

# Martin Luther King Jr.

## SPECIAL EDITION

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portrait by Bill Scott

### Martin Luther King Jr.: How Wonderful Yet Is His Spirit



A huge rally at Soldier Field in Chicago on July 10, 1966, launched an aggressive campaign to combat housing discrimination in the city. Immediately following the demonstration, King, backed by 5,000 supporters, marched into the heart of Chicago and taped a copy of the protesters' demands to the front door of City Hall.

BY PROF. MCKINLEY BURT

**T**he life and times of this gifted and articulate human who gave shape and force to the aspirations and dreams of a multitude represent an epic in the world's tradition of those great leaders who have sought freedom and justice for their brethren--all too often at the cost of their lives. People like the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. would seem to define the term 'epic' rather than the other way around; "extending beyond the usual or ordinary in size or scope--a legendary or historical hero".

It will not come as a surprise that I have chosen the "I Have A Dream" speech as a focal point for evaluating Dr. King's polemic and metaphors in favor of "justice and humanity for all of God's children". No more than is should be surprising that this gifted orator descended from an African tradition that thousands of years ago gave the world its first great spiritual insight, "In the beginning was the word". Early on the heritage was recorded on stone and papyrus, and the Greek

visitors and historians described these soulful people as "Ethiopians, the most just and religious of all peoples" -- and Plato said they were the "inventors of letters and mathematics".

Quite early in his famous speech Rev. King demonstrates that he is quite familiar with these vaunted Greeks and that the founding fathers of this nation borrowed much from them (and from Africa: The Pyramid and eye of the African God on the Great Seal). In particular, it is in the third paragraph that King strangles the racists on their own utterances; words or truths which were said then and later to be "self-evident" in paraphrase of that famed Greek mathematician, Euclid, who said the very same thing about the axioms of his geometry. The king quote follows.

"When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men--yes, black men as well as white men--would be guaranteed the inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

A reading through of the "dream" polemic puts to the lie any suggestion that Dr. King was not tough enough or belligerent enough to deal with hard core racists--speaking of "love" as he did so frequently and so eloquently. When you think of the times and the social environment during the long bitter days of the marches and confrontations you may begin to grasp the ferocious courage it took for King and his followers to assault the barricades with a "nonviolence" posture. "Creative suffering" he called it. He exhorted his followers, "continue to work with the faith that unearned suffering is redemptive". How many of us today have that kind of currency with which to buy freedom? Dare we to dream again?

Too, there are detractors who will claim that Dr. King had a fatal flaw in the construct of his dream that blacks could achieve freedom and prosperity in these United States. And that they say was a failure to pursue economic goals as vigorously as civil rights, e.g. integration and voting. Nothing could be further than the truth for it is a given that the man recognized that urban economics begin



King with his wife, Coretta, and daughter Yolanda on the steps of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, just down the street from the state capitol, in 1956. His insistence that all church members support civil rights groups, register to vote, and regard their pastor as Dexter's chief authority and policymaker helped pave the way for him to become a leading spokesman for Montgomery's black community.

at the grass roots level; The civil rights protester, the marcher, the striker (an their lawyers) must eat, sleep and have transportation before they can confront and have an impact.

And for continued support from the masses and further draw downs on "America's great bank of opportunity", Dr. King adequately demonstrated an understanding that he needed 'troops' with job security-

people who could feed an house their families, leaving the mind free to gain even higher ground. Need we look any further than the last great struggle haled in Memphis just before his assassination in April, 1968. Throwing the weight of his movement and electric personality behind the economic

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