

One on One with Martin Luther King, III

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On the eve of what was supposed to be the landmark dedication of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. National Memorial, The Washington Informer spoke with the preeminent civil rights leader's son Martin Luther King III. He shared his thoughts about his father, the monument and the momentous occasion. The dedication ceremony was postponed due to Hurricane Irene.

How does it feel to have a memorial on the National Mall honoring your father?

I am gratified and overjoyed by the coming unveiling of the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Memorial in the nation's capital. More importantly, it is a great gift to America. Of course, it's an historic accomplishment for an African American leader to be honored on the National Mall, adjacent to the Lincoln, Jefferson and Franklin Roosevelt memorials. But it is even more gratifying that, for the first time, a nonviolent leader, a man of peace, will now be represented alongside the greatest presidents of American history. It will provide a symbolic affirmation that nonviolent leadership can make history and transform America. This memorial will have powerful symbolic resonance, and it will certainly increase requests for information from The King Center in Atlanta, which remains the primary resource for information and education about the life, work and teachings of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Does the design of the memorial and the inscriptions that speak of love, peace, justice and freedom give an accurate representation of your father and his legacy?

Yes. I like the design, particularly the imagery associated with my father's challenge to "hew a stone of hope out of the mountain of despair." I think the other quotations in the memorial are excellent and very relevant to our times. 'Love, peace and justice' are cornerstones of my father's teachings and they never go out of style.

What can young people gain from visiting the King monument at the National Mall?

They can gain inspiration and hope and a sense of the unique power of nonviolence as a transformative historical force, and perhaps they can also gain an understanding of the redemptive power of nonviolence as the hope of humanity for a more just and peaceful world. They can learn something as well from the quotations. My hope is that they will also make a point of visiting or contacting The King Center in Atlanta (www.thekingcenter.org), which is the official institution charged with educating people of all races, religions and nations about my father's teachings.