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Martin Luther King set in Stone:

The Civil Rights Movement Forever Commemorated by the Peaceful Leader

During the day, the granite appears light; the face on the statue is solemn and deep in thought (Figure 1). Once the sun goes down, more details become apparent as shadows create a furrowed brow and lights illuminate the features of the statue (Figure 2). These photographs of the recently erected Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial in Washington D.C. display the most prominent part of the memorial, a thirty-foot tall likeness of Martin Luther King Jr., otherwise referred to as the “Stone of Hope.” A project that took nearly twenty years from proposal to dedication was much anticipated, much appreciated and much criticized. The first proposal for the memorial was in 1996 by the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, a brotherhood to which King was a member. Tackling many obstacles along the way, the memorial moved from Congressional legislation to the Tidal Basin of the Potomac River on the National Mall in about ten years and opened to the public approximately five years after that.

The hard work and time proved worthwhile when this prominent figure finally received recognition. King was not only the first non-president commemorated on the National Mall, but also the first African American. African Americans hoped to honor their ancestor’s racial struggles and believed this memorial was a way in which they could. The process of erecting a memorial to Martin Luther King Jr. took a long time to complete; especially when compared to the World War II Memorial, which was only proposed three years prior to King’s yet was finished in half the time.¹ Despite the long

¹ World War II Memorial, “World War II Memorial Introduction: Timeline,” *National World War II Memorial National Website*, n.d., <wwiimemorial.com> (15 November, 2013).

wait, Americans were glad to see their past represented by an important and respected figure in history.

The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's represented a time that could have been remembered for radicalism, but instead became represented by the a peaceful leader. A monument to King rather than the whole movement served as America's way of remembering, symbolizing and encapsulating the Civil Rights Movement in American memory based on its advancements won through peace, rather than the violence spurred by hatred. Despite the economic issues and controversies faced along the way, the grand statue that resides over Washington D.C. stands as a physical representation for commemoration of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the Civil Rights Movement.

The magnitude of Martin Luther King's influence was translated into a grand memorial at a monumental cost. Collecting over one hundred million dollars was no easy task, it took over ten years and numerous donors, but eventually through ad campaigns and fundraising events, corporations and citizens came together and paid for a statue to one of America's heroes. Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity was granted the legal opportunity to organize a memorial in 1996 and created a foundation to raise the funds two years later in 1998; needing an expected \$120 million.² Harry E. Johnson was the President of Alpha Phi Alpha, and President, CEO and Chief Executive of the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Project Foundation.³ Out of respect for King's widow, Coretta Scott King was

² The Philadelphia Inquirer Editorial, "King National Memorial is long overdue", *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. 28 August 2011, Pg. C04, Lexis Nexis. www.lexisnexis.com/hottopic/inacademic

³ Michael Birnbaum, "Arts Panel Members Satisfied With changes to King Statue", *The Washington Post*. 20 June 2008,. Pg. B01, Lexis Nexis, www.lexisnexis.com. Melanie Eversley, "MLK memorial: A dream in progress; \$120 million project short \$11 million", *USA Today*, 17 January 2011, Pg. 5A, Lexis Nexis, [lexisnexis.com](http://www.lexisnexis.com). Michael E. Ruane, "The man behind the memorial", *The Washington Post*, 21 August 2011, Pg. A01, Lexis Nexis. www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/inacademic.

asked to be honorary chairwoman of project, until her death in 2006.⁴ Over the years, the numerous amount and variety of people who aided in the fundraising for and building of the monument displayed how King affected a large audience.

The late 1990's were a promising time for the memorial, with many government approvals that began the building process. In 1998 a Joint Resolution from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources approved the location on the National Mall.⁵ It would be another year before the National Capital Planning Committee (NCPC) approved the exact site, which was a four-acre space on the shore of the Tidal Basin nestled between the Lincoln and Jefferson Memorials.⁶ When asked his opinion on the location, George Sealey, a brother of Alpha Phi Alpha stated, "Absolutely this is the right location. This is the only location." Because, in the shadow of the steps where King's "I Have a Dream" speech was given, the placement of King in line with Lincoln which makes a statement on the progress of African Americans.⁷ As the next century began, 2003 brought the fundraising total to \$25 million with \$66 million needed in order to break ground in 2004. Congress extended the groundbreaking, giving the Foundation until 2006 to raise the necessary funds.⁸ For the next three years, large sums of money were raised thanks to large donations, such as, \$1 million from Federal National Mortgage Association (Fannie Mae) and \$500,000 from J. Willard and Alice S. Marriot Foundation in 2004, bringing

⁴ Gerald Mizejewski, "Section made for King site on Mall", *The Washington Times*, 3 December 1999, Pg. C3, Lexis Nexis Database, lexisnexis.com

⁵ 105th Congress Joint Resolution, "Approving the location of a Martin Luther King Jr., Memorial in the Nation's Capital", *Joint Resolution 105th Congress*, Public Law 105-201 (July 16, 1998) accessed October 15, 2013.

⁶ Carol D. Leonnig, "D.C. Planners Agree on Spot for Dr. King Memorial it is to be Located on the Banks of the Tidal Basin. There had been a Great Deal of Passionate Debate", *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. 3 December 1999, Pg. A02, Lexis Nexis, lexisnexis.com.

⁷ Gerald Mizejewski.

⁸ Judith Person, "Groups press for tribute to King; Ads seek money for place on Mall", *The Washington Times*, 8 May 2003, Pg. B01, Lexis Nexis, www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/inacademic.

the fundraising total to \$29 million.⁹ The following year capped at \$40 million, with a notable \$1 million from Star Wars director, George Lucas.¹⁰ With donations from various companies and individuals, King's memory is evidently in the consciousness of contemporary citizens and corporations.

Breaking ground at the site of the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial was a great feat for those who had been working for nearly a decade to make their vision a reality. November 2006 was the deadline for the MLK Memorial Foundation to raise \$66 million in order to begin work at the site; with only \$60.3 raised by July they feared that they would not make the deadline. However, the deadline was met and come November there was an elaborate celebration as, then, Senator Barack Obama placed the first shovel in the ground.¹¹ A mere two years later, in early 2008, The Martin Luther King Jr. National Memorial Project Foundation, with President Harry E. Johnson Sr. had raised \$94.8 million of the \$100 million they would need in donations.¹² As the years passed and progress was made on the memorial, more and more donations flowed in as sponsors saw their money at work.

Within months, the monument was worth \$100 million in public donations and a \$10 million federal grant; including, \$3 million from W.K. Kellogg Foundation, \$5 million from Tommy Hilfiger, \$10 million from General Motors and \$3 million from the

⁹ Benjamin Forgey, "Washington Firm Joins King Memorial Project", *The Washington Post*, 19 February 2004, Pg. C09, Lexis Nexis, www.lexisnexus.com/hottopics/inacademic.

¹⁰ Theola S. Labbe, "To King Drives On; Mall Project Raises A Third of Funds", *The Washington Post*, 16 January 2005, Pg. C01, Lexis Nexis, www.lexisnexus.com/hottopics/inacademic. Reuters, "Lucas donates \$1-million for King memorial", *The Globe and Mail (Canada)*, 22 October 2005, Pg. R5, Lexis Nexis, www.lexisnexus.com/hottopics/inacademic.

¹¹ Gary Emerling, "King project short of funds; Plan for Mall memorial needs \$40 million more", *The Washington Times*, 26 July 2006, Pg. B01, Lexis Nexis, [lexisnexus.com](http://www.lexisnexus.com). Meredith Somers, "Crowds get early peek at King memorial" *The Washington Times*, 23 August 2011, Pg. 14, Lexis Nexis, www.lexisnexus.com/hottopics/inacademic.

¹² Birnbaum, Michael.

National Basketball Association and the Women's National Basketball Association.¹³ 2009 saw another \$6 million raised and over \$12 million promised by Wal-Mart.¹⁴ By 2011, only months from the Memorial being opened to the public, the Foundation still had money to raise. Thankfully, large donations came from big corporate sponsors like Boeing, Ford, Coca-Cola and Exxon Mobil. In the end, eighty-nine companies and foundations were thanked on the memorial's website and those who donated at least one million dollars are named on a donor wall at the memorial.¹⁵ Once again the donations from gigantic corporate sponsors exemplified how King's legacy remained important to American citizens today, therefore companies were willing to donate large sums of money to see the memorial completed.

Ad campaigns and fundraisers were a way to use famous Americans to spread awareness of the Memorial and gather donations. Public service campaigns in 2003 focused on what society would be like had King 'never had a dream.'¹⁶ Portrayals of Al Roker facing "white guests only signs" in the gym and Halle Berry at a restaurant table labeled "color section" were supposed to resonate with the public to accumulate personal donations to the memorial fund by emphasizing the prominence King's ideals in today's world.¹⁷ The 2005 'Dream Dinner', a pay per plate charity dinner, in San Francisco, CA acted as a fundraising and awareness event, cohosted by George Lucas.¹⁸ In 2006, stars gathered in Beverly Hills at the Regent Beverly Wilshire Hotel at another event that

¹³ Petula Dvorak, "King Memorial Plan Approved; Project for the Wall Put Off; Commission Asks for More Information, *The Washington Post*, 2 December 2005, Pg. B05, Lexis Nexis, www.lexisnexus.com/hottopics/inacademic. Michael E. Ruane, "The man behind the memorial".

¹⁴ Michael E. Ruane, "From dream to very solid reality; Massive granite sections of King memorial are readied for shipment from China to the Mall", *The Washington Post*, 11 February 2010, Pg. B01, Lexis Nexis, www.lexisnexus.com/hottopics/inacademic.

¹⁵ Michael E. Ruane, "The man behind the memorial"

¹⁶ William Keck, "Stars remember King's Dream", *USA Today*, 2 March 2006, Pg. 2D, Lexis Nexis, www.lexisnexus.com/hottopics/inacademic.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Reuters, "Washington memorial to Martin Luther King Jr. inspired by speech"

helped raise millions of dollars. Amongst the crowd were prominent entertainment figures, including Usher and Morgan Freeman. Freeman was quoted saying “Dr. MLK is not a black hero. He is an American hero... the world needs his message today more than ever before.”¹⁹ Freeman’s words echo a popular opinion and a reason why King was honored with a memorial. WWPR (105.1 FM) hosted a radio-thon that featured famous African American voices like Steve Harvey, Aretha Franklin, Samuel L. Jackson and Colin Powell. The show was scheduled to run along side the commemoration of the 45th anniversary of the March On Washington in August 2008.²⁰ By publicizing the need for donations the Foundation was able to meet their financial goals while promoting the importance of remembering King on a national level.

The 2011 opening came forty-three years after the assassination of the American icon, Martin Luther King Jr; however much work was put into the building process in the years beforehand. The motivation to begin the project stemmed from the American people who had waited a long time to recognize King’s role in the Civil Rights Movement. Due to the long awaited groundbreaking, there was a sense of urgency in 2006 on the part of Johnson and the foundation because for them and many others, the wait had been long enough. The country had celebrated twenty years of a federal holiday honoring King and now they needed a physical place to pay their respects.²¹ A Philadelphia Inquirer Editorial corresponded with some Americans’ idea that the commemoration of King should have begun right after his assassination in 1968.²² A monument on the National Mall is a tribute for, how a Washington Times writer put it,

¹⁹William Keck, “Stars remember King’s Dream”

²⁰ David Hinckley, “KING-SIZED FUND-RAISER FOR D.C. MEMORIAL”, *Daily News New York*. 27 August 2008, Pg. 90, Lexis Nexis, www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/inacademic.

²¹ Wendy Koch, “Organizers of MLK memorial quicken pace to get slain leader among greats”, *USA Today*, 13 January 2006, Pg. 2A, Lexis Nexis, www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/inacademic.

²² The Philadelphia Inquirer Editorial

what “the man stood for in life and has come to represent in death”, a “stone of hope” out of the “mountain of despair.”²³ Martin Luther King Jr. is arguably one of the most iconic figures of the 20th Century America; people who were not born or were young in the 1960’s still recognize King and know and remember his role in fighting against segregation and for racial equality for African Americans.

Many Americans believed that the time had come long ago to honor King, and therefore the Memorial needed to open as soon as possible. “It’s about time,” said Coretta Scott King, explaining that “its appropriate that there is a memorial for him in the nations capital on the order of those for Abraham Lincoln and Thomas Jefferson. They were great patriots and so was my husband.”²⁴ Other members of the King family held the same opinion, “Its been a long time coming,” said Bernice King, the King’s youngest child.²⁵ Even those outside the King family had grown impatient; “It’s history to me and it’s a long time coming” announced DC resident Dave Feaster.²⁶ These ideas displayed many American’s belief that it had been long enough since King’s assassination and they needed a place to gather and remember the man and the movement. King placed among the great heroes of the nation means much more than a thirty-foot statue. As the President of the Foundation stated, “When we finish this memorial, we will have a King among presidents.”²⁷ For Americans, the memorial is a way to remember the tumultuous era of

²³ Somers, Meredith “Mall memorial the culmination of a dream; Official dedication in bright autumn sun ‘a long time coming’.” *The Washington Times*. October 17, 2011. Pg. 8. Lexis Nexis. www.lexisnexus.com/hottopics/inacademic.

²⁴ Reuters.

²⁵ Meredith Somers, “Mall memorial the culmination of a dream; Official dedication in bright autumn sun ‘a long time coming’.”

²⁶ Ibid. Meredith Somers, “Crowds get early peek at King memorial”, *The Washington Times*, 23 August 2011, Pg. 14, Lexis Nexis, www.lexisnexus.com/hottopics/inacademic. David Osborne, “Martin Luther King quote makes him look a twit, says Angelou”, *The Independent (London)*, 1 September 2011, Pg. 30, Lexis Nexis, www.lexisnexus.com/hottopics/inacademic.

²⁷ Arlo Wagner, “Ground to break for King memorial; Speakers include Clinton, Winfrey”, *The Washington Times*, 13 November 2006, Pg. B01, Lexis Nexis, www.lexisnexus.com/hottopics/inacademic.

the Civil Rights Movement in the most positive manner possible, as well as, a physical place to gather in commemoration of hope for the future.

An area dedicated to King on America's National Mall was significant to many Americans, as the Civil Rights Movement was physically placed among important people and moments in American history. According to Henry Gilford, son of an Alabama sharecropper and himself one of the builders from Gilford Corp, one of the four firms tasked with the design and construction of the memorial, "The mall has always been considered pretty much sacred. It has been reserved for ex-presidents. Here is an African American who is not an ex-president. He wasn't even a general. He was a man of peace."²⁸ For Gilford, and many citizens who were brought to tears at the sight of the statue, it was inconceivable that the United States would ever produce a national monument to a black man. The opening of the Martin Luther King Memorial marked a moment of triumph after a very long struggle for Black Americans, who reminisced on their slave ancestors and soaked in the moment where King, and their struggle, was nationally recognized.²⁹ This memorial now gave people a space to gather and remember King and the struggle of the Civil Rights Movement, as well as ensuring their history will live on for future generations.

When the contract for the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial was granted to the Chinese artisan, Mr. Lei Yixin, some Americans had concerns and questions about how the monument would turn out. There were complaints regarding the "outsourcing" of the job to a Chinese sculptor, as well as, the memorial being constructed from granite coming

²⁸ Sheldon Alberts, "Civil rights activist still breaking barriers; MLK memorial; First on National Mall for black man", *The Gazette (Montreal)*, 27 August 2011, Pg. A23, Lexis Nexis, lexisnexis.com

²⁹ Ibid.

from Xiamen, China.³⁰ A Daily News Editorial exclaimed, “The base should not be chiseled with the words, ‘Made in China.’”³¹ Mr. Lei was pleased to take on the project because he believed that “Martin Luther King is not only a hero of Americans, [but] he also is a hero of the world and he pursued the universal dream of the people of the world.” Shi Ke, Lei’s son, spoke on his father’s excitement and pride as the chosen artist, Shi claimed his father was, “honored and excited to work on the memorial and hoped to please Americans so they did not regret picking him.”³² Ed Jackson Jr., the lead architect on the project, believed Lei was a good choice because Americans had not built huge detailed sculptures for sometime, while the Chinese were still crafting large statues of their leaders. Others argued that an American, specifically a black American, could have done it better because of their personal memories of King, “...having a black sculptor of a black civil rights icon- working on ground once toiled by black slaves... designed and surveyed with the help of a black mathematician and astronomer... would have added to the King memorial’s symbolic power,” as stated by Washington Post columnist Courland Milloy in an article regarding the choice of artist. Johnson said King himself, who believed more in the content of someone’s character than the color of their skin, would have backed their choice.³³ King’s son, Martin Luther King III approved of Lei’s design, “I have seen probably 50 sculptures of my dad, and I would say 47 of them are not good

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Daily News Editorial, “King Size Blunder, *Daily News New York*, 19 May 2008, Pg. 26, Lexis Nexis, lexisnexis.com

³² Erin Banco, “Disputed quote removed from memorial to King; Chinese sculptor amends work before anniversary of rights leader’s march”, *The International Herald Tribune*, 3 August 2013, Pg. 5, Lexis Nexis, www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/inacademic.

³³ Patrick Jonsson, “MLK Memorial: From China with love?; MLK Memorial plans have been dogged by controversy over links to China. The MLK Memorial was built by Chinese sculptor from Chinese granite. But the backers are pleased with the result.”, *The Christian Science Monitor*, 16 October 2011. Lexis Nexis. www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/inacademic.

reflections. This particular artist, he has done a good job.”³⁴ Some Americans may have fought against a Chinese artisan for King’s statue because they wanted the physical memory of King to be how Americans remember King; however, Mr. Lei’s work represented the power of King’s words as they were heard across the globe.

The quotes engraved at the memorial were chosen from some of King’s most famous speeches and writings and were selected carefully in order to commemorate King properly through his powerful words.³⁵ King’s more radical statements may not be what people often remember, but his opinions on the government and about American morals regarding other nations were a big part of King’s works and are therefore carved into the stone of his memorial. In order to remember him this way, The South wall, amongst many other inscriptions, reads, “I oppose the war in Vietnam because I love America. I speak out against it not in anger but with anxiety and sorrow in my heart, and above with a passionate desire to see our beloved country stand as a moral example to the world,” an example of King’s more radical and less commonly known ideals.³⁶ (Figure 3) The North wall quotations remembers King in the way most Americans do, for his work for equality amongst the races; “I have the audacity to believe that peoples everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies. Education and culture for their minds, and dignity, equality and freedom for their spirits.”³⁷ (Figure 4) In carefully selecting a variety of inscriptions that include all the factions of King’s ideology, the historians chose to represent all the elements of King’s ideals rather than just the most well known.

³⁴ The Toronto Star.

³⁵ AP, “First glimpse of Martin Luther King Jr.’s memorial”, *The New Zealand Herald*, 23 August 2011, Lexis Nexis, www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/inacademic.

³⁶ The Toronto Star, “Dream; With the opening of a new memorial in Washing, Martin Luther Jr.’s soaring message of freedom takes flight again”, *The Toronto Star*, 28 August 2011, Pg. IN1, Lexis Nexis, www.lexisnexis.com.

³⁷ Ibid.

In sifting through King's many notable quotations, the Council of Historians that picked the words to be carved into the memorial chose a portion of King's "Drum Major Intuition" Speech to receive space on the statue. This oration occurred at the Atlanta Ebenezer Baptist Church in 1968.³⁸ Trouble arose when the design team took it upon themselves to paraphrase the original quotation to fit on the side of King's statue; the architects, not the historians, shortened it without the approval of the Historic Council, a change that affected the historical accuracy of the memorial.³⁹ King had not called himself a drum major, but offered a way for Americans to remember him if they chose to do so, "Yes, if you want to say that I was a drum major, say that I was a drum major for justice. Say that I was a drum major for peace. I was a drum major for righteousness. And all of the other shallow things will not matter."⁴⁰ Ed Jackson Jr. argued that, "As you move through the process, things happen and you have to make design changes on the spot."⁴¹ The shortened version read "I was a drum major for justice, peace and righteousness," however, the historians had chosen the entire phrase in its original form to maintain the meaning of King's original words. The paraphrase caused much uproar from citizens and those who had a part in creating the memorial because the change had potential to affect the way in which future generations would think of King. The intention of the memorial was to immortalize King for generations to come, therefore people wanted him to be remembered in all historical accuracy.

³⁸ Mary E. Dolan-Hogrefe, "We got FDR's memorial fixed. We can do the same for MLK's", *The Washington Post*, 9 October 2011, Pg. C05, Lexis Nexis. Also, see Speech Book for full text

³⁹ Rachel Manteuffel, "The MLK memorial is being fixed. What monument should be next?", *The Washington Post*, 16 August 2013, Pg. C01, Lexis Nexis, www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/inacademic.

⁴⁰ Rachel Manteuffel, "A drum major? If you say so.", *The Washington Post*, 26 August 2011, Pg. A15, Lexis Nexis, www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/inacademic.

⁴¹ Brad Knickerbocker, "Does memorial quote make Martin Luther King Jr. seem like an 'arrogant twit'?", Poet Maya Angelou says a truncated quote on the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial makes the civil rights icon seem like an 'arrogant twit'. Public art is always controversial, and this is no exception", *The Christian Science Monitor*, 1 September 2011, Lexis Nexis, www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/inacademic.

Many parties requested the inscription fixed including historians, writers, the King family and Civil Rights activists.⁴² The paraphrase made many angry because the altered drum major quote made King look arrogant and pompous. Some people wanted it gone all together because it was the “antithesis” of King’s legacy and therefore not how he should be remembered. One newspaper said the issue was that the paraphrase was “missing the ‘if’ clause”, which changed the meaning of the quote.⁴³ Others suggested leave only, “a drum major for justice, peace and righteous,” as that could be a posthumous way Americans remembered King.⁴⁴ The paraphrase was “self-aggrandizing for a man who so often symbolized the strength in humility” said journalist Rachel Manteuffel, who wrote several articles on the issues of the paraphrase.⁴⁵ Some journalists, like Brad Knickerbocker and Gene Simkins from the Washington Post, saw the paraphrase as “Embarrassingly misleading” in regards to the accuracy of King’s memory and believed that the paraphrase minimized the man King was.⁴⁶ As they stated, “It makes him seem less than the humanitarian he was... it makes him seem an egotist.”⁴⁷ The famous writer Maya Angelou voiced her opinion on the issue, “The quote makes Dr. Martin Luther King look like an arrogant twit. He had no arrogance at all. He had a humility that comes from deep inside.”⁴⁸ The anger that erupted from the paraphrase was due to the idea that since all the other carvings are direct quotations, future visitors who do not know any better will believe the paraphrase is as well, which could alter the

⁴² The Washington Post Editorial “Poised for change”, *The Washington Post*, 21 December 2011, Pg. A14, Lexis Nexis, www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/inacademic.

⁴³ The Washington Post Metro, “Mistakes of monumental proportions?”, *The Washington Post*, 1 September 2011, Pg. B02, Lexis Nexis, www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/inacademic.

⁴⁴ The Washington Post Editorial, “That controversial quote on the King memorial: Keep or drum out?”, *The Washington Post*, 3 September 2011, Pg. A18, Lexis Nexis, www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/inacademic

⁴⁵ Rachel Manteuffel, “A drum major? If you say so.”

⁴⁶ Brad Knickerbocker. Gene Simkins, “The King statue- as appalling as that truncated quotation”, *The Washington Post*, 8 October 2011, Pg. A18, Lexis Nexis, www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/inacademic.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Knickerbocker, Brad.

reputation of King.⁴⁹ If the nation allowed the paraphrase to remain, King's legacy could be altered by words he never spoke.

To the pleasure of many Americans, in January 2012 Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar ordered the correction and the drum major quote was removed in August of 2013.⁵⁰ The misquote was still on the memorial for almost two years after National Park Service officials said they would change it.⁵¹ In the time between the decision to change the quote and when it physically happened, there was no sign stating there was intent to fix it or that it was not accurate and this disregard was considered an insult to King and the Civil Rights Movement's legacy.⁵² In order to fix the statue there was coordination between the sculptor and the Rhode Island stone carver while the MLK Memorial Foundation found it in the budget to pay for it.⁵³ The quote was removed by chisels into the stone that left scratch marks to blend in with the rest of the sculpture.⁵⁴ Dr. King's Sister, Christine King Farris commented for the family that they would have loved to have the entire quote instead, but they supported the measures taken.⁵⁵ In July 2013 work began to erase the quote, which left "striations" that depicted King, the "stone of hope," coming out of the background sculpture, the "mountain of despair."⁵⁶ (Figure 5) The success of Americans to fix the mistake has ensured that future generations will come to

⁴⁹ The Washington Post Editorial, "Poised for change"

⁵⁰ Carol Morello and Ed O'Keefe, "Paraphrase on MLK Memorial to be corrected", *The Washington Post*, 15 January 2012, Pg. A01, Lexis Nexis, www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/inacademic

⁵¹ Tom Howell Jr., "Hurricane delays King dedication; Storm feared to be worst to hit region in a decade" *The Washington Times*, August 26, 2011, Pg. 1, Lexis Nexis, www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/inacademic.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Emmarie Huetteman, "In Response to Criticism, Officials to Remove Quote from Memorial to King" *The New York Times*, 13 December 2012, Pg. 21, Lexis Nexis, www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/inacademic

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Andrea Noble, "Carvings to erase disputed King quote; Work to begin Monday to eliminate 'drum major' words on memorial", *The Washington Times*, 22 July 2013, Pg. 12, Lexis Nexis, www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/inacademic.

the memorial and grasp what King stood for, as well as, his representation of the Civil Rights Movement through peaceful movements and powerful words.

Martin Luther King Jr.'s Memorial is not alone in being altered; many of the Nation's most famous sites, like the Lincoln and Jefferson memorials, faced their own technical difficulties; however, King's renovations took more time to be fixed. "Mistakes of monumental proportions," a phrase from a Washington Post Editorial, also occurred at the Lincoln Memorial. An 'E' was carved when an 'F' should have been, but was fixed instantly. Jefferson's memorial had the word inalienable when it was supposed to say unalienable and the word "that" was omitted.⁵⁷ The Vietnam War Memorial has names of people who survived the war where the names of the dead were supposed to be carved.⁵⁸ One newspaper posed the thought that, "Every word of Lincoln's second inaugural address is carved in stone without an ellipsis to mar its poetry," therefore Martin Luther King's should have received the same diligence.⁵⁹ King was, however, fixed before a few less notable memorials; including, a boy scouts statue with suggestive half naked adults, the Freedmen's memorial to Lincoln, which represents the freedmen as still enslaved, and an ugly temperance fountain that has no historical value to its design.⁶⁰ Errors in national monuments, big and small, can greatly alter the way the subject is remembered and these examples highlight the importance of King's commemoration reliance on historical accuracy.

⁵⁷ The Washington Post Metro.

⁵⁸ Ibid. .

⁵⁹ Jim Sollisch, "MLK memorial crushes the poetry-and meaning-of Martin Luther King Jr.; The MLK memorial is a poem poorly translated. Why paraphrase? Across the mall, every word of Lincoln's second inaugural address is carved in stone without an ellipsis to mar its poetry", *The Christian Science Monitor*. 9 September 2011, Lexis Nexis, www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/inacademic.

⁶⁰ Rachel Manteuffel, "The MLK memorial is being fixed. What monument should be next?"

Martin Luther King was first remembered at the Lincoln Memorial with an etched stone where he gave the famous “I Have a Dream” speech during the March on Washington in 1963. A Washington Times article from 2003 believed the carving now allowed people to “...stand on that spot, look across the Mall and remember what happened on that day.”⁶¹ This carving may have been a way to remember where King made his most famous speech, but the American people demanded a more profound memorial that encompassed the whole Civil Rights Movement through the words and likeness of King. For the MLK Memorial Foundation, location was a key part of the success of the memorial. President Bush noted the location of King between the Jefferson and Lincoln memorials and near Washington’s would “unite the men who declared the promise of America [Washington and Jefferson] and defended the promise of America [Lincoln] with the man who redeemed the promise of America [King].”⁶² King’s statue lying in the shadow of Lincoln was no coincidence, the Foundation and those who worked on the memorial wanted the memorial to be in line with the man who made King’s dreams a reality, as well as, minutes away from the spot where King delivered his most famous speech.

Years in the making, every step in the process of erecting the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial brought about much celebration and large volumes on visitors. The November 2006 groundbreaking brought much excitement and celebration as the ceremony drew about 5,000 people.⁶³ Notable people like President Bill Clinton, who signed the authorization bill ten years previously, as well as Oprah Winfrey, Maya Angelou,

⁶¹ Jon Ward, “Memorial to mark King’s Speech; Will be etched into the site on Lincoln monument step”, *The Washington Times*, 20 January 2003, Pg. A01, Lexis Nexis, www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/inacademic. Carol Morello and Ed O’Keefe

⁶² Ed Pilkington, “American Dream Work begins on Martin Luther King memorial” *The Guardian* (London), 14 November 2006, Pg. 21, Lexis Nexis, www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/inacademic.

⁶³ Arlo Wagner.

Reverend Jesse Jackson and former Atlanta Mayor Andrew Young were there when the shovels broke “sacred ground,” as the Daily News called the site.⁶⁴ The presence of then Senator Barack Obama was special because at the time he was the only African American serving in the United States Senate.⁶⁵ King’s children and other civil rights leaders spoke before him, but Obama’s speech credited King as the man who paved the way for black Americans as he focused on King’s broad themes of equality, justice and peaceful resistance.⁶⁶ Johnson stated that this day would “...mark a change in the very character of some of America’s most hallowed real estate [the National Mall]” as they broke ground to commemorate “A civilian and an African American who embodied the American tradition of peaceful protest and activism” since there was “...never...a memorial to a man of color, a man of peace.”⁶⁷ 2006 was the first time Americans could gather at the King site and know it would be ground used to commemorate the peaceful Civil Rights leader and the Movement as a whole.

After years of construction, The Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial officially opened to the public in August 2011 with official dedication scheduled on August 28th, the 48th anniversary of the March on Washington. The dedication of King’s memorial expected 400,000 more people than the March.⁶⁸ The ceremony was planned to include President Obama as a way to emphasize how King’s legacy allowed Obama to become the first African American President and exemplify the progress made in only 5 years, as Obama was elected from Senator to President since the beginning of the memorial’s

⁶⁴ Richard Sisk.

⁶⁵ Lisa Lambert, “Martin Luther King’s dream inspires memorial”, *The Courier Mail (Australia)*. 15 November 2006, Pg. 32, Lexis Nexis, www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/inacademic.

⁶⁶ Brett Zongker, “Memorial keeping King’s Dream alive”, *The Advertiser (Australia)*, 18 October 2011, Pg. 24, Lexis Nexis, www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/inacademic.

⁶⁷ Petula Dvorak “Memorial Planners Have a Dream, Too; Mall Site Honoring King Reaches Next Milestone”

⁶⁸ Melanie Eversley, “King memorial on Mall nears completion”, *USA Today*, 14 June 2011, Pg. 3A, Lexis Nexis, www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/inacademic.

construction.⁶⁹ Other famous Americans were scheduled to make it a star-studded dedication in a concert starring Aretha Franklin and Stevie Wonder that included appearances from Colin Powell, Secretary of State Hilary Clinton, Jamie Foxx, BeBe Winans and Lionel Richie, who all represented the impact left by King on some of America's most prominent figures.⁷⁰ The week opened with a special viewing for Washington DC residents, but Mayor Vincent C. Gray was overwhelmed with the amount of people who wished to attend and had to stop attempts to distribute tickets.⁷¹ Upwards of 250,000 visitors were anticipated to attend; however, there were a only certain number of VIP seats in a lottery that were gone quickly.⁷² The star power at the dedication made the day even more significant; the appearances displayed the power King's legacy had in uniting common American citizens and national celebrities.

When some visitors laid eyes on the statue of King they were brought to tears. The Toronto Star dubbed the dedication and visits to the memorial as "...a pilgrimage to a sacred place."⁷³ Johnson believed the monument is for all Americans because King's dream was for the betterment of the whole country, and he hoped the issues addressed by King and faced by today's visitors will not exist within the next century.⁷⁴ Democratic Representative John Lewis of Georgia noted that the opening of the memorial "... is the first time on the Mall that there will be a memorial dedicated to a man of peace, a person

⁶⁹ AP

⁷⁰ Melanie Eversley "King memorial on Mall nears completion"

⁷¹ Tim Craig, "Tickets won't be needed for a look at memorial", *The Washington Post*, 17 August 2011, Pg. B03, Lexis Nexis, www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/inacademic.

⁷² Laura Bly, Kitty Bean Yancey and Fran Golden, "MLK memorial in D.C. ready to open", *USA Today*, 19 August 2011, Pg. 5D, Lexis Nexis, www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/inacademic.

⁷³ The Toronto Star.

⁷⁴ Melanie Eversley, "In Washington, the dream is reality at last; Memorial to King brings some first-day visitors to tears", *USA Today*, 23 August 2011, Pg. 3A, Lexis Nexis, www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/inacademic.

of non-violence and to someone who was never elected to political office.”⁷⁵ The significance of Lewis’ statement resonates with the general population; by dedicating King’s memorial on an anniversary significant to the Civil Rights Movement, America is remembering that period of time through its most peaceful leader.

Hurricane Irene delayed the dedication until October, but Johnson promised, “We did not bring you this far not to have a dedication.”⁷⁶ Tens of thousands of people were finally able to celebrate on October 16th, 2011. Some people viewed the display from Independence Avenue because the 10,000 chairs and viewing area were filled up.⁷⁷ At the dedication, Obama spoke as he did five years earlier at the groundbreaking, this time as the first African American President. His oration included the idea that King was “A black preacher of no official rank or title, who somehow gave voice to our deepest dreams and our most lasting ideals; a man who stirred our conscience and thereby made our union more perfect.” This was the idea that a man who was not a politician and who routed his ideas in non-violence could be the most prominent figure of the Civil Rights Movement because of how deeply his words and actions impacted many types of people. Johnson commented that celebration was a way to remember “Dr. King, his life, his dream and his legacy [that] will be a source of history and inspiration for all people for all time, I’m very much looking forward to celebrating this momentous event... and the relevance of Dr. King’s message.”⁷⁸ The relevance of his message that resonates with the

⁷⁵ Melanie Eversley, “King memorial on Mall nears completion”

⁷⁶ Tom Howell Jr., “The ‘drum major’ is waiting for right words; Work on King quote has yet to be started”.

⁷⁷ Michael E. Ruane, “He will stand for all time”, *The Washington Post*, 17 October 2011, Pg. A01, Lexis Nexis. www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/inacademic.

⁷⁸ Michael E. Ruane, “Events set for MLK statue dedication”, *The Washington Post*, 29 April 2011, Pg. B05, Lexis Nexis, www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/inacademic.

American people and an explanation for King's memorial celebrated in grand, festive ways for each milestone of this memorial.

Martin Luther King's memorial was first stop for many in January 2013 for Obama's second inauguration. This visit made sense to people because, according to the President himself, he might not have been elected once, let alone twice, if it had not been for King. The importance of this pilgrimage was emphasized by one visitor who saw the visit as a way to connect modern progress for African Americans to their historical moments, she stated, "My mother was at the March on Washington and I was able to come to the first inauguration of the first black president who is here because of this man [King]." ⁷⁹ At the Inauguration ceremony, Obama was sworn in on King's bible and in his second inaugural address, Obama quoted King, "Change does not roll in on the wheels of inevitability but comes through continuous struggle." ⁸⁰ In his own words, Obama touched upon the idea of a black man being President as something personal, that it was a moment neither his grandparents nor his parents could have imagined. ⁸¹ King's relevance on the day of the inauguration displayed another reason why he is memorialized on the Mall; many African-Americans attribute King's work to opportunities they have to do that may not have been possible without the Civil Rights Movement.

Martin Luther King and many other famous Americans commemorated in the Nation's Capital represent the importance of memory in American History. Americans have faced countless prominent moments and figures since the birth of the nation, but there is limited space on the National Mall. Therefore, in selecting who and what to memorialize, builders must consider what lessons can be learned and should be

⁷⁹ Melanie Eversley and Larry Copeland "MLK memorial: For many, a fitting place to start the day", *USA Today*, 22 January 2013, Pg. 9A, Lexis Nexis, www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/inacademic.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

remembered for future generations. The greatest wars and people are commemorated in Washington DC, a place that has hosted and housed many of Americas best moments and brightest figures. With the multitude of events that occurred in the Capital, many different interest groups want a piece of the mall for their cause.⁸² The large number of memorials in DC are considered part of “monument-it is” which the Washington Post defined as the continuous building of large monuments on the Mall⁸³ The same Washington Post article believes that Memorials should be “sufficiently inspiring and meaningful,” and that King’s memorial goes along with the other grand statues, while also offering inspiration to many Americans⁸⁴ The Martin Luther King Jr. memorial was erected because he represented an important era in American history and instills meanings that people who visit can remember in the future.

Martin Luther King’s Memorial was not alone in its controversy over how important people and moments should be remembered. The World War Two Memorial received was proposed three years before King’s and received just as much dispute, in this case from Veteran’s groups.⁸⁵ A book on commemoration describes the struggle between different interest groups as “The politics of memory also involves competition with other groups, such as veterans, who also perceive themselves as ‘subordinate’ to the prevailing commemorative power.”⁸⁶ Yet, despite the arguments surrounding the war memorial, it took ten years from proposal to completion, compared to King’s twenty, with only two

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Roger L. Lewis, “Is MLK Memorial a sign of monument-it is?”, 8 October 2011, Pg. E04, Lexis Nexis, www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/inacademic.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ “World War II Memorial Introduction: Timeline”

⁸⁶ Renee C. Ramano and Leigh Raiford, *The Civil Rights Movement in American Memory* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2006).pg. 82.

months between approval and groundbreaking when King's took ten years.⁸⁷

Comparisons like this were part of the motives of the pressure to finish the King memorial in a short amount of time so people could begin visiting it and perpetuating King's legacy.

King's commemoration is part of a larger movement on the part of African Americans to remember the Civil Rights Movement and the struggles faced during that time. As a nation, America chose to use King as a symbol to memorialize the whole Movement. King's spot on the mall Americans way to compensate for the lack of national recognition of the suffering faced by African Americans.⁸⁸ Now, the memory of the Civil Rights Movement focuses on the fight against racism, represented in King's fight for equality; the struggle was more than "black versus white," it was a battle for human decency amongst all races.⁸⁹ King's memorial was a way of taking a previous struggle and remembering it in a positive manner.⁹⁰

King's memorial is a tribute to the man himself, but it is also a symbol of a movement much bigger than one man. King is representative of the way Americans have chosen to remember the Civil Rights Movement in the memory of American history as they are forever on the national stage of the Mall amongst timeless heroes and defining moments in American history. Despite the economic worries, the time consuming and controversial paraphrase and many other debates amongst builders, donors and citizens, Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movement were finally commemorated. By immortalizing King in stone, the United States has forever commemorated the Civil Rights Movement as represented by the profound thoughts, ideas and words of Martin Luther King Jr.

⁸⁷ Petula Dvorak.

⁸⁸ Ramano, Renee C. and Leigh Raiford, pg. 68.

⁸⁹ Ramano, Renee C. and Leigh Raiford, pg. 1,2.

⁹⁰ Ramano, Renee C. and Leigh Raiford, pg. 29,60.

Figures



Figure 1. Martin Luther King Statue During the Day. May 27, 2012. Meghan Mahoney

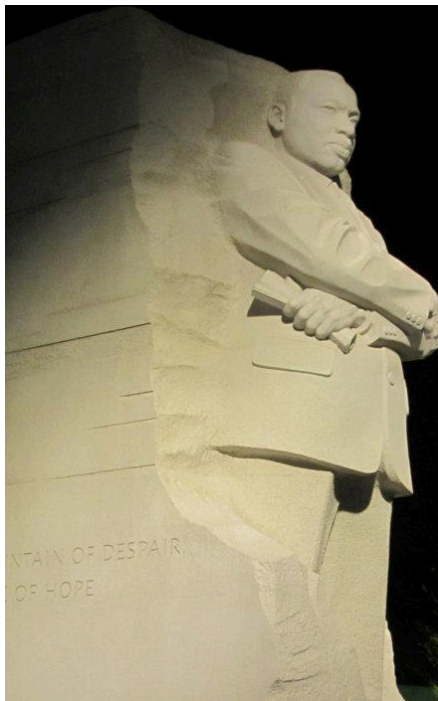


Figure 2. Martin Luther King Statue at Night. April 29, 2012. Meghan Mahoney

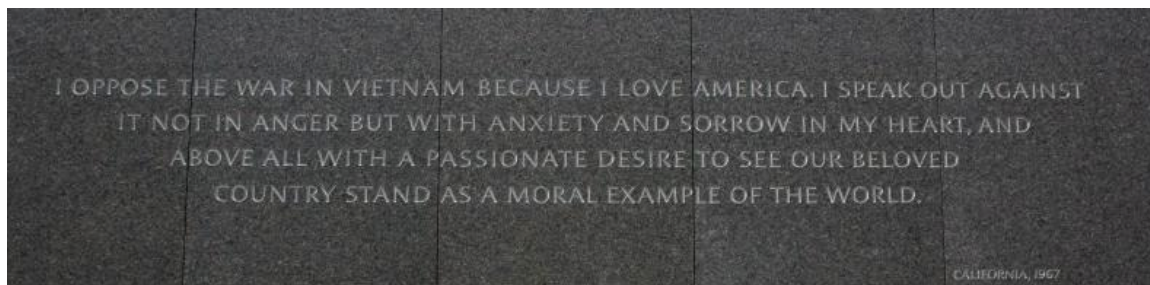


Figure 3. South Wall Inscription. National Park Services and the Department of the Interior. www.nps.gov

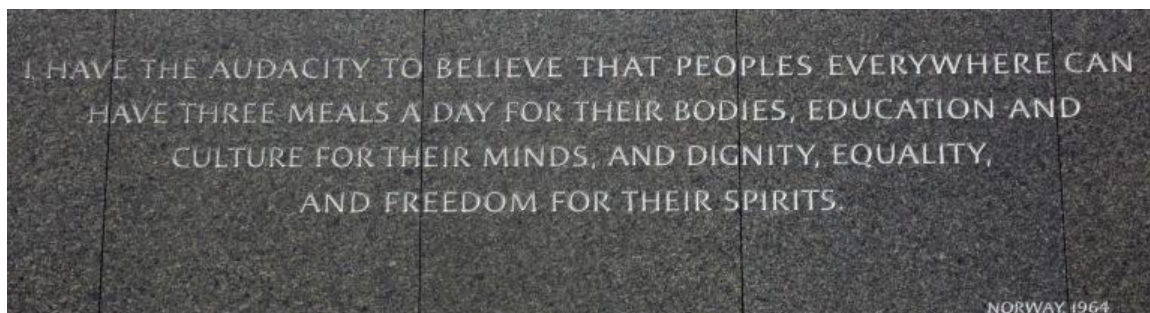


Figure 4. North Wall Inscription. National Park Services and the Department of the Interior. www.nps.gov

Figure 5. The Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Full Length Horizontal Picture. Philip Scott Andrews. New York Times. "A Dream Fulfilled, Martin Luther King Memorial Opens. August 22, 2011.

