

# Obsequies

## Martin Luther King, Jr.



TUESDAY, APRIL 9, 1968

10:30 A. M.

**Ebenezer Baptist Church**

2:00 P. M.

**The Campus of Morehouse College**  
ATLANTA, GEORGIA

# Martin Luther King Jr.

1929 - 1968

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MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. is like the great Yggdrasil tree, "whose roots," a poet said, "are deep in earth but in whose upper branches the stars of heaven are glowing and astir."

His roots went deeply into the inferno of slavery, this black baby born January 15, 1929, to Alberta Williams King and Martin Luther King Sr. Now the roots have grown to those upper branches, and he is indeed among the stars of heaven, this beautiful man, husband, father, pastor, leader.

He is free and he is home, and the world has come to his home to honor him and hopefully, to repent the sins against him and all humanity.

Martin Luther King came of a deeply religious family tradition. His great grandfather was a slave exhorter. His maternal grandfather, the Rev. Adam Daniel Williams, was the second pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church where for eight years, Dr. King and his father were co-pastors.

This lineage which permeated his life was an enormous influence on him and what he would ultimately become.

His father, born at the turn of the century in Stockbridge, Georgia, came to Atlanta in 1916. In 1925, Martin Luther King Sr. married Alberta Williams. They were blessed with a daughter and two sons. The youngest son is the Reverend Alfred Daniel Williams King of Louisville, Kentucky, who went to Memphis, Tennessee, one infamous day "to help my brother." The daughter is Christine King Farris of Atlanta, who went to a home that night to comfort her brother's wife. The other son was Martin Luther King, Jr.

Reared in a home of love, understanding, and compassion, young Martin was to find 501 Auburn Avenue a buffer against the rampant injustices of the "sick society" for which he would become the physician.

A serious student, Martin Luther King was an early admissions student at Morehouse College in Atlanta, from which he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1948.

His great "wrestling inside with the problem of a vocation" must have been prophetic of the many agonizing hours which would eventually characterize his life.

Having felt the stings of "man's inhumanity to man," Martin Luther King believed law would be his sphere for combating injustices. The ministry as he saw it was not socially relevant; however, at Morehouse, in the brilliant Dr. Benjamin E. Mays, he saw the ideal of what he wanted a minister to be. In his junior year, he gave himself to the ministry.

At Crozer Theological Seminary in Chester, Pennsylvania, Martin Luther King was further stimulated but still his quest for a method to end social evil continued. Through courses at the University of Pennsylvania, deep, serious reading, and provocative lectures, he began to find answers which would crystallize his thinking and give him the philosophy by which he would "redeem the soul of America." Because of the color of his skin, his life was threatened at this institution, but with the aplomb that would be typical of his response to later threats, he disarmed his attacker.

He was the first Negro to be elected president of Crozer's student body, and this began what would become a series of firsts for this son whose roots were in slavery.

With a partially satisfied, but still fermenting mind, he matriculated at Boston University, at the time the center of personalism, the philosophical posture which he had adopted. Studying under two of the greatest exponents of his philosophy, Martin King was to find this theory an enormously sustaining force in the future.

In Boston, he met Coretta Scott, an equally concerned and talented New England Conservatory student from the South. On June 18, 1953, at her Marion, Alabama home she became Mrs. Martin Luther King, Jr. She was later to realize her highest dreams, not in concertizing, but in singing the songs of freedom and being her husband's disciple from "Montgomery to Montgomery."

This happy marriage brought into life four children; Yolanda Denise, born November 17, 1955; Martin Luther III, born October 23, 1957; Dexter Scott, born January 30, 1961; and Bernice Albertine, born March 28, 1963.

The Ph.D. degree was awarded Martin Luther King in 1955, and again there was a great "wrestling inside." Sensitive to the needs of his native South, he decided to return to the land from whence he had sprung, and preach a "socially relevant and intellectually responsible" gospel. He accepted the "call" to Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, and began his pastorate September 1, 1954.

The cradle of the Confederacy was a seething cauldron of racial injustice, and this grandson of a founder of the Atlanta Branch NAACP was asked to assume the presidency of the Montgomery Branch NAACP. Again the wrestle.

Finally, he answered negatively, but on December 1, 1955, the refusal of Mrs. Rosa Parks to give up her seat to a white man on a Montgomery bus made the young, erudite minister answer affirmatively when asked to chair the newly formed Montgomery Improvement Association.

Mrs. Parks' arrest for violation of the system of racial segregation set off a new American Revolution. Daring to do what was right, Ralph and Juanita Abernathy stood up with Martin and Coretta King when there were nothing but "valleys of despair," and their loyalty has never known the midnight.

Now, the myriad religious and philosophical forces which had shaped his life would be put to the test and this selfless, compassionate man would "forget himself into immortality."

"Christian love can bring brotherhood on earth. There is an element of God in every man," said he after his home was bombed in Montgomery. This new attack on America's social system gave every day application to the teachings of Jesus, and captured the conscience of the world.

On April 4, 1968, an assassin took the earthly life of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Profound, but unpretentious; gentle, but valiant; Baptist, but ecumenical; loving justice, but hating injustice; the deep roots of this Great Spirit resolved the agonizing wrestling and gave all mankind new hope for a bright tomorrow.

It is, now, for us, the living to dedicate and rededicate our lives to the Cause which Martin Luther King so nobly advanced.

*He Had a Dream.*



# The Leadership Of MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

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- 1955-56 Montgomery Bus Boycott
- 1957 Founding of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC)
- 1958 Beginning of massive South-wide voter registration
- 1959 Nonviolent education programs; school integration drives
- 1960 Founding of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee; the sit-in movement
- 1961 Freedom Rides; the Albany Movement — Albany, Georgia
- 1962 Establishment of SCLC Citizenship Education Program and SCLC Operation Breadbasket
- 1963 The Birmingham Movement; The March on Washington
- 1964 The Nobel Prize for Peace; the Civil Rights Act of 1964
- 1965 The Selma-to-Montgomery March; The Voting Rights Act of 1965
- 1966 The Chicago Movement; the March Against Fear in Mississippi
- 1967 The war in Vietnam and the call for peace; the Cleveland Movement
- 1968 The Poor People's Campaign; Memphis

Memorial Services  
Martin Luther King Jr.  
1929 - 1968

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- I. Ebenezer Baptist Church ..... Family and Faith
- II. Memorial March ..... Commitment and Movement
- III. The Morehouse College Campus ..... Knowledge and  
Wisdom
- IV. Interment ..... *"Free at last, free at last!  
Thank God Almighty, I'm  
free at last!"*
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Atlanta, Georgia  
April 9, 1968

## Memorial March



Martin Luther King Jr. marched  
for freedom.

We march today in  
grateful recognition of the freedom  
he has now achieved.

# Memorial Services

## Martin Luther King Jr.

### EBENEZER BAPTIST CHURCH

10:30 A. M.

The Reverend Ralph David Abernathy, Officiating

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PROCESSIONAL — *"Cortege"* ..... Dupre

HYMN — *"When I Survey the Wondrous Cross"* .. arr. Lowell Mason

PRAYER ..... The Reverend Ronald English  
Assistant Pastor, Ebenezer Baptist Church

HYMN — *"In Christ There Is No East or West"* .....  
Alexander R. Reinagle

OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURE .....  
The Reverend William H. Borders  
Pastor, Wheat Street Baptist Church

HYMN — *"Softly and Tenderly"* ..... Will L. Thompson

NEW TESTAMENT SCRIPTURE ..... The Reverend E. H. Dorsey  
Pastor, Tabernacle Baptist Church

HYMN — *"Where He Leads Me"* ..... J. S. Norris

TRIBUTE ..... Dr. L. Harold De Wolfe  
Mentor of Dr. King

SOLO — *"My Heavenly Father Watches Over Me"* .....  
Charles H. Gabriel  
Mrs. Mary Gurley

SERMON EXCERPTS

SPIRITUAL — *"Balm in Gilead"* ..... Traditional

RECESSIONAL — *"Largo"* from *"New World Symphony"* .... Dvorak



Interment



South View  
Cemetery

# THE DREAMS AND INSPIRATION OF MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

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*"History has thrust upon our generation an indescribably important destiny—to complete a process of democratization which our nation has too long developed too slowly. How we deal with this crucial situation will determine our moral health as individuals, our cultural health as a region, our political health as a nation, and our prestige as a leader of the free world."*

— 1958

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*"Although I cannot pay the fine, I will willingly accept the alternative which you provide, and that I will do without malice."*

— Statement to an Alabama judge, 1958

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*"It may get me crucified. I may even die. But I want it said even if I die in the struggle that 'He died to make men free'".*

— 1962

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*"The question is not whether we will be extremist but what kind of extremists will we be. Will we be extremists for hate or will we be extremists for the preservation of injustice-or will we be extremists for the cause of justice?"*

— Letter from a Birmingham Jail  
April, 1963

*"I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but the content of their character."*

— The March on Washington,  
August 28, 1963

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*"Some of you have knives, and I ask you to put them up. Some of you have arms, and I ask you to put them up. Get the weapon of nonviolence, the breastplate of righteousness, the armor of truth and just keep marching."*

— 1964

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*"Cowardice asks the question, 'Is it safe?' Expediency asks the question, 'Is it politic?' Vanity asks the question, 'Is it popular?' But conscience asks the question, 'Is it right?' And there comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular, but he must take it because conscience tells him that it is right."*

— On Taking a position against  
the war in Vietnam, 1967

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*"Poor people's lives are disrupted and dislocated every day. We want to put a stop to this. Poverty, racism and discrimination cause families to be kept apart, men to become desperate, women to live in fear, and children to starve."*

— On the Poor People's Campaign, 1968

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*"Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will . . . . I've looked over and I've seen the promised land. I may not get there with you, but I want you to know tonight that we as a people will get to the promised land."*

— April 3, 1968

## Honorary Hallbearers:

Board of Deacons, Ebenezer Baptist Church

S. C. L. C. Staff

Men of the Clergy

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## Active Hallbearers:

1. Mr. Milton Cornelius
2. Mr. Jethro English
3. Mr. Arthur Henderson
4. Mr. Howard Dowdy
5. Reverend C. K. Steele
6. Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth
7. Reverend Jesse Jackson
8. Reverend Fred C. Bennette

## "I Tried to Love and Serve Humanity"

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"IF ANY OF YOU are around when I have to meet my day, I don't want a long funeral. And if you get somebody to deliver the eulogy, tell him not to talk too long . . . . Tell them not to mention that I have a Nobel Peace Prize. That isn't important. Tell them not to mention that I have three or four hundred other awards. That's not important. Tell them not to mention where I went to school. I'd like somebody to mention that day, that 'Martin Luther King Jr. tried to give his life serving others.' I'd like for somebody to say that day, that 'Martin Luther King Jr. tried to love somebody.' I want you to say that day that I tried to be right on the war question. I want you to be able to say that day, that I did try to feed the hungry. And I want you to be able to say that day that I did try in my life to clothe those who were naked. I want you to say on that day, that I did try, in my life, to visit those who were in prison. I want you to say that I tried to love and serve humanity."

— MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.  
Ebenezer Baptist Church  
Atlanta, Georgia  
Sunday, February 4, 1968



## To Our Friends

In this hour of sadness, we wish to acknowledge with deepest gratitude the great outpouring of sympathy and warm consolation we have received from our friends throughout the world. You have lifted our hearts, and with your help and the immortal guiding spirit of our son, husband, father, brother, martyred leader — MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. — *We Shall Overcome.*

THE FAMILY OF MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

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Funeral Under the Direction of:  
HANLEY BELL STREET FUNERAL HOME  
MARCELLOUS THORNTON FUNERAL HOME  
Atlanta, Georgia