

CAC & Fort Leavenworth
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
LUNCHEON

Friday, 22 January 2016
from 1130-1300
Frontier Conference Center

TITLE: REMEMBER! CELEBRATE! ACT!

REMEMBER!

Martin Luther King Jr. was a Baptist minister and social activist, who led the Civil Rights Movement in the United States from the mid-1950s until his death by assassination in 1968.

Synopsis - slide 1

Martin Luther King Jr. was born on January 15, 1929, in Atlanta, Georgia. King, both a Baptist minister and civil-rights activist, had a seismic impact on race relations in the United States, beginning in the mid-1950s. Among many efforts, King headed the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Through his activism, he played a pivotal role in ending the legal segregation of African-American citizens in the South and other areas of the nation, as well as the creation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. King received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964, among several other honors. King was assassinated in April 1968, and continues to be remembered as one of the most lauded African-American leaders in history, often referenced by his 1963 speech, "I Have a Dream."

Early Years - slide 2

Born as Michael King Jr. on January 15, 1929, Martin Luther King Jr. was the middle child of Michael King Sr. and Alberta Williams King. The King and Williams families were rooted in rural Georgia. Martin Jr.'s grandfather, A.D. Williams, was a rural minister for years and then moved to Atlanta in 1893. He took over the small, struggling Ebenezer Baptist church with around 13 members and made it into a forceful congregation. He married Jennie Celeste Parks and they had one child that survived, Alberta. Michael King Sr. came from a sharecropper family in a poor farming community. He married Alberta in 1926 after an eight-year courtship. The newlyweds moved to A.D. Williams' home in Atlanta.

Michael King Sr. stepped in as pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church upon the death of his father-in-law in 1931. He too, became a successful minister, and adopted the name Martin Luther King Sr. in honor of the German Protestant religious leader Martin Luther. In due time, Michael Jr. would follow his father's lead and adopt the name himself.

Young Martin had an older sister, Willie Christine, and a younger brother, Alfred Daniel Williams King. The King children grew up in a secure and loving environment. Martin Sr. was more the disciplinarian, while his wife's gentleness easily balanced out the father's more strict hand. Though they undoubtedly tried, Martin Jr.'s parents couldn't shield him completely from racism. Martin Luther King Sr. fought against racial prejudice, not just

because his race suffered, but because he considered racism and segregation to be an affront to God's will. He strongly discouraged any sense of class superiority in his children which left a lasting impression on Martin Jr.

Growing up in Atlanta, Georgia, Martin Luther King Jr. entered public school at age 5. In May, 1936 he was baptized, but the event made little impression on him. In May, 1941, Martin was 12 years old when his grandmother, Jennie, died of a heart attack. The event was traumatic for Martin, more so because he was out watching a parade against his parents' wishes when she died. Distraught at the news, young Martin jumped from a second story window at the family home, allegedly attempting suicide.

King attended Booker T. Washington High School, where he was said to be a precocious student. He skipped both the ninth and eleventh grades, and entered Morehouse College in Atlanta at age 15, in 1944. He was a popular student, especially with his female classmates, but an unmotivated student who floated through his first two years. Although his family was deeply involved in the church and worship, young Martin questioned religion in general and felt uncomfortable with overly emotional displays of religious worship. This discomfort continued through much of his adolescence, initially leading him to decide against entering the ministry, much to his father's dismay. But in his junior year, Martin took a Bible class, renewed his faith and began to envision a career in the ministry. In the fall of his senior year, he told his father of his decision.

Education and Spiritual Growth - slide 3

In 1948, Martin Luther King Jr. earned a sociology degree from Morehouse College and attended the liberal Crozer Theological Seminary in Chester, Pennsylvania. He thrived in all his studies, and was valedictorian of his class in 1951, and elected student body president. He also earned a fellowship for graduate study. But Martin also rebelled against his father's more conservative influence by drinking beer and playing pool while at college. He became involved with a white woman and went through a difficult time before he could break off the affair.

During his last year in seminary, Martin Luther King Jr. came under the guidance of Morehouse College President Benjamin E. Mays who influenced King's spiritual development. Mays was an outspoken advocate for racial equality and encouraged King to view Christianity as a potential force for social change. After being accepted at several colleges for his doctoral study, including Yale and Edinburgh in Scotland, King enrolled in Boston University.

During the work on this doctorate, Martin Luther King Jr. met Coretta Scott, an aspiring singer and musician, at the New England Conservatory school in Boston. They were married in June 1953 and had four children, Yolanda, Martin Luther King III, Dexter Scott and Bernice. In 1954, while still working on his dissertation, King became pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church of Montgomery, Alabama. He completed his Ph.D. and was awarded his degree in 1955 at the age of 25.

Montgomery Bus Boycott - slide 4

On March 2, 1955, a 15-year-old girl refused to give up her seat to a white man on a Montgomery city bus in violation of local law. Claudette Colvin was arrested and taken to jail. At first, the local chapter of the NAACP felt they had an excellent test case to challenge Montgomery's segregated bus policy. But then it was revealed that she was pregnant and civil rights leaders feared this would scandalize the deeply religious black community and make Colvin (and, thus the group's efforts) less credible in the eyes of sympathetic whites.

On December 1, 1955, they got another chance to make their case. That evening, 42-year-old Rosa Parks boarded the Cleveland Avenue bus to go home from an exhausting day at work. She sat in the first row of the "colored" section in the middle of the bus. As the bus traveled its route, all the seats in the white section filled up and several more white passengers continued to board the bus. The bus driver noted that there were several white men standing and demanded that Parks and several other African Americans give up their seats. Three other African American passengers reluctantly gave up their places, but Parks remained seated. The driver asked her again to give up her seat and again she refused. Parks was arrested and booked for violating the Montgomery City Code. At her trial a week later, in a 30-minute hearing, Parks was found guilty and fined \$10 and assessed a \$4 court fee.

On the night that Rosa Parks was arrested, E.D. Nixon, head of the local NAACP chapter met with Martin Luther King Jr. and other local civil rights leaders to plan a citywide bus boycott. King was elected to lead the boycott because he was young, well-trained with solid family connections and had a professional standing. But he was also new to the community and had few enemies, so it was felt he would have strong credibility with the black community.

In his first speech as the group's president, King declared, "We have no alternative but to protest. For many years we have shown an amazing patience. We have sometimes given our white brothers the feeling that we liked the way we were being treated. But we come here tonight to be saved from that patience that makes us patient with anything less than freedom and justice."

Martin Luther King Jr.'s fresh and skillful rhetoric put a new energy into the civil rights struggle in Alabama. The bus boycott would be 382 days of walking to work, harassment, violence and intimidation for the Montgomery's African-American community. Both King's and E.D. Nixon's homes were attacked. But the African-American community also took legal action against the city ordinance arguing that it was unconstitutional based on the Supreme Court's "separate is never equal" decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*. After being defeated in several lower court rulings and suffering large financial losses, the city of Montgomery lifted the law mandating segregated public transportation.

The Southern Christian Leadership Conference - slide 5

Flush with victory, African-American civil rights leaders recognized the need for a national organization to help coordinate their efforts. In January 1957, Martin Luther King Jr., Ralph Abernathy, and 60 ministers and civil rights activists founded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference to harness the moral authority and organizing power of black churches. They would help conduct non-violent protests to promote civil rights reform. King's participation in the organization gave him a base of operation throughout the South, as well as a national platform. The organization felt the best place to start to give African Americans a voice was to enfranchise them in the voting process. In February 1958, the SCLC sponsored more than 20 mass meetings in key southern cities to register black voters in the South. King met with religious and civil rights leaders and lectured all over the country on race-related issues.

In 1959, with the help of the American Friends Service Committee, and inspired by Gandhi's success with non-violent activism, King visited Gandhi's birthplace in India. The trip affected him in a deeply profound way, increasing his commitment to America's civil rights struggle. African-American civil rights activist Bayard Rustin, who had studied Gandhi's teachings, became one of King's associates and counseled him to dedicate himself to the principles of non-violence. Rustin served as King's mentor and advisor throughout his early activism and was the main organizer of the 1963 March on Washington. But Rustin was also a controversial figure at the time, being a homosexual with alleged ties to

the Communist Party, USA. Though his counsel was invaluable to King, many of his other supporters urged him to distance himself from Rustin.

In February 1960, a group of African-American students began what became known as the "sit-in" movement in Greensboro, North Carolina. The students would sit at racially segregated lunch counters in the city's stores. When asked to leave or sit in the colored section, they just remained seated, subjecting themselves to verbal and sometimes physical abuse. The movement quickly gained traction in several other cities. In April 1960, the SCLC held a conference at Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina with local sit-in leaders. Martin Luther King Jr. encouraged students to continue to use nonviolent methods during their protests. Out of this meeting, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee formed and for a time, worked closely with the SCLC. By August of 1960, the sit-ins had been successful in ending segregation at lunch counters in 27 southern cities.

By 1960, Martin Luther King Jr. was gaining national notoriety. He returned to Atlanta to become co-pastor with his father at Ebenezer Baptist Church, while continuing his civil rights efforts. On October 19, 1960, King and 75 students entered a local department store and requested lunch-counter service but were denied. When they refused to leave the counter area, King and 36 others were arrested. Realizing the incident would hurt the city's reputation, Atlanta's mayor negotiated a truce and charges were eventually dropped. But soon after, King was imprisoned for violating his probation on a traffic conviction. The news of

his imprisonment entered the 1960 presidential campaign, when candidate John F. Kennedy made a phone call to Coretta Scott King. Kennedy expressed his concern for King's harsh treatment for the traffic ticket and political pressure was quickly set in motion. King was soon released.

'I Have a Dream'- slide 6

In the spring of 1963, Martin Luther King Jr. organized a demonstration in downtown Birmingham, Alabama, where entire families attended. City police turned dogs and fire hoses on demonstrators. King was jailed along with a large number of his supporters, and the event drew nationwide attention. King was personally criticized by black and white clergy alike for taking risks and endangering the children who attended the demonstration. From the jail in Birmingham, King eloquently spelled out his theory of non-violence: "Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community, which has constantly refused to negotiate, is forced to confront the issue."

By the end of the Birmingham campaign, King and his supporters were making plans for a massive demonstration on the nation's capital composed of multiple organizations, all asking for peaceful change. On August 28, 1963, the historic March on Washington drew more than 200,000 people in the shadow of the Lincoln Memorial. It was here that King made his famous "I Have a Dream" speech, emphasizing his belief that someday all men could be brothers.

"I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character." — Martin Luther King, Jr. "I Have A Dream" speech, August 28, 1963

The rising tide of civil rights agitation produced a strong effect on public opinion. Many people in cities not experiencing racial tension began to question the nation's Jim Crow laws and the near century-long second class treatment of African-American citizens. This resulted in the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 authorizing the federal government to enforce desegregation of public accommodations and outlawing discrimination in publicly owned facilities. This also led to Martin Luther King receiving the Nobel Peace Prize for the year of 1964.

King's struggle continued throughout the 1960s. Often, it seemed as though the pattern of progress was two steps forward and one step back. On March 7, 1965, a civil rights march, planned from Selma to Alabama's capital in Montgomery, turned violent as police with nightsticks and tear gas met the demonstrators as they tried to cross the Edmond Pettus Bridge. King was not in the march, however the attack was televised showing horrifying images of marchers being bloodied and severely injured. Seventeen demonstrators were hospitalized leading to the referral of the event as "Bloody Sunday." A second march was cancelled due to a restraining order to prevent the march from taking place. A third march was planned and this time King made sure he was personally there to participate in it. Not wanting to alienate southern judges by violating the restraining order, a different tact was taken. On March 9, 1965, a

procession of 2,500 marchers, both black and white, set out once again to cross the Pettus Bridge and confronted barricades and state troopers. Instead of forcing a confrontation, King led his followers to kneel in prayer and they then turned back. The event caused King the loss of support among some younger African-American leaders, but it nonetheless aroused support for the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

From late 1965 through 1967, Martin Luther King Jr. expanded his Civil Rights Movement into other larger American cities, including Chicago and Los Angeles. He met with increasing criticism and public challenges from young black-power leaders. King's patient, non-violent approach and appeal to white middle-class citizens alienated many black militants who considered his methods too weak and too late. In the eyes of the sharp-tongued, blue jean young urban black, King's manner was irresponsibly passive and deemed non-effective. To address this criticism King began making a link between discrimination and poverty. He expanded his civil rights efforts to the Vietnam War and felt that America's involvement was politically untenable and the government's conduct of the war discriminatory to the poor. He sought to broaden his base by forming a multi-race coalition to address economic and unemployment problems of all disadvantaged people.

Assassination and Legacy - slide 7

By 1968, the years of demonstrations and confrontations were beginning to wear on Martin Luther King Jr. He had grown tired of marches, going to jail, and living under the constant threat of death. He was becoming

discouraged at the slow progress of civil rights in America and the increasing criticism from other African-American leaders. Plans were in the works for another march on Washington to revive his movement and bring attention to a widening range of issues. In the spring of 1968, a labor strike by Memphis sanitation workers drew King to one last crusade. On April 3, in what proved to be an eerily prophetic speech, he told supporters, "I've seen the promised land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight that we, as a people, will get to the promised land." The next day, while standing on a balcony outside his room at the Lorraine Motel, Martin Luther King Jr. was struck by a sniper's bullet. The shooter, a malcontent drifter and former convict named James Earl Ray, was eventually apprehended after a two-month, international manhunt. The killing sparked riots and demonstrations in more than 100 cities across the country. In 1969, Ray pleaded guilty to assassinating King and was sentenced to 99 years in prison. He died in prison on April 23, 1998.

Martin Luther King Jr.'s life had a seismic impact on race relations in the United States. Years after his death, he is the most widely known African-American leader of his era. His life and work have been honored with a national holiday, schools and public buildings named after him, and a memorial on Independence Mall in Washington, D.C. But his life remains controversial as well. In the 1970s, FBI files, released under the Freedom of Information Act, revealed that he was under government surveillance, and suggested his involvement in adulterous relationships and communist influences. Over the years, extensive archival studies have led to a more balanced and comprehensive assessment of his life, portraying him as a

complex figure: flawed, fallible and limited in his control over the mass movements with which he was associated, yet a visionary leader who was deeply committed to achieving social justice through nonviolent means.

CELEBRATE!

How do you explain when things don't go as we assume? Or better yet, how do you explain when others are able to achieve things that seem to defy all of the assumptions? For example: Why is it that Martin Luther King led the Civil Rights Movement? He wasn't the only man who suffered in pre-civil rights America, and he certainly wasn't the only great orator of the day. Why him? There's something else at play here.

In his book, "Start With Why", author **Simon Sinek** explores how leaders can inspire cooperation, trust and change. Sinek has a simple but powerful model for inspirational leadership — starting with a golden circle and the question "Why?" His examples include Apple, Martin Luther King, and the Wright brothers.

And, as it turns out, all the great inspiring leaders and organizations in the world, whether it's Apple or Martin Luther King or the Wright brothers, they all think, act and communicate the exact same way. And it's the complete opposite to everyone else.

This is because people don't buy what you do; they buy why you do it.

If you talk about what you believe, you will attract those who believe what you believe.

Diffusion of innovations - slide 8

But why is it important to attract those who believe what you believe?

Diffusion of innovations. Diffusion of innovations is a theory that seeks to explain how, why, and at what rate new ideas and technology spread through cultures. I use this theory in the marketing field.

The first 2.5% of our population are our innovators. The next 13.5% of our population are our early adopters. The next 34% are your early majority, the next 34% are your late majority and the final 16% are your laggards. The only reason these laggards people buy cell phones is because you can't buy rotary phones anymore.

We all sit at various places at various times on this scale, but what the diffusion of innovations theory tells us is that if you want mass-market success or mass-market acceptance of an idea, you cannot have it until you achieve the tipping point between 15 and 18 percent market penetration, and then the system tips.

Now let me give you a successful example of the diffusion of innovations theory. In the summer of 1963, 250,000 people showed up on the mall in Washington to hear Dr. King speak.

They sent out no invitations, no text messages or emails, and there was no website to check the date. How do you do that?

Well, Dr. King wasn't the only man in America who was a great orator. He wasn't the only man in America who suffered in a pre-civil rights America. In fact, in the fluid reality of the movement, some of his ideas were not very well conceived. But he had a gift of leadership too. He didn't go around telling people what needed to change in America. He went around and told people what he believed.

"I believe, I believe, I believe," he told people. - slide 9

And people who believed what he believed took his cause, and they made it their own, and they told people. And some of those people created structures to get the word out to even more people. And lo and behold, 250,000 people showed up on the right day at the right time to hear him speak.

How many of them showed up for him? Zero. They showed up for themselves. It's what they believed about America that got them to travel in a bus for eight hours, to stand in the sun in Washington DC, in the middle of August. It's what they believed, and it wasn't necessarily about black versus white: 25% of the audience was white.

Dr. King believed that there are two types of laws in this world: those that are made by a higher authority and those that are made by men. And not until all the laws that are made by men are consistent with the laws made by the higher authority will we live in a just world. It just so happened that the Civil Rights Movement was the perfect thing to help him bring his cause to life. We followed, not for him, but for ourselves. By the way, he gave the "I have a dream" speech, not the "I have a plan" speech.

ACT!

Listen to too many politicians now, and you will hear their comprehensive 12-point plans. They're not inspiring anybody. Because there are leaders and there are those who lead. Leaders hold a position of power or authority, but those who lead inspire us. Whether they're individuals or organizations, we ultimately follow those who lead, not because we have to, but because we want to. We follow those who lead, not for them, but for ourselves. And it's those who start with "why" that have the ability to inspire those around them or find others who inspire them. Ask why!

We Are American and We Get Better - slide 10

I work at the American Jazz Museum in the historic 18th & Vine Jazz District of Kansas City, which is one of the four major centers where the music was created. New York, Chicago and New Orleans being the other three.

In 1997, the city of Kansas City decided to preserve the history of that district and build a facility to perpetuate the innovative culture that produced jazz music - America's only original contribution to the arts.

Jazz music originated from the African American aesthetic, but not only includes this perspective. Spirituals. Field Hollers. Blues. Complex polyrhythms of African music. Complex harmonies of European music. American folk songs. All come together to make up what is called, "Jazz".

The museum also displays an historic timeline that includes life in that community before, during and after the Civil Rights Era. It is a subtle reminder of the courage that Kansas City demonstrates to show all of our history, even those times when we need to get better.

That's the "ACT!" part of this talk today. Like America has done throughout her entire history, we should always seek to get better. That's another major lesson that the Reverend Dr. King can teach us today. We may make mistakes or do dumb things along the way, but we Americans always get better.

Thank you very much.

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Guest Speaker is Christopher Burnett heads the Marketing and Communications at the American Jazz Museum in Kansas City. He is a jazz recording artist, composer, educator, entrepreneur, businessman; and, retired from active duty military service as a First Sergeant with the US Army Bands Career Program.

References:

1. Martin Luther King Jr., Civil Rights Activist, Minister (1929–1968), Biography Editors
2. Diffusion of innovations, Wikipedia Editors
3. "Start With Why" by Simon Sinek