



NCR Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Cultural Observances, Awareness Information and Events

Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday

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Did You Know?

1. Martin Luther King's birth name was Michael, not Martin.
2. Martin Luther King skipped two grades in school.
3. Martin Luther King survived an assassination attempt in 1958.
4. Martin Luther King was a Trekkie.
5. Martin Luther King won a Grammy Award.
6. Martin Luther King improvised the "I Have a Dream" speech.
7. Martin Luther King entered college at the age of 15.
8. Martin Luther King received his doctorate in Systematic Theology.
9. Martin Luther King was imprisoned nearly 30 times.

Who Was Martin Luther King?

King was not a prime mover behind any of the civil rights campaigns between 1956 and 1968 for which he is known, except the first one. That was the Montgomery bus boycott that began in December 1955. He was not involved at the beginning of protests in Albany, Ga., Birmingham, Ala., Selma, Ala., St. Augustine, Fla., Chicago or Memphis. In each case he joined campaigns already well under way. Once a campaign was in progress he infused it with his charismatic leadership, oratorical power and nonviolent principle – a legacy of another kind.

Many people still identify King primarily as a “civil rights leader” and fail to understand his Christian Social Gospel. As a follower of Jesus, he adhered to nonviolence and a vision of “the beloved community.” King strongly criticized America’s racial form of capitalism that “gives luxuries to the classes and takes necessities from the masses.” He stood strongly with unions, which he called the strongest antidote to poverty. In his Poor People’s Campaign, he sought to reorder our national priorities from funding war, tax cuts and bailouts for the rich to insuring every person the opportunity for a good education, health care as a human right, a decent job, and a viable income. In Memphis, he called for “economic equality” and died fighting for workers to have union rights.

Beyond civil and voting rights, he pursued a nonviolent, moral revolution and a vision of a world without violence, hatred, war, poverty and oppression. Many still do not understand the fullness of King’s dream and our society has failed to live up to it.