

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. MEMORIAL TO
BREAK GROUND IN D.C. NEXT YEAR

Remembering The Man Who Would Dream

by E. Cameron Reeder

For years, the Mall in Washington, D.C. was devoid of a memorial to the men and women who fought in World War II. But with the assistance of celebrities and concerned citizens, a fitting tribute finally became a reality.

Similarly, a memorial to the movement for racial equality in the United States has been too long in coming. And once again, Hollywood stars, major corporations and individuals are digging deep to rectify that situation. Today, the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial might only exist in the hearts of those who have spearheaded those efforts, but in a couple of years, the nation's first memorial to a person of color will grace the National Mall.

Permission was originally granted by Congress in 1996 to the nation's oldest black fraternity, Alpha Phi Alpha Inc., of which King was a member, to establish the memorial and to raise the necessary private funds for the project. The cost was originally projected at \$100 million and the foundation was granted authority until 2003 to break ground. Further legislation extended the date to 2006.

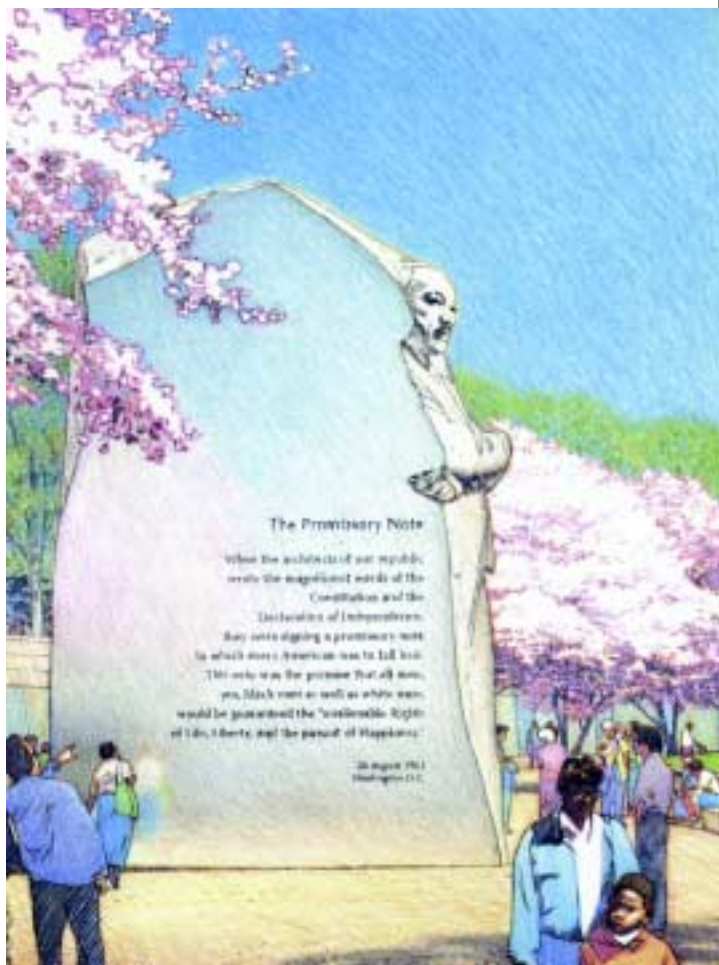
Groundbreaking is now expected to occur late in 2006 with the finished project taking an additional two years to complete. Funds are reportedly at \$37.5 million and are still being solicited for completion of the project.

The four-acre site for the memorial is on the northeast corner of the Tidal Basin, adjacent to the FDR Memorial and in a direct line between the Lincoln and Jefferson Memorials. The Commission of Fine Arts and The National Capital Planning Commission approved the location in December of

*The Stone
of Hope*



*Winning layout for the
entire Martin Luther
King Memorial in
Washington D.C.*



1999. The nearby Lincoln Memorial was the location of Dr. King's famous, "I Have a Dream" speech which was given before a crowd of a quarter of a million people 40 years ago.

Once the site was chosen, the search began for an architectural and design firm. A competition was held in which almost 2,000 entries were received from more than 50 countries. The winning design belonged to ROMA Group from San Francisco. A partnership of Devroux & Purnell/ROMA Design Group Joint Venture was named as Architect of Record as recently as February, 2004. The design will seek to show the nation's Civil Rights evolution from the founding fathers to the present.

Three themes that designers hope to convey from Dr. King's life for the circular memorial include justice, democracy and hope.

"There are very few Americans who, by their words and deeds have captured the hearts and minds of people worldwide,"said Dr. Ed Jackson, Jr., Executive Architect for the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Memorial Project Foundation, Inc. "Dr. Martin Luther King is certainly a member of that group."

The memorial's proximity between the Jefferson and Lincoln Memorials will help to frame these concepts. The memorial will seek to highlight the Man, the Movement and the Message. Stone, trees and water will be used in artistic ways as metaphors to capture the imagination of the onlooker.

The most direct element of the memorial will be the sculpture of Dr. King himself. The image of Dr. King will protrude from a block of stone, himself a part of the natural elements. This is done to unify the overall message presented in the work entitled "Stone of Hope." He will be seen looking across the Tidal Basin to the Jefferson Memorial and pointing with a pencil to his words in "The Promissory Note".

"World peace through nonviolent means is neither absurd nor unattainable. All other methods have failed. Thus we must begin anew. Nonviolence is a good starting point. Those of us who believe in this method can

be voices of reason, sanity, and understanding amid the voices of violence, hatred, and emotion. We can very well set a mood of peace out of which a system of peace can be built."

-- Martin Luther King, Jr.
December 1964

Displays of passages from many of his more notable sermons and speeches will also appear throughout the memorial. These will appear chronologically arranged to recount the struggles in Dr. King's life.

"This memorial to Dr. King is designed to illuminate, inspire and educate present and future generations of visitors (to The National Mall) of his visions of and for America -- a place founded upon the tenants of democracy, justice, hope and love for mankind," said Dr. Jackson. "We hope this memorial will serve as a beacon to all members of the human family who share in his vision of living in peace and harmony, a world without hunger or wars, a world where respect for life and equal justice is the norm."

The King Memorial's corporate and foundation sponsors include: General Motors, Tommy Hilfiger, Inc., J.W. Marriott Foundation, Aflac, Bank of America Charitable Foundation, Bell South, Fannie Mae, and the Ford Motor Fund. The board includes: Mrs. Coretta Scott King, Ambassador Andrew Young, Gary Cowger, Suzanne DePasse, George Foreman, William Gray, III, Willie Gary, Joel Horowitz, Vernon Jordan, Tommy Hilfiger, Franklin Raines, David Stern, Jack Valenti and Dr. Robert Wright. Morgan Freeman appears on the foundation website. Carlos Santana, Al Roker and Halle Barry star in television and radio public service announcements for the Memorial.

For more information, contact Rica Orszag, Public Relations Director at the MLK Memorial Foundation at 202.253.8974.

The organizations's web site is www.buildthedream.org.

The writer was born and raised in Montgomery, Alabama. He grew up within minutes of Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church where Dr. King held his first pastorate.

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A Brief Chronology of Martin Luther King, Jr.

January 15, 1929	Martin Luther King, Jr. (originally named Michael King) is born in Atlanta, GA.
May 17, 1954	The United States Supreme Court rules unanimously that racial segregation in public schools is unconstitutional.
December 20, 1956	Buses in Montgomery are integrated after federal injunctions are issued against many state, city, and bus company officials.
March-April, 1962	Dr. King is arrested during a demonstration in Birmingham. On April 16, he writes his famous "Letter from the Birmingham Jail."
October 16, 1962	Dr. King meets with President John F. Kennedy at the White House, urging him to support civil rights.
August 28, 1963	At the historic March on Washington, the first large integrated protest march, Dr. King delivers his famous "I Have a Dream" speech.
July 2, 1964	Dr. King attends the signing of the Public Accommodations Bill, a part of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, by President Lyndon B. Johnson.
December 10, 1964	Dr. King accepts the Nobel Prize for Peace in Oslo, Norway.
August 6, 1965	President Johnson signs the 1965 Voting Rights Act.
April 4, 1968	Dr. King is assassinated at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee.
November 2, 1983	The Martin Luther King, Jr. Federal Holiday bill is signed by President Ronald Regan, declaring King's birthday a national holiday.

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