

Partners in the Civil Rights Struggle

Martin Luther King Jr. had strong allies

BY MICHAEL HUDSON

As we celebrate the birthday of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., it is fitting to recognize the efforts of other groups and individuals who have worked to ensure the freedom of all Americans.

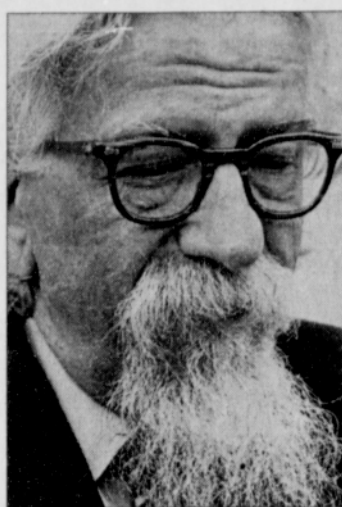
As in the case of Sen. Barack Obama's election as the first African-American president, the historical progress in the battle for equality was made possible only

because people of different races and faiths came together to support a cause.

In Oregon for example, approximately 60 percent of voters cast their ballot for Obama in a state with less than a 2 percent African-American population.

One religious group familiar with the fight for freedom is Jewish Americans. According to exit polls nationwide, 78 percent of Jews voted for Obama.

In April, Jewish Americans will participate in the holiday of Passover, which celebrates the freedom of Jews after being slaves in Egypt.



Abraham Joshua Heschel

There are similarities in the Jewish experience and the African American experience. As an American who is

both Black and Jewish, I am proud of both histories and I easily see the link between African Americans and Jews.

"Let My People Go" is a Spiritual originally sung by Black slaves in America as they began to identify with the Israelite slaves in the Hebrew Bible and developed faith that they too would someday experience freedom.

This song is also a part of the Passover Seder, the traditional meal celebrated by Jews during the first and second evenings of Passover.

Four questions are asked during the holiday meal and each answer begins with the

phrase, Avadim Hayinu, the Hebrew words for, "We were slaves."

The famous poet Maya Angelou wrote about the concept of freedom in her poem, "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings." The enslaved person, like the caged bird, longs to learn more about the hidden world. Both Jews and African Americans can relate to the importance of freedom. It is not surprising that dur-

ing the modern Civil Rights movement, Jews were major participants. Most notable was

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel who marched arm-in-arm with Dr. Martin Luther King in his 1965 March on Selma.

Julius Rosenwald, another white man of the Jewish faith was part-owner and



Julius Rosenwald

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This is the Rosenwald Center at Tuskegee University in Alabama. The college's African American founder Booker T. Washington and white businessman Julius Rosenwald, president of Sears, got to be good friends, and Rosenwald served on the board of directors from 1912 until he died.

MLK Weekend Celebration through Service

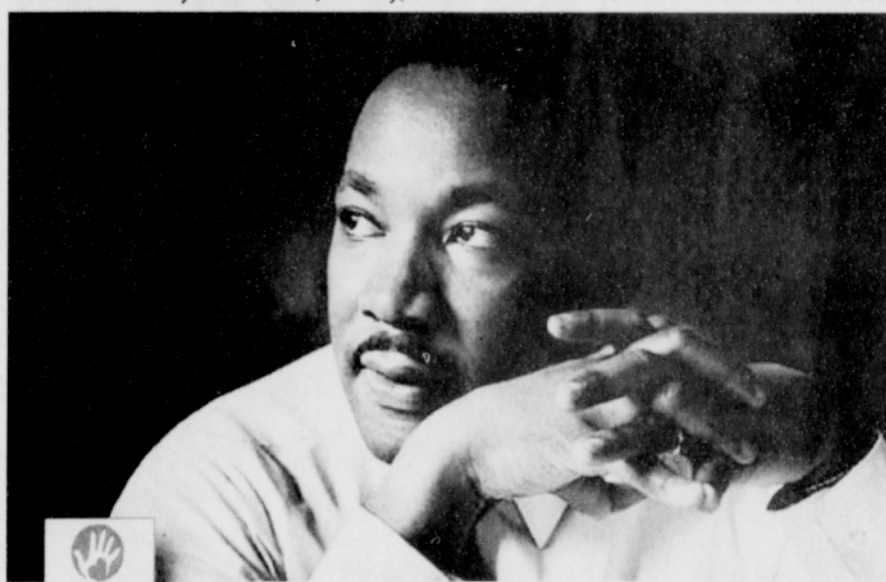
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January 17 - 19

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United Way of the Columbia-Willamette



His voice has not faded. His light has not dimmed.

Martin Luther King, Jr. stood up for the dignity of each individual and demonstrated the power of many individuals working together.

He spoke to our better selves with words of hope and encouragement.

When the journey was hard, he led us further down the road and invited all to join in.

Many years ago, this one man brightened the future for generations to come. His message still calls out to us, and his actions live on.

The City of Portland and Multnomah County honor the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. by striving to promote equality and opportunity for all people. Our goal is to foster employee diversity through workforce training and hiring and to support economic development for minority-owned, women-owned, and emerging small businesses. Please contact the staff members identified below about contracting and consulting opportunities.

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