



### NEWS RELEASE

April 9, 2013

#### **Santa Maria Public Library Joins Celebration of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Letter From Birmingham Jail With a Public Reading**

Members of the community are invited to join the Santa Maria Public Library in a celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the day Martin Luther King Jr. began writing his "Letter from Birmingham Jail." Beginning at 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday, April 16, participants will gather in Shepard Hall at the Library where they will be given a section of the letter to read aloud individually or in groups.

The event, sponsored and coordinated by the Birmingham, Alabama Public Library, will be replicated in libraries, museums, schools, places of worship, bookstores, coffee shops and more. Participating cities cover the United States from Portland, Maine to Detroit to New Orleans to Los Angeles, and around the globe from South Africa to Israel to Thailand to Iceland.

In April 1963, Martin Luther King, Jr. joined local civil rights activists in Birmingham in their struggle to end segregation. They instigated mass meetings, lunch counter sit-ins, marches on City Hall, and boycotts of merchants. King spoke extensively about the philosophy of nonviolence, and actions increased daily.

A court injunction was obtained against the protests, but the leaders decided to disobey the court order. King was arrested on Good Friday, April 12, and subsequently began writing his "Letter from Birmingham Jail" on the edges of the Birmingham News on April 16. He wrote in response to a statement published in the Birmingham News by eight local clergy who had condemned the protests.

Part of the letter reads, "Never before have I written so long a letter. I'm afraid it is much too long to take your precious time. I can assure you that it would have been much shorter if I had been writing from a comfortable desk, but what else can one do when he is alone in a narrow jail cell, other than write long letters, think long thoughts and pray long prayers?"

This event will be photographed and videotaped in order to share it with the Birmingham library. The Santa Maria Public Library is located at 421 S. McClelland Street. Questions may be directed to City Librarian Mary Housel, at 925-0951 ext. 322.

<b>Department:</b>	<b>Public Library</b>
<b>Contact Person:</b>	<b>Mary Housel, City Librarian</b>
<b>Telephone Number:</b>	<b>(805) 925-0951 ext. 322</b>
<b>E-mail Address:</b>	<b>mhoussel@ci.santa-maria.ca.us</b>