunity, education, health and more.

Leadership Conference

While the NAACP is dedicated to eliminating discrimination for all, its history — and even its name — indicate its main focus is on African-Americans. The Leadership Conference, **CivilRights.org**, is a coalition of more than 200 organizations dedicated to protecting the civil and human rights of all people in the United States.

The group was formed in 1950 by the leaders of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, the NAACP and the National Jewish Community

Relations Advisory Council. They reasoned that their lobbying efforts for civil rights would be stronger working together than any one group by itself. Naturally, there is a lot of overlap with the NAACP in the causes it embraces, and many of the achievements listed on the site mirror those on the NAACP's.

The website is not as visually engaging as the NAACP's, but it covers a lot of the same territory — news, history, taking action, financial support, etc. One distinguishing feature is the long list of coalition members with links to all of the websites.

SPLC

The Southern Poverty Law Center, **SPLCenter.org**, shares similar goals with the previous two organizations, but it employs more aggressive tactics to achieve results. In its own words, it is "dedicated to fighting hate and bigotry." The group, formed in 1971, actively seeks out hate groups and looks for legal ways to put them out of existence, often through financially devastating lawsuits.

SPLC's website is well organized with much of the same type of content as the other sites. What stands out on the site are sections such as Hate-watch Blog, Extremist Files, Case Docket and Hate Map, which locates hate groups all around the country.

All of these groups have noble goals, and the people in them show the courage of their convictions. Members have been harassed, attacked and even killed, for fighting for the rights of the less fortunate. Visiting these sites brings home how bad — and good — people can be.

KEVIN O'NEILL is a staff artist for The Times-Tribune. Share your favorite websites and apps with him at koneill@timeshamrock.com.