



# A man with a dream

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STAFF WRITER

"If a man hasn't discovered something that he will die for, he isn't fit to live," Martin Luther King Jr. said at a speech in Detroit in 1963. He was assassinated five years later in Memphis, Tenn. To this day, he prevails as a controversial black civil rights leader.

King was the outstanding leader of the civil rights movement, especially in the Montgomery bus boycott and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. From his flair for argument, he had the edge every leader dreams of. He called for immediate, unconditional action.

Equality was King's goal, and it was achieved in government, education, the workplace and society by his dedicated hands, brilliant mind, charismatic mouth, restless legs and allegiant followers.

King's use of emotions in speeches gave a passionate look into the African-American soul during the 1950s, 1960s and before any measures were taken toward having a colorless nation. The struggles endured by young black children, civil rights protesters and even the old African-American lady down the street, were going to change. While he had opposition, it's evident that he was the keystone in formulating civil rights activity. King changed America.

Jimmy Carter said he couldn't have been elected president had it not been for King. Robert and John Kennedy were in regular contact with King during movement years. Their intervention to end King's imprisonment during the Rich's protest came two weeks before the 1960 presidential election and arguably won JFK the election.

King influenced one of the top comics in the country, Dick Gregory, to give up the stage for the Birmingham protests and a career in the movement. Even during King's Atlanta reception, honoring him as a winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, the room was integrated.

But no influence is as heartfelt as the influence of a son on a father. Martin Luther King Sr. had had a hatred of white people since childhood. "But nobody helped me more than Martin Luther King Jr.," he said. "He helped me to rid myself totally of hate, and just before he left and after

he left, I wrote all hate off for anybody anyway. No man can hate and live."

King's career began in Montgomery, Ala., where black riders boycotted buses after Rosa Parks was imprisoned for not giving her seat to a white man, therefore violating a segregation policy. The boycott began in 1955 and lasted 13 months, with King as the spokesman and president of the Montgomery Improvement Association. He encouraged his followers to practice nonviolence and extend courtesy to opponents in the protest. A Supreme Court decision in 1956 to desegregate buses landed King a win toward equality, as well as popularity among citizens.

King became the president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in January 1957. The interracial group was composed mostly of ministers who were also leaders in the civil rights movement.

To the SCLC staff, King was the civil rights movement. But decisions and opposing opinions brought on lengthy discussions by the staff. King and the SCLC were successful in many campaigns. They were debatably more powerful and productive than the NAACP is today.

Other protests, like the Nashville sit-ins in 1959, used King's philosophies as an example, confirming his reign as the standout leader of the civil rights movement. The protests also drew on rules King had enforced during the Montgomery Bus Boycott

Criticisms of King were plentiful, but only prove that his every step was imperative to blacks' succeeding in the battle for equality. Many thought that his leadership role in the civil rights movement should have gotten him on the bus during the Freedom Rides despite his probation.

King's words changed the tolerance and tone of the United States and gave a whole new meaning to the Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you."

King's "I Have a Dream" speech was the main attraction for a crowd of more than 200,000 people during the March on Washington in 1963. The march was to generate support for the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and get more support for the civil rights movement. Repetition weaves through the dynamic speech, including the critical phrases "We can never be satisfied," "I have



a dream," "Let freedom ring" and the "together" promise. King describes African Americans as "crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination." He had a goal to "transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood." A strong appeal for hope states that "... little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls and walk together as sisters and brothers."

Eight clergymen sparked a response from King in his "Letter from Birmingham Jail," which was written while he was confined over Easter weekend in 1963.

To explain his reasoning for the civil rights movement, King uses an analogy. "Like a boil that can never be cured so long as it is covered up but must be opened with all its ugliness to the

natural medicines of air and light, injustice must be exposed, with all the tension its exposure creates, to the light of human conscience and the air of national opinion before it can be cured," he wrote.

King was ambushed with criticism; however, his words and actions never stopped. His words were passionate, original and real until his death, until his words ended up killing him. Equality was his "something" to die for. King was warned by many friends of the consequences of being a leader of the civil rights movement.

King's assassination caused the civil rights movement to suffer greatly.

Ralph David Abernathy remembers when the shot hit King and an associate's walk-in reaction. "Rev. Young came up and saw: 'Oh, my God, my God, it's all over, it's all over.'"

## SG to hold meeting about elections

Students interested in running for office in the February Student Government elections are invited to attend a pre-candidates' meeting at 4 p.m. Tuesday in RH 203. For more information, call the Student Government office at 777-2654.

## Carolina for Kids holds Kick-Off 2000

Students interested in becoming tutors for Carolina for Kids can sign up between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. Tuesday and Wednesday on Greene Street. For more information, e-mail Tom Winslow at tom\_winslow@hotmail.com.

## Leadership Training Conference to be held

The Office of Leadership Programs announces the 14th annual Student Leadership Training Conference. The theme for this year's conference is "The Art of Leadership: Painting Your Palette." The SLTC will be from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Feb. 5. Early registration will be accepted in the Campus Activities Center until Jan. 21 at a cost of \$20 for USC participants. After the deadline Jan. 28, cost increases to \$25. For more information, call the Office of Leadership Programs at 777-6688.

## Omicron Delta Kappa accepts application

Omicron Delta Kappa is accepting applications. Applications are available in the Housing Office, the Student Government Office, the Russell House Information Desk and the Campus Activities Center. Turn in completed applications to the Housing Office at 1215 Blossom St. by 5 p.m. Feb. 1. An information session will be held at 7 p.m. Jan. 25 in the ODK room of Russell House.

## Engagement ring found in Law Center

A diamond engagement ring was found in the Law Center. For information, call 777-8117.

## USCPD offers RAD class over weekend

The USC Police Department, University Housing and Dining Services will sponsor a Rape Aggression Defense weekend course Jan. 22 and 23. For more information, call Officer Garbade at 777-4215.

## CORRECTIONS

In Wednesday's issue of *The Gamecock*, an article should have said that the results of an internal audit of the College of Engineering and Information Technology might be discussed at the next fiscal meeting of the board of trustees.

## USC Day of Service

USC will hold a Day of Service on Monday to honor Martin Luther King Jr.

9 a.m. Registration, second floor lobby of the Russell House.

9:30 a.m. Rally for volunteers on Greene Street

10 a.m. March to MLK Park in Five Points

10:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m. Service projects

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