



LESHUN "SHIP" COLLINS

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Award

Ohio-based education innovator LeShun "Ship" Collins is a worthy inheritor of Dr. Martin Luther King's legacy of social engagement... and enlightenment translating to empowerment.

For over two decades, Mr. Collins has fought the good fight for all children, particularly young African American men, to connect pride in their identity to academic achievement, transcending typical societal perceptions.

As a health and physical education instructor at Orange High School in Pepper Pike, Ohio, Mr. Collins has long recognized his responsibilities go well beyond the backboard and blackboard. Through afterschool mentoring programs inspiring youth to embrace and recognize their potential, he makes real world connections that get real world results.

His founding of the Male Minority Leadership Group at Orange High achieved just that. It allowed young men to learn they can take control their own destiny and positively impact their communities in a safe space. They were also able to bond over their commonalities while celebrating their differences, learning the lesson that their lives aren't a "one size fits all" monolith.

Mr. Collins is equally dedicated to the concept of respecting, protecting and supporting women through his formation of the White Ribbon Campaign, taking on the issue of domestic violence. He is a board member of the Cleveland Rape Crisis Center, as a staunch ally raising awareness and advocating for gender equality.

Mr. Collins' awards for 2019 Ohio Coach of the Year, and 2024 Teacher of the Year and Coach of the Year are a testament to his high regard in his district, but that's far from his end game. Mr. Collins is also a proud leader in the Ohio Education Association's Minority Training and Women's Leadership Program.

Through these initiatives he's not only building tomorrow's change agents, he's instructing how to engage with community activists and elected officials to foster progress. Mr. Collins is helping young people understand how to speak truth and tolerance to power to gain their own.

As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. instilled in previous generations, LeShun "Ship" Collins consistently provides hope that "the dream" can and will become the reality and is stewarding the "ship" towards a land of equity in education for all.