

Honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Streets

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King. ... It is no longer a solid Black street. ... It is no longer a residential street or rundown business street. It is a top class business street."

Many cities have resorted to dedicating a road to King, rather than force a full name and address change. Several cities such as Zephyrhills, Florida, and Statesboro, Georgia, also created renaming ordinances in direct response to King street-naming efforts. While these policies now apply to all renaming efforts, they were created with the original intent of limiting how and where citizens remember King within their communities. These policies echo a long history of Black disenfranchisement, procedural injustice and segregated public spaces.

In places such as Tulsa, Indianapolis and the North Carolina city of Greenville, King roads have doubled as memorials and boundaries between King's supporters and those who do not identify with

or desire to be associated with him. Extending King's name even a few blocks can become contentious.

For many African Americans, the fight to have a voice in King street naming parallels recent activism against Confederate monuments and symbols of white supremacy. In the same way, it is about claiming and exerting one's right to belong, and remembering and being remembered in communities where rights were denied for generations.

Roads of resilience

The neighborhoods through which many King streets run reflect both the resiliency and precariousness of Black American life. In the words of journalist Doug Moore, King's road in St. Louis, Missouri, is "where hope and despair collide." King streets host disproportionately high numbers of churches, government offices and schools, as well as beauty parlors and barber shops.

These provided valuable refugee and mobilization spaces during the civil rights movement

and today serve as hubs of resourcefulness, aid and creative community building.

These institutions exist alongside high crime rates, poverty, abandoned buildings, food deserts and sputtering redevelopment efforts.

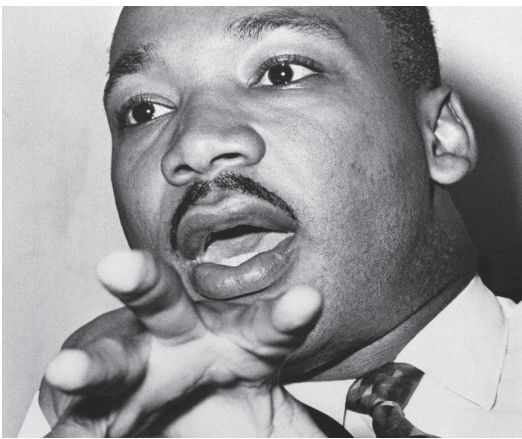
Revitalization is on the minds of many King street activists.

They want to raise incomes, property values and quality of life without the forced displacement of gentrification. These efforts, while more formalized than in the past, have moved slowly if not failed without private and public support.

These activists believe that convincing the larger public to care about King streets is of critical importance. King's namesakes don't just memorialize.

They can open up critical discussions of the continuing power of racism. They can be avenues — literally and figuratively — to continuing the civil rights leader's work of battling racial and economic inequality and the creation of a black sense of belonging and place in the U.S.

Langston Hughes' Hidden Influence on MLK



Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream — which alternated between shattered and hopeful — can be traced back to Hughes' poetry.

By Jason Miller
The Conversation

For years, Martin Luther King Jr. and poet Langston Hughes maintained a friendship, exchanging letters and favors and even traveling to Nigeria together in 1960.

In 1956, King recited Hughes' poem "Mother to Son" from the pulpit to honor his wife Coretta, who was celebrating her first Mother's Day. That same year, Hughes wrote a poem about Dr. King and the bus boycott titled "Brotherly Love." At the time, Hughes was much more famous than King,

who was honored to have become a subject for the poet.

But during the most turbulent years of the civil rights movement, Dr. King never publicly uttered the poet's name. Nor did the reverend overtly invoke the poet's words.

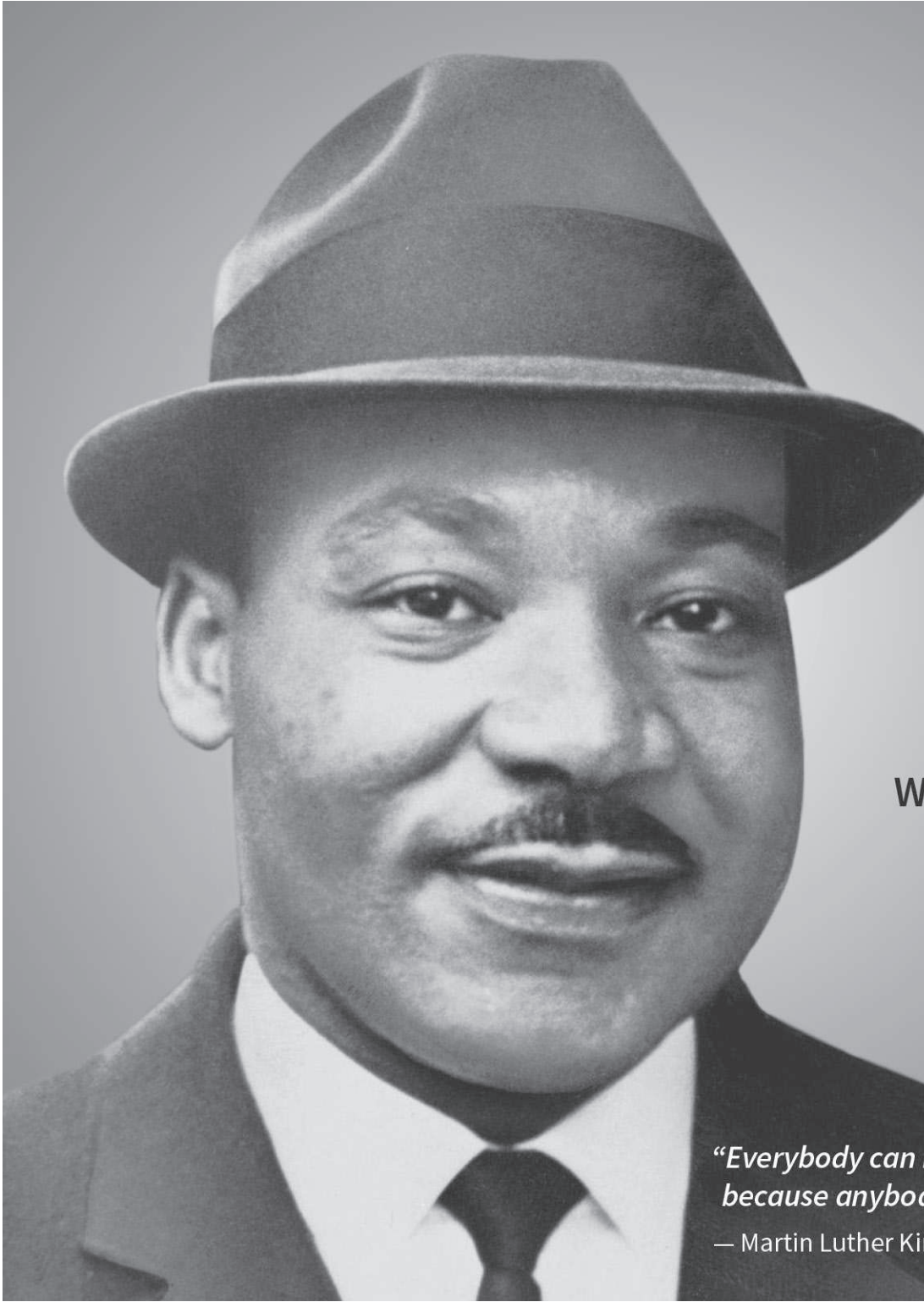
You would think that King would be eager to do so; Hughes was one of the Harlem Renaissance's leading poets, a master with words whose verses inspired millions of readers across the globe.

However, Hughes was also suspected of being a communist sympathizer. In March of 1953, he

was even called to testify before Joseph McCarthy during the Red Scare.

Meanwhile, King's opponents were starting to make similar charges of communism against him and his Southern Christian Leadership Conference, accusing the group of being a communist front. The red-baiting ended up serving as some of the most effective attacks against King and his Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

It forced King to distance his organization from men with similar reputations — Bayard
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Celebrating the dream of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

We are proud to serve our community
and strive to be great every day.

TRIOMET

*"Everybody can be great,
because anybody can serve."*
— Martin Luther King, Jr.