

teacher resource guide

**schooltime
performance
series**



Damien Sneed

WE SHALL OVERCOME

**we shall
overcome**

A Celebration of
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.,
featuring Damien Sneed

**arts
education**
njpac
discover. create. grow.

about the performance

Get ready for a stirring and electrifying concert honoring the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in *We Shall Overcome: A Celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*, featuring an array of talented guest artists and Damien Sneed, the concert's musical leader and a gifted pianist, conductor and composer.

The concert will cover a wide range of African-American musical traditions from classical music, traditional and modern gospel, jazz, Broadway tunes and old-time spirituals. Much of the music that the vocalists and instrumentalists on stage will be performing sustained and inspired many civil rights activists in the long struggle to achieve equal rights for African Americans. Underpinning the concert will be some of King's most important speeches.

Sneed and fellow artists will perform music associated with the greats, such as Aretha Franklin, Marvin Gaye, Dionne Warwick, Wynton Marsalis, Duke Ellington, Stevie Wonder, Nina Simone and Donny Hathaway, songs from *The Wiz*, and traditional spirituals.



about damien sneed

Damien Sneed is a multi-hyphenate performer whose skills cross musical genres from gospel to opera. Sneed is a talented pianist, organist, conductor, composer, producer, arranger, vocal coach, and educator, who has worked with several musical icons in pop, jazz, R&B, and classical. They include Diana Ross, Stevie Wonder, Wynton Marsalis, the late Aretha Franklin, Ashford & Simpson, Jessye Norman, Lawrence Brownlee, Wycliffe Gordon, Eric Reed and other legends.

A Georgia native, Sneed started playing the piano when he was three years old. At the age of five, he began playing the piano at his family church and was tapped to become the music director for the senior choir at the age of eight. Sneed earned a bachelor of music degree in piano performance from Howard University, studied at the Peabody Conservatory at Johns Hopkins University and the Manhattan School of Music, and earned a master's degree in music from New York University. Sneed is projected to earn a doctoral degree in orchestral conducting from the University of Southern California, Los Angeles. He has worked with the Juilliard School, Jazz at Lincoln Center, the Boys Choir of Harlem, Carnegie Hall, the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, the Houston Grand Opera, and many other prestigious organizations.

Sneed has also won the Sphinx Medal of Excellence, an award recognizing emerging black and Latinx talent in classical music.



in the spotlight

An interview with Damien Sneed

What was your inspiration to create a concert like this one?

I was initially inspired by a friend, Jono Gasparro who asked me to present a series of concerts in tribute to Martin Luther King in Harlem (NYC) at Red Rooster Harlem restaurant.

What is the structure of the concert? Are there particular pieces that serve as a special focal point?

The repertoire of the concert is extremely varied, but if I had to choose a few particular pieces that I consider as special focal points, it would be "Still I Rise," "What's Going On" and "We Shall Overcome."

This artistic work speaks to a variety of musical genres, crossing secular and sacred music, how does the choice of music reflect your own background and upbringing?

As a young artist growing up in the Augusta, Georgia area I spent time building my artistic skills in classical, jazz, gospel, soul and world music.

How has MLK's writing and oration personally impacted or inspired you?

I used to visit Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birth home many times in middle school and high school because I was extremely impressed by how young he was when he graduated from Morehouse College and I was extremely amazed at his ability to love people and serve his community regardless of how he was mistreated.

What do you hope young audiences take away from watching this concert?

I want young people to leave the concert understanding the power of music as a universal language to heal, bring people together in unity and spread positive messages.

inspired ideas in the classroom

Teacher Focus

Student Activity

NJ Student Learning Standards

P

Prepare for the performance

Ask students to describe the types of songs or music that might be performed in Damien Sneed's concert honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
If you have 30 minutes...
 After each student names a song they think would be performed at this concert, ask them to explain why they feel this song would be appropriate for this kind of concert.

Think about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s legacy. Name songs by song title, artist, genre, or lyrics and explain why you think this song is appropriate to be performed in this concert.

English Language Arts
 NJLSA.SL1.
Social Studies
 6.1 U.S. History: America in the World
Visual and Performing Arts
 1.2 History of Arts and Culture

E

Experience the performance

Discussion
 Discuss the title of the concert with students. Ask students to describe how someone may feel after going through a struggle and overcoming it. Encourage students to observe how the musicians and singers express emotions during their performance.
During the Show
 Encourage students to remember the title of any song(s) in the concert they enjoyed the most. How did the song make them feel?

Discussion
 Other than lyrics, how can musicians and singers express emotions through music? What kinds of emotions do you think will be expressed by the musicians and singers in this concert?
During the Show
 During the concert, take note of which songs touched you the most. Remember the title of the song and how the song made you feel.

Visual & Performing Arts
 1.4 Aesthetic Response & Critique
English Language Arts
 NJLSA.R4.
 NJLSA.SL2.

R

Reflect, respond and read

Reflect
If you have 10 minutes...
 In a large group setting, ask students to share the title of one song from the concert they enjoyed the most.
Respond
If you have 30 minutes...
 Ask students to find a classmate and take turns interviewing each other about their favorite song. The interviewer should write down the response of their interviewee.
Read
 Ask students to take turns reading the responses from their interviews to the class.

Reflect
 Which song from the concert touched you the most?
Respond
 Interview questions: How did you feel while listening to the song? In your own words, what do you feel is the meaning of the song?
Read
 Take turns reading each other's responses to the class.

Visual & Performing Arts
 1.4 Aesthetic Response & Critique
English Language Arts
 NJLSA.R4.
 NJLSA.SL1.
 NJLSA.SL2.

F

Focus

Ask students the following question: Damien Sneed's concert is to honor the life and legacy of civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. If you could produce a concert like Damien Sneed's *We Shall Overcome: A Celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*, who or what cause would you choose to honor?

Think of an influential historical hero, urgent world issue, or any topic for which you have great passion. Why do you feel this individual, issue, or movement deserves a concert in its honor?

Social Studies
 6.3 Active Citizenship in the 21st Century
Visual and Performing Arts
 1.1 The Creative Process

O

Originate

We Shall Overcome is a collaboration of different artists who perform music from various genres.
 (4th–8th) Explain to your students that genre refers to musical styles such as jazz, salsa, hip-hop, etc. Ask students, what music genre(s) would they choose for their concert?
 (9th–12th) Have students complete **Activity Sheet 1** by listing musicians and songs they feel best represents the theme of their concert.

(4th–8th) Think of a person or cause you would honor in your concert. What songs, bands, or singers do you feel have the best lyrics and music to represent your theme?
 (9th–12th) On **Activity Sheet 1**, list the artists and types of songs you feel have the best messages to represent your concert.

English Language Arts
 NJLSA.R5.
Visual and Performing Arts
 1.1 The Creative Process

R

Rehearse

Create a flyer!
 Using a flyer to spread the word about a concert is called **promoting**.
 (4th–8th) Have your students use **Activity Sheet 2** to create a flyer for their concert. Tell them to draw the strongest images and words to let people know what or who their concert is honoring.
 (9th–12th) After your students complete **Activity Sheet 1**, they can create a flyer for their concert. They should use the information from their activity sheet to create a flyer that will grab people's attention. Students can draw or, if accessible, use a computer to create the flyers.

(4th–12th) **Promote your concert!** Get creative and make a flyer with highlights about your concert. Here are some ideas to get you going:
 • Similar to *We Shall Overcome: A Celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*, think of a great title for your concert.
 • Design an image that is relevant to the theme.
 • Name popular performers and songs that will be performed at your concert.
 • When and where will your concert be? Feel free to choose NJPAC as your venue!
 • Write a short description about whom or what the concert is honoring.

English Language Arts
 NJLSA.R5.
Visual and Performing Arts
 1.1 The Creative Process

M

Make magic

Share their flyer or their talent! Choose the most convenient way to showcase your students' work. Hang the flyers around the classroom or in the hallway. Take photos of their flyers and share with the school community. Have students prepare a 15-second commercial about their concert and share it in front of the class. If you have performers in your classroom who want to share a song from their concert with the class, encourage them to perform it! Any way you choose to share it is okay!
 If you can coordinate with another teacher from another class, have students share their flyers with that classroom and perform a song from their concert for those students.

Work with your teacher on ways to share your flyer throughout your school. If you are a performer, you can perform a song from your concert for your class or for another class.

English Language Arts
 NJLSA.R6.
Visual and Performing Arts
 1.3 Performance

curriculum standards

NJ Arts Standards

1.1 The Creative Process

All students will demonstrate an understanding of the elements and principles that govern the creation of works of art in dance, music, theatre, and visual art.

1.2 History of Arts & Culture

All students will understand the role, development, and influence of the arts throughout history and across cultures.

1.3 Performance

All students will synthesize skills, media, methods and technologies that are appropriate to creating, performing and/or presenting works of art in dance, music, theatre and visual art.

1.4 Aesthetic Response & Critique

All students will demonstrate and apply an understanding of arts philosophies, judgment and analysis to works of art in dance, music, theatre and visual art.

National Arts Standards

- 1:** Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.
- 5:** Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation.
- 6:** Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work.
- 7:** Perceive and analyze artistic work.
- 8:** Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.
- 11:** Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.

FIND THE STANDARDS

For more detailed information on the standards, visit these websites:

NJ ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

state.nj.us/education/cccs/2016/ela

NJ SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS

state.nj.us/education/cccs/2014/ss

NJ WORLD LANGUAGE STANDARDS

state.nj.us/education/aps/cccs/wl

NJ ARTS STANDARDS

state.nj.us/education/cccs/2009/1.pdf

NATIONAL ARTS STANDARDS

nationalartsstandards.org

new jersey student learning standards

English Language Arts

NJLSA.SL1.

Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

NJLSA.SL2.

Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

NJLSA.R4.

Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

NJLSA.R5.

Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.

NJLSA.R6.

Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

Social Studies

6.1 U.S. History: America in the World

All students will acquire the knowledge and skills to think analytically about how past and present interactions of people, cultures, and the environment shape the American heritage. Such knowledge and skills enable students to make informed decisions that reflect fundamental rights and core democratic values as productive citizens in local, national, and global communities.

6.3 Active Citizenship in the 21st Century

All students will acquire the skills needed to be active, informed citizens who value diversity and promote cultural understanding by working collaboratively to address the challenges that are inherent in living in an interconnected world.

cultural connections

Music and its connections with social and political movements in America

The history of protest music and songs are deeply intertwined with important inflection points in American history—when people rose up and upended the status quo.

We can start at the very beginning of America's birth when invading British soldiers sang the song "Yankee Doodle" to make fun of the colonies during the American Revolutionary War. In the song's lyrics, Americans (or Yankees) were seen as country bumpkins who stuck feathers in their hats because they thought it was fancy. But as the Continental Army—led by George Washington—beat back the British, Americans took the song and tweaked the lyrics to mock the Brits and praise Washington.

Though the successful end of the war meant that Americans were no longer subject to British rule, the spirit of independence did not extend to the estimated 450,000 African-American slaves in the 13 former colonies.

"What, to the slave, is the Fourth of July?" Frederick Douglass, the great orator and abolitionist, once asked.

Faith became a refuge for many slaves on plantations and was probably one of the few areas of life that limited the oversight of white people. Preachers would take Biblical teachings to emphasize salvation, redemption, freedom and resistance. Songs would hammer home these themes and even serve clandestine aims.

During the heyday of the Underground Railroad, Harriet Tubman would sing "Go Down, Moses" to let nearby slaves know she could help them flee. Spirituals like "I Got My Ticket" and "Steal Away Jesus" are considered by some historians to be secret protest songs that urged people to leave.

After the Civil War and into the Jim Crow era, the black church remained a hotbed for social and political justice with music serving as a rallying cry. The old spiritual "This Little Light of Mine" is one such example. Protesters, many of them clergy members and church-goers, adopted the song during the 1950s and 1960s Civil Rights Movement to defy white supremacists. Recently, a counter-protest group that included activist and scholar Cornel West sang the song at Neo-Nazi and alt-right marchers who had gathered for the "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville, Virginia in 2017.

In secular music circles, artists have long been reflecting on the times with stunning effect. Billie Holiday's famous rendition of the anti-lynching song "Strange Fruit" indicts lynchings used to control and terrorize the black population in the South. (More than 3,000 black people were lynched from 1882 to 1968, according to the NAACP.)

Though some people at first may think it's a patriotic song, "This Land Is Your Land" was penned by folk musician Woody Guthrie as a left-wing, sarcastic response to Irvin Berlin's "God Bless America." His more radical lyrics had been dropped from many renditions, but other singers, like his son Arlo Guthrie and Pete Seeger, restored them:

"One bright sunny morning in the shadow of the steeple,
by the relief office I saw my people.
As they stood hungry,
I stood there wondering if God blessed America for me."

Folk singer Seeger was famous for music that called for social justice and peace during the 1960s. Songs like "Where Have All the Flowers Gone," "If I Had a Hammer," and "Turn! Turn! Turn!" (derived almost verbatim from the Bible's *Book of Ecclesiastes*) were used to protest oppressive government action, such as the Communist crackdown during the McCarthy period and against the Vietnam War.

Stevie Wonder wrote his own version of "Happy Birthday" as a tribute to Martin Luther King, Jr. and used the song to help push for the holiday honoring King. North Carolina Senator Jesse Helms famously resisted these efforts in the U.S. Congress until public pressure forced the approval of the holiday.

"It's no secret that this was a song about Martin Luther King, his death and people coming together to stop things like that from happening again. I think it's a celebratory song with a protest edge,"

said electronic musician Helado Negro in an article in *The Guardian*.

Arguably, the most recent, most well-known song to have been used by protesters is rapper Kendrick Lamar's "Alright," which marchers have picked up as the unofficial anthem of the Black Lives Matter Movement. In 2015, activists in Cleveland left a conference on Black Lives Matter and then confronted police after they had detained a 14-year-old boy following an altercation. When he was released to his parents, the activists started joyfully chanting a lyric from the song: "We gon' be alright! We gon' be alright!"

cultural connections

A New Jersey Connection: Jubilation

The ties linking music, spirituality and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. are strong in Jubilation, a gospel choir powerhouse. The group got its start in 1998 at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC). They made their first stage appearance at NJPAC's second annual celebratory event honoring King, while sharing the stage with the event's headliner, Shirley Caesar, the acclaimed gospel singer and pastor.

The choir celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2019 at an NJPAC concert with the Rev. Dr. Stefanie Minatee, its leader, founder and artistic director. During its history,

the choir won a GRAMMY™ Award, released six albums, and traveled both across the country and internationally. The choir has had the distinction of performing with secular artists such as Queen Latifah, Ray Charles, Isaac Hayes, Dionne Warwick, Kenny Loggins and Patty Griffin—along with gospel greats Bishop Walter Hawkins, Albertina Walker, Kurt Carr and Donnie McClurkin.



Jubilation Choir performing at NJPAC's annual MLK Celebration, 2019

vocabulary

Black Lives Matter

A campaign to protest violence and systemic racism against black people. The movement came into being in 2013 in reaction to the acquittal of Trayvon Martin's killer, George Zimmerman, in Florida. Martin, 17, was unarmed when Zimmerman shot him. Some people have seen Black Lives Matter as an attempt to complete the unfinished work of the Civil Rights Movement: address police brutality against minority communities, mass incarceration, the school-to-prison pipeline, and scant resources—such as education and housing—for the poor.

Civil Rights Movement

Major movement in the 1940s-1960s to push for equal rights for black people and protest Jim Crow laws in the South that discriminated, segregated and terrorized black people and de facto discrimination in the North. Clergy leaders such as Martin Luther King, Jr. and Ralph Abernathy and organizations like the NAACP used actions such as boycotts, peaceful marches and lawsuits to achieve their aims.

Folk Music

Traditional music usually passed down orally and having rural origins. In America, the folk music tradition transcends cultures and encompasses songs from European, African and other communities. There are different genres within folk music, such as cowboy songs, Appalachian music, Cajun, and Tejano music in the Hispanic communities of Texas, just to name a few. Artists like Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger brought folk music back into popular culture during the 1940s-1960s as part of the American folk music revival.

Gospel

A genre of Christian music that originates in black churches. Gospel, which is rousing and inspiring and exuberant in its musicality and performance, has its roots in enslaved African American communities and their oral traditions and songs. Spirituals were a precursor to gospel. Other influences on gospel were the blues as well as the energetic worship style of Pentecostal churches. Gospel music first became popular in the 1930s and has permeated popular, secular songs like some of singer Adele's recordings.

Harriet Tubman

Famous abolitionist and "conductor" of the Underground Railroad (c. 1820-1913). An incredibly brave and resourceful woman, she is well known for freeing slaves, including family members and friends. Historians say she freed 300 people in 19 trips. During the Civil War, Tubman was a nurse, cook, spy and scout.

McCarthy Period

McCarthyism or alternatively the McCarthy Era—a dark time in American history during the 1950s when Wisconsin Senator Joseph McCarthy led hearings to expose and punish alleged members of the Communist Party who had apparently infiltrated the government. Many of his claims were unsubstantiated. Entertainers, writers, activists, scientists and other prominent Americans were also accused of being Communists and persecuted during this period.

Spirituals

A genre of Christian songs created by African Americans in the South before the Civil War. Slaves saw parallels between their lives and Biblical stories, such as Moses and the liberation of Jewish slaves under Egyptian rule. They took these stories and turned them into song. Spirituals often had a call-and-response element: the leader would improvise a lyric and the group would reply back in song.

Underground Railroad

A network of secret routes and safe hiding places that were used by abolitionists (anti-slavery activists) to move fugitive slaves from Southern states to free Northern states, where slavery was outlawed, or Canada. Mostly active in the three decades before the Civil War.

resources

Websites

We Shall Overcome—official website

imgartists.com/roster/we-shall-overcome-a-celebration-of-martin-luther-king-jr

Damien Sneed—official website

damiensneed.com

Jubilation Choir

jubilationchoir.org/the-choir/

njpac.org/events/detail/jubilation-the-road-to-20

The History of American Protest Music, from “Yankee Doodle” to Kendrick Lamar

vox.com/culture/2017/4/12/14462948/

African American Spirituals

loc.gov/item/ihas.200197495/

African American Gospel

loc.gov/collections/songs-of-america/articles-and-essays/musical-styles/ritual-and-worship/african-american-gospel

“This Little Light of Mine” Shines On, a Timeless Tool of Resistance

npr.org/2018/08/06/630051651

How “This Land Is Your Land” Roamed and Rambled into American Life

npr.org/2019/03/14/702792467

Pete Seeger: The Man Who Brought Politics to Music

theguardian.com/music/2014/jan/28/pete-seeger-man-brought-politics-to-music

Has Kendrick Lamar Recorded the New Black National Anthem?

late.com/culture/2015/08/black-lives-matter-protesters-chant-kendrick-lamars-alright-what-makes-it-the-perfect-protest-song-video.html

Black Lives Matter

blacklivesmatter.com

Videos

We Shall Overcome | Damien Sneed | “Bridge Over Troubled Water”

youtu.be/LrTo6DT98IQ

We Shall Overcome featuring

Damien Sneed—Mesa Arts Center

youtu.be/MyRIN5dotsU

“Call Him By His Name”—Damien Sneed & Friends at Jazz at Lincoln Center

youtu.be/UvG6ScN1IQs

Meet Jubilation

youtu.be/Bogho2YqAXo

Louis Armstrong—“Go Down Moses”

youtu.be/BJNCS27rtQ8

Billie Holiday—“Strange Fruit” Live 1959

youtu.be/-DGYgHvChXk

Woody Guthrie—“This Land Is Your Land”

youtu.be/wxiMrvDbq3s

Pete Seeger—“This Land Is Your Land”

youtu.be/HE4Hok8TDgw

Stevie Wonder—“Happy Birthday”

youtu.be/KibW1FBhQIU

Alt-Right @ Charlottesville—“This Little Light of Mine, I’m Gonna Let It Shine”

youtu.be/HsK7gC4noJU

Police harassment leads to crowd singing

Kendrick Lamar’s “Alright”

youtu.be/VUC_DOhfwQ

Books

The Books of the American Negro Spirituals

By James Weldon Johnson and J. Rosamond Johnson

Da Capo Press; Revised edition—December 3, 2002

African American Heritage Hymnal: 575 Hymns, Spirituals, and Gospel Songs

by Rev. Dr. Delores Carpenter and Rev. Nolan E. Williams Jr.

GIA Publications; Reprint edition—September 1, 2001

People Get Ready!: A New History of Black Gospel Music

By Robert Darden

Continuum—October 5, 2005

A City Called Heaven: Chicago and the Birth of Gospel Music (Music in American Life)

By Robert Marovich

University of Illinois Press; 1st edition—March 3, 2015

Strength to Love

By Martin Luther King, Jr.

Fortress Press—January 10, 2010

The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.

By Clayborne Carson

Warner Books—January 1, 2001

Everybody Says Freedom: A History of the Civil Rights

Movement in Songs and Pictures

By Pete Seeger and Bob Reiser

W.W. Norton & Company—June 15, 2009

Songs of America: Patriotism, Protest,

and the Music That Made a Nation

By Jon Meacham and Tim McGraw

Random House—June 11, 2019

33 Revolutions per Minute: A History of Protest

Songs, from Billie Holiday to Green Day

By Dorian Lynskey

Ecco—April 5, 2011

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(partial listing)

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the arts in your school

In-School Residencies: Drama + Social Studies. Dance + Math. It all adds up in NJPAC’s In-School Residencies in which professional teaching artists partner with educators to bring the arts into the classroom. Each 7- to 10-week program culminates in a student performance or an interactive family workshop. All programs address state and national standards. NJPAC is the regional provider in New Jersey for international arts programs like the NJ Wolf Trap Program and Dancing Classrooms Global.

Assemblies: NJPAC presents engaging school assembly programs that are presented by professional artists that invite students into the enchanting world of live performance. NJPAC’s assembly series promotes cultural awareness and invigorates learning by presenting works that are connected to your school’s curriculum.

Professional Development: NJPAC Professional Development engages classroom teachers, arts specialists and teaching artists as integrated teams that combine arts pedagogy, content, classroom management and social behavioral strategies to ignite and inspire arts-rich classrooms. Working as a team empowers teachers to share practice and strategy. Our goal is to inspire artistic and intellectual capacities in students, building competence and confidence in both students and teachers.

study the arts at njpac

Saturday Programs: NJPAC’s Saturday programs are geared towards students at every level—from those who dream of starring on Broadway to those who are still learning their scales. Students work with professional artists to build technique and develop their own creative style in film, contemporary modern dance, hip hop, jazz, musical theater and symphonic band.

Summer Programs: Want to begin to explore the arts? Or immerse yourself in the study of one genre? Then join us at NJPAC next summer in one of seven programs that spark the creativity in every child through the study of music, dance and theater.

arts education njpac discover. create. grow.

For more information or to schedule an appointment, please call our education sales team at 973.353.7058
or email artseducation@njpac.org. Visit www.njpac.org/education

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