

43RD ANNUAL DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. COMMEMORATION 2025



We are excited to share the [2025 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemoration](#) Engagement Toolkit. This toolkit was created to encourage university community members to engage more deeply with Commemoration events. The information included may be used as a resource for individual reflection, group dialogue and academic discourse.

Oregon State University is excited to welcome [Ruha Benjamin](#) as the 2025 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemoration keynote speaker. Benjamin writes, teaches and speaks widely about the relationship between innovation and inequity, knowledge and power, race and citizenship, health and justice. We invite all community members to attend the Commemoration Keynote Address on **Thursday, Jan. 30 at 7 p.m.** at the LaSells Stewart Center. The event is free and open to the public. We ask that all attendees register to attend [here](#).

This toolkit includes a selection of Benjamin's audio, video and written works, along with sample guiding questions for facilitating a learning experience with the materials. We hope you find this toolkit helpful.

About the Commemoration

Now in its 43rd year, the annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemoration is intended to engage community members in learning about and reflecting on the life and legacy of Dr. King and to collaboratively envision ways to carry forward his vision for a more just society.

The Commemoration will open on Monday, Jan. 20 with the annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. [Peace Breakfast](#) and March, and close with the Commemoration keynote address on Thursday, Jan. 30. A full list of events will continue to be added on <https://beav.es/MLK>.

About Ruha Benjamin

[Ruha Benjamin](#) is the Alexander Stewart 1886 Professor of African American Studies at Princeton University, founding director of the Ida B. Wells JUST Data Lab. She is author of the award-winning book "[Race After Technology: Abolitionist Tools for the New Jim Code](#)" and "[Viral Justice: How We Grow the World We Want](#)", the 2023 winner of the Stowe Prize, among many other publications. Her work investigates the social dimensions of science, medicine and technology with a focus on the relationship between innovation and inequity, health and justice, knowledge and power. She recently released her fourth book, "[Imagination: A Manifesto](#)".

She is the recipient of numerous awards and honors, including a 2024 MacArthur Fellowship, the Marguerite Casey Foundation Freedom Scholar Award and the President's Award for Distinguished Teaching at Princeton.

How to Use This Toolkit

This toolkit can be used in a variety of settings and audiences. Below are a few examples, along with supplemental facilitation resources.

Classroom

Instructional faculty can consider connecting the keynote speaker to their courses. Below are just a few examples on what that can look like:

- **Course assignment:** If you believe the keynote speaker will supplement your course outcomes, consider assigning a video or reading in your class syllabus coupled with attending Benjamin's keynote and making connections to the assigned materials.
- **Classroom facilitation:** Consider assigning a video or reading and facilitating a classroom learning experience. You can make students aware that Benjamin will also be delivering a keynote.

Dialogue

OSU employees can engage in a facilitated learning experience about issues impacting our community. Below are just a few examples on how that may look:

- **Facilitate a staff meeting:** Consider assigning a video or reading and facilitating a learning experience at a staff meeting.
- **Share articles and videos:** Consider sharing an article, video or a combination of both via email and encourage teams to attend the keynote together.

While each accompanying article and video contains guiding questions, it is encouraged to edit or draft your own questions to better meet the intended group and/or course outcomes. To help plan your facilitated debrief, a sample agenda is linked at the end of the toolkit.

Short Articles and Opinion pieces

- [To Dismantle the Prison System, We Need Viral Justice \(2022\) TIME](#)
 - Discussion Questions
 - How does Benjamin challenge conventional views of justice and public safety, particularly in the context of race and mental health? How does our field intersect with the systems of justice and public safety?
 - The concept of "viral justice" emphasizes small, community-driven efforts to combat systemic injustice. How can you apply the idea of viral justice in your own lives and communities?

- Benjamin draws parallels between individual experiences of incarceration and the broader impact on families and communities. How do you think society should address psychological and social effects of the criminal justice system on communities?
 - What roles can educational institutions play in supporting students from communities affected by over-policing and incarceration?
- [Disrupting the Gospel of Tech Solutionism to Build Tech Justice \(2022\) Stanford Social Innovation Review](#)
 - Discussion Questions
 - How do you feel about the balance between safety and surveillance in your daily life? How do the technologies you interact with (e.g., wearable devices, online platforms) serve your best interests? Do potential uses of your data align with your values?
 - Benjamin argues that those most impacted by harmful technologies should lead the design of public interest tech ecosystems. Why is it important for marginalized communities to be involved in the creation and oversight of new technologies? How might including these perspectives lead to more equitable tech development?
 - Benjamin suggests that we should reimagine a relationship with technology that embraces justice rather than assuming technology will naturally solve societal problems. What examples can you think of where technological solutions have failed to address deeper social issues, and how might a justice-centered approach be different?

Videos and podcasts

- [Ruha Benjamin on Imagination: A Manifesto \(2024\) Poured Over: The B&N Podcast](#) (47 min)
 - Discussion Questions
 - In what ways has technological convenience reshaped human labor, and what are the social and emotional costs that come with it? Can you think of examples where convenience for some has negatively impacted others?
 - How does the current education system stifle or nurture imagination? Can you think of examples where imagination has been limited by institutional rules?
 - What does it mean to be “stubbornly hopeful” in today’s world? How can we balance recognizing global issues with maintaining hope for change?
 - What role does science fiction or speculative fiction play in helping us envision better futures? Can we apply these ideas to real-world policies?
- [Is technology our savior - or our slayer? \(2023\) TEDWomen](#) (12 min)
 - Discussion Questions
 - How do you see the role of technology in shaping the future? Who should control its direction, and how can we ensure it benefits everyone?
 - What are your personal visions of the future? How do the concepts of utopia and dystopia, influence your perspective on the possibilities we have to respond to societal inequities?
 - How can students, like those in Barcelona or Atlanta, influence local policies and challenge tech-driven or top-down decisions? What steps can be taken to increase collective decision-making?
- [From Park Bench to Lab Bench: What Kind of Future are We Designing? \(2015\) TEDxBaltimore](#) (21 min)
 - Discussion Questions

- Have you noticed any examples of design in your campus or city that results in people experiencing their environments differently? How do these designs impact different groups of people? How do you think they could be designed differently to be more inclusive?
- Henrietta Lacks' cells were used without her or her family's consent. Is it possible for scientists to balance advancing research with respecting the rights and privacy of individuals? How? What role should marginalized communities play in guiding scientific research?
- Benjamin challenges the traditional notion of "progress." How do you define progress in your field of scholarship? Is it possible to have progress that benefits everyone equally? Do you think it's possible to design systems that prioritize both individual freedom and the collective good? How?

Book Chapters

- [Viral Justice: Trust \(2022\)](#)
 - Discussion Questions
 - In what ways has racism shaped the expectations of Black participants in medical research? How does Benjamin's argument about the lack of trustworthiness in dominant institutions relate to vaccine hesitancy in Black communities?
 - How does Benjamin's critique of medical research's exploitation of Black communities affect your understanding of historical and current issues in healthcare? What parallels can you draw between past and present patterns of exploitation?
 - In what ways does the concept of trust, as described by Benjamin, go beyond individual relationships and extend to societal structures like healthcare? How can communities reclaim trust when institutions have been historically untrustworthy?
- [Engineered Inequity: Are Robots Racist \(2019\)](#)
 - Discussion Questions
 - The Beauty AI contest showed a strong preference for white faces. How do you think society's historical standards of beauty were reflected in the robot's algorithm, and why is this a problem for creating equitable AI technologies?
 - Do you think biases in machine learning are truly "unintentional," as suggested by the author? What responsibility do programmers and tech companies have in mitigating these biases?
 - Should there be stricter ethical guidelines for the development of AI technologies? What role do you think the humanities could play in shaping the development of technology to be more socially conscious?
 - Given the inherent biases that can be coded into AI, how important do you think human oversight is in preventing harm? What systems could be implemented to improve accountability?
- [The New Jim Code \(2019\)](#)
 - Discussion Questions
 - Benjamin introduces the concept of the "New Jim Code" to describe encoded forms of racial bias in technology. What are some potential dangers of relying on seemingly neutral algorithms in areas such as policing, healthcare, or employment?

- Benjamin mentions that certain groups are working to resist technological inequities. What are some ways students or activists might challenge the biases and discrimination in technology? How can you contribute to more equitable design practices?
- Do you think it's possible for technology to be used as a tool to combat racism, or does it inherently perpetuate social biases? How can we ensure that new technologies are part of the solution rather than the problem?

Sample Agenda

This sample agenda of a facilitated learning experience was created for your reference. This sample agenda can serve as a starting point for your needs, as facilitation techniques and approaches may vary depending on your unique facilitation style and the learning environment. If you would like to consult about developing a facilitation guide for your class or meeting, please reach out to diversity@oregonstate.edu.

Overview

Source	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Title of video or article
Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore... • Examine...
Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free write • Small pair share • Large group discussion

Agenda (40-50 Minutes)

Section	Activity	Notes
Introduction (10-15 Minutes)	Framing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Framing of the presentation/time together. • Share information about the speaker's visit to Oregon State University as part of the Dr. King Commemoration.
	Free Write	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free write about general thoughts about the article or video. The initial question can be general thoughts, what you were left feeling, what stood out for you.
Group Dialogue (15-20 Minutes)	Pair Share	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To help spur conversation, consider starting with the first question in pairs, usually the person next to you. • Consider asking them what they wrote about and/or a question that elicits deeper conversation

	Small Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depending on the size of the group, you can ask pairs to combine with another pair • After the groups introduce themselves, present the question you select. The question can elicit deeper conversation about the issue.
Closing (15-20 Minutes)	Large Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite participants to share insights and themes from their small groups. You can facilitate dialogue based on what surfaces: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Themes, distinctions, questions, etc. • Ahead of time develop 1-2 possible probing questions if needed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Question 1 ○ Question 2
	Closing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share out: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In large group in the group of four: “As we close, what feelings or thoughts are you sitting with?”