

## **ATLANTA JOURNAL CONSTITUTION ([www.AJC.com](http://www.AJC.com))**

### **Q&A / HARRY JOHNSON: King site in D.C. looking for donors**

Bob Dart - Cox Washington Bureau  
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Washington --- Houston lawyer and law professor Harry Johnson is leading efforts this month, Black History Month, to raise \$5 million toward construction of a memorial to the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. in Washington.

It's part of a larger drive that has seen about \$33 million raised since 1996, when President Bill Clinton signed legislation approving the memorial. But the remaining two-thirds of the estimated \$100 million cost remains to be collected.

Late last week, Johnson, president of the Martin Luther King Jr. National Memorial Project Foundation and immediate past president of Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity, which counted King among its members, discussed the project and his role in it.

**Q:** Alpha Phi Alpha, the college fraternity that Martin Luther King Jr., joined at Morehouse College in Atlanta, has raised \$1.1 million for the national memorial and led this campaign to honor their famed, slain brother. How did this happen?

**A:** Members wanted to see Dr. King placed in the rightful context for what he did for his country. So they came up with the idea and formed the foundation.

**Q:** Where will the memorial be located?

**A:** It will be on the Mall, on the Tidal Basin, between the Lincoln and Jefferson memorials. It's right down the street from the FDR Memorial.

**Q:** How was the site determined?

**A:** With input from the National Park Service and the Commission on Fine Arts. We searched all over D.C. and determined that this was the best site. It's right on the Tidal Basin, where the cherry blossoms come each spring. The landscape design fits in with the water and trees.

**Q:** What will it look like?

**A:** It will have a huge boulder --- a "Mountain of Despair" that comes from a phrase in one of Dr. King's speeches. It will look like Dr. King is walking out of this mountain. Dr. King himself will be looking across the water at the Jefferson Memorial. . . . Behind the "Mountain of Despair," in a semicircle, visitors can walk and read on 24 panels some of Dr. King's words. The granite that we're going to use will come from Georgia.

**Q:** How was this design selected?

**A:** We had an international competition with entries from 52 countries --- 1,900 entries in all.

**Q:** Is there urgency in this fund-raising? I understand you need \$66 million --- twice as much as you have now --- to break ground.

**A:** Yes. This month is a call to action. We hope to break ground in early '06 and have the memorial finished in '08.

Q: Have you found that many Americans are unaware of this effort to build a national memorial to honor Dr. King?

A: Yes. But we are building up the awareness. We have some great partners who are helping us. . . . We have a "dream team" giving us support: Muhammad Ali, Dr. Maya Angelou, Angela Bassett, Kenny "Babyface" Edmonds, Laurence Fishburne, Harrison Ford, Morgan Freeman, Whoopi Goldberg, Samuel L. Jackson, Joseph C. Phillips, Al Roker, Carlos Santana, Martin Sheen, Tavis Smiley and Jerry Stackhouse. . . . And we're giving a blue "build the dream" bracelet to everyone who contributes at least \$5.

Q: Has the King family been involved?

A: Yes. They are very much involved, and they're excited about the way the memorial looks and what it says. Coretta Scott King is on the foundation's board of directors.

Q: I see that General Motors has donated \$10 million, the National Ad Council \$9 million and Tommy Hilfiger \$5 million. Are Atlanta corporations chipping in?

A: We're looking at a couple of Atlanta corporations for help right now: Coca-Cola. Home Depot. Bank of America. Delta Air Lines. . . . Bell South has been on board with us since Day One. [Bell South has given \$600,000, the foundation reported.] We feel that Atlanta should play a huge role in this. Dr. King was born there, and it was his home.

Q: How can people contribute?

A: They can go to our Web site, [www.buildthedream.org](http://www.buildthedream.org), or call our toll-free number, 1-888-484-3373 (1-888-4THEDREAM).

This sketch of the MLK memorial design shows "The Mountain of Despair" from which a figure of King is seen emerging. The 'Stone of Hope' which will be the centerpiece of the Martin Luther King, Jr. memorial in Washington, D.C. (handout via e-mail)