

Community Organizers of Distinction



Barack Obama campaigns for president of the United States.

Like King, Obama built a movement

BY JAKE THOMAS
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

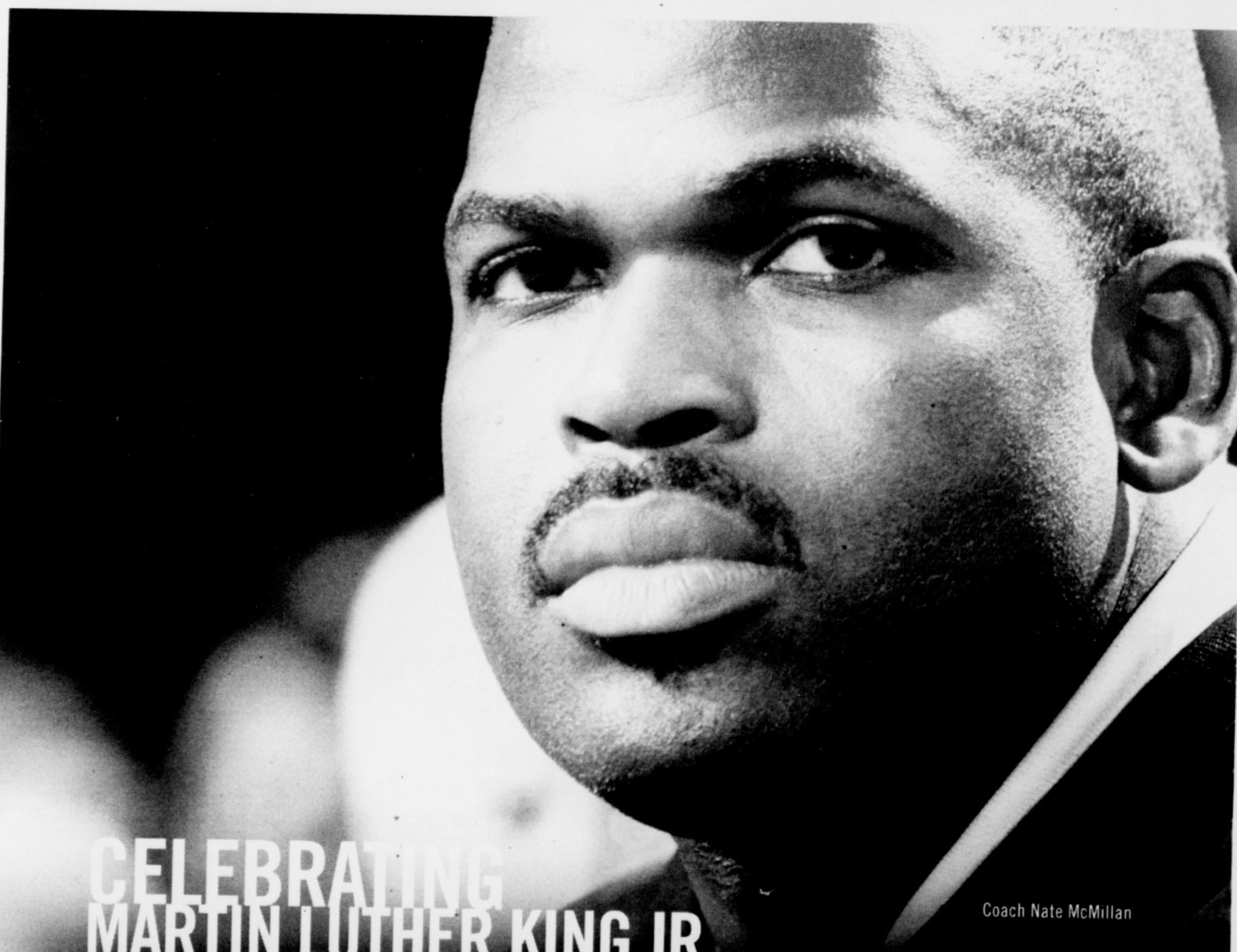
In 1957 an obscure southern Baptist minister named Martin Luther King Jr. invited other black ministers to Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, Ga. to discuss strategy on organizing for civil rights. He might not have been aware that he was gathering kindling for a fire that would eventually encompass the entire nation.

Fresh from a successful year-long effort to integrate buses in Montgomery, Ala., King hoped to broaden his efforts to the rest of the south by reaching out to an institution that would serve as a hub for his community organizing efforts: churches.

The Southern Christian Leadership Conference was established in 1957 with the help of King to "realize that the treatment of Negroes is a basic spiritual problem," and that "far too many have silently stood by."

According to the Martin Luther King Jr. Research and Education Institute at Stanford University, the SCLC differed from other like-minded organizations, like the NAACP and the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, in that it served as an umbrella organization for black southern churches and

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Coach Nate McMillan

CELEBRATING MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

"Martin Luther King Jr. was all about opportunity and equal rights for all people. We're starting to see changes in our country, but there is work to be done as far as communication and people's voices being heard. That is what his message was all about, that everyone would have an opportunity to make it in this world."

- TRAIL BLAZERS COACH NATE McMILLAN

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