
For the Classroom

A Story in Honor of Martin Luther King, Jr.

— Debora Petschek

In 2021 at the height of concern for equal rights and the honoring of Black lives, this story was written to bring the picture of Dr. Martin Luther King to three-, four-, and five-year-old children. It has been used by the author and colleagues as a treasured presentation of the struggle for equality to our youngest children.

Sheepland was a beautiful valley with a wide river meandering this way and that along the valley floor. The hill on one side of the river was lush and green, with abundant sweet grass. That is where the white sheep lived.

The hill on the other side of the river was hot and dry. Only brown, brittle grass grew there. This was home to the brown sheep.

There was a bridge over the river where the sheep might cross from one side to the other, but under it lived a mean troll who guarded the bridge and would not allow any sheep to cross.

The white sheep would look over at the brown hill and say, "That does not look like a nice place to be. I will stay here."

The brown sheep would look over at the green hill and say, "That grass looks so sweet and plentiful. How I wish I could cross over and try some."

But every time the brown sheep tried to cross the bridge, the mean troll would jump up waving a big stick and chase the brown sheep back to their hill. What were the brown sheep to do?

One day a kind shepherd named Martin came to the valley. He saw the green hill with its lush sweet grass. He saw the brown hill with its bitter grass. He noticed that only white sheep lived on the green hill and only brown sheep lived on the brown hill. He also saw how the brown sheep wished they could cross over to the green hill.

"This is so unfair!" he said to himself. "It will never do! I must do something to help."

So he gathered all the brown sheep and marched with them down to the bridge. When they started to cross, out jumped the troll waving his stick, ready to chase them back. But kind shepherd Martin stood his ground and would not budge. The troll shouted and waved his stick about. Still kind shepherd Martin stood there. The troll stamped his feet and growled. Still Martin stood there, not moving and refusing to leave. Finally the troll grew very tired and crawled back under the bridge to sleep.

Then good shepherd Martin led his flock of brown sheep over the bridge and up onto the green hill where they ate and ate from the plentiful sweet grass. ♦

Debora Petschek started her Waldorf journey as a parent. In that capacity she served for several years on a committee working to bring DEI into the classroom. She eventually moved into early childhood, where she taught for 16 years, first as an assistant and eventually as a lead teacher. Now, in retirement, she is caring for her 99-year-old father. In her spare time she enjoys working in her ever-changing garden, striving to make it a welcoming place for bees, birds and the elementals.