

Nation Prepares For Martin Luther King Holiday

By Clarence Waldron
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As the nation prepares to celebrate Martin Luther King's birthday this month, the King family is urging people to remember the true meaning of the day.

The holiday theme, "Remember! Celebrate! Act! A Day On, Not a Day Off," sponsored by the King Center in Atlanta,

reiterates the importance of recalling Dr. King's work for human rights and acting on his teachings of nonviolence and commitment to serving others.

His daughter, Rev. Bernice King, told JET magazine: "We can best honor Dr. King by working in our communities around the nation and the world to eradicate what he called the 'triple evils,' poverty, racism and militarism. Also, committing us to those things for which he gave his life. He gave his life for justice for all people, democracy for all people, truth for all people, peace for all people and love for all people."

King, who plans to attend several King Day celebrations including the Annual Commemorative King Holiday Program at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, adds, "I am encouraging people to volunteer in their communities, not just on the holiday, but beyond the holiday."

This year marks what would have been Dr. King's 81st birthday.

"Every year in January, we start anew," Martin Luther King III told JET. "We need to get millions of people engaged in community service, but not just on that day, but every week of the year. It could be helping senior citizens or cleaning up the community or addressing the issue of drug usage in our communities. We need to commit to doing something to make our nation better. We also need men and



women, but especially Black men, doing more mentoring. We need to be showing our young people the way.”

The official King flag will be flown at the King Center on the holiday. Maria and Dwayne Ross of Dallas are the creators of the flag that has been at the King Center since May 2008.

“This flag is a constant visual reminder of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s vision,” said Maria Ross. “If we’re to continue moving forward, we must go back and rediscover that Dr. King’s dedication to justice, peace and brotherhood lies within each of us.”

Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee, who supported the Ross family’s efforts to get the flag distributed nationally, told JET: “This flag waves King’s message of justice around the nation. There’s nothing more beautiful than a waving flag. This flag symbolizes service and you are reminded to commemorate his message all year long.” (See flag on Page 16.)

Other tributes include live performances. For example, theatergoers in New York will get a look at Dr. King in the one-man play *The Man in Room 306*, starring Craig Alan Edwards as King, at the 59E59 Theaters.

Dr. King’s nephew, Isaac Farris Jr., president and CEO of the King Center in Atlanta, emphasizes what all Americans can do on the King Holiday. “We would like people to do something that benefits someone other than themselves.” He urges people to go to the center’s Web site, thekingcenter.org, “to get some ideas of how they can be of service in their community. We can link them up. There’s no excuse. You can do something.” □



W.A. Harewood/AP



King Children Work Toward Reconciliation

As they celebrate their father’s life and legacy this month, Bernice and Martin III (top, r) say they are in the process of reconciling with their brother, Dexter (l), after they reached an out-of-court settlement in 2009 over their father’s estate.

Bernice and Martin filed suit against Dexter accusing him of acting improperly as head of their father’s estate, which the three of them control as a private corporation.

Bernice told JET: “Things like this take time and I am committed to restoring our family relationship.”

Martin says, “We are very pleased with where we are. Sometimes you got to go through some dark periods. We went through a very difficult period last year being in court. But it was a nonviolent method; we were not fighting each other. I can’t say we resolved everything today. But we are certainly in communication. We hope to be together on the holiday. All of that is positive.”

Dexter was not available for comment.



MAKING A DIFFERENCE MLK DAY, EVERY DAY

This Jan. 18 marks the Martin Luther King Jr. federal holiday. It is also a national day of service, designated by Congress in 1994, in which Americans are encouraged to take a “day on, not a day off” to strengthen their communities, volunteer to help others and bridge barriers in honor of King’s legacy. Early last year, President Obama launched United We Serve, a nationwide initiative to focus on community needs and to promote service as a way of life. Go to Web sites, such as serve.gov, nationalservice.gov and mlkday.gov, in search of volunteer opportunities for King Day and beyond. Following are just a few of the many service programs occurring in key cities touched by the civil rights leader. Use them as examples of ways you can benefit others.

ATLANTA

Where King was born, reared and attended Morehouse College

*** Helping the homeless:**

Samaritan House of Atlanta transforms lives by helping

homeless men and women achieve self-sufficiency through employment readiness and life stabilization programs. Volunteers can help with service tasks. www.handsonatlanta.org

MONTGOMERY, ALA.

Where King led the Montgomery Bus Boycott, 1955

*** Aiding the incarcerated:**

AIM – Aid to Inmate Mothers provides services to Alabama’s incarcerated women with an emphasis on enhancing personal growth and strengthening the bonds between inmate mothers and their children. Visiting volunteers and reading helpers needed. www.inmatemoms.org

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Where King gave “I Have a Dream” speech on National Mall, 1963

*** Assisting food banks:**

SOME – So Others Might Eat serves breakfast and lunch seven days a week to the most vulnerable of the D.C. area. They serve between 700-800 meals a day. Meals are accepted and volunteers are welcome to prepare or serve food. www.some.org

The King Flag, created by Maria and Dwayne Ross, hangs on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis.

CHICAGO

Where King and others tried to expand the Civil Rights Movement in the North, 1966

*** Sprucing up communities:**

City Year Chicago partners with the Englewood and Woodlawn communities in a day of transformative service: painting murals; beautifying two public schools; painting a senior-apartment building; and more. This event also marks the opening day of two school-aged service-learning programs: Young Heroes and City Heroes. www.cityyear.org

NEW YORK

Where King delivered speech “Beyond Vietnam,” expressing opposition to the Vietnam War at Riverside Church, 1967

*** Improving schools:**

Children for Children Foundation is seeking youth and adult volunteers for hands-on service projects to benefit the community and those in need at two locations, Martin Luther King High School and PS 57 James Weldon Johnson in Manhattan. www.childrenforchildren.org

MEMPHIS

Where King was assassinated on Lorraine Motel balcony, 1968

*** Advancing history:**

The National Civil Rights Museum at the Lorraine Motel for the past 18 years has commemorated the life of Dr. King through original programs to inspire new generations of leaders. Volunteers are needed to serve in various capacities from greeters to gallery attendants on King Day. www.civilrightsmuseum.org