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## BlackMale Brother 2 Brother Newsletter Jan 2001

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# BlackMale

Brother-to-Brother Newsletter

**Date:** January 2001

**Issue:** 2

**Editor:** Francisco Gomes

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## Quote of the month

“Now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God's children.”

(Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.)

## Note from the Editor

Sometimes miracles do happen, and to celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King in such a dignifying way is indeed a miracle and an honor to an educational institution such as Denison University.

Just imagining that ten years ago an event of such proportions would be inconceivable makes us realize the greatness and relevance of this celebration. More than that, it makes us thank the people who made it possible and who worked thoroughly for the fulfillment of this project—to all of them our most heartfelt appreciation.

The MLK celebrations are indicative of the long road we have traveled so far. In less than forty years we went from a time of exclusion and segregation to an era of greater tolerance, acceptance, and understanding. Sure, there is still a lot to be done. Sure, the path ahead is still long and, in many ways, treacherous. However, this is a time to rethink our past, and use it to prepare our future and make America a more responsive and aware society. At the door of a new millenium, the past filled with figures such as Malcolm X and Dr. King, remains our guiding light and inspirational strength to the journey ahead.

In a time of celebration, the need for dedicated and responsible leadership is urgent. There is no time to pay attention to insignificant details. Instead we need to focus on the more encompassing goals of justice and equality for all. These are not dated topics. Instead these issues are still very much alive nowadays, reminding us of a mission: a (never-ending?) mission to improve mankind and to assure that everybody has a place in this society, regardless of the color of his or her skin.

## Short Biography of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

One of the world's best-known advocates of non-violent social change strategies, Martin Luther King, Jr., synthesized ideas drawn from many different cultural traditions. Born in Atlanta on January 15, 1929, King's roots were in the Black Baptist church. He was the grandson of the Rev. A. D. Williams, pastor of Ebenezer Baptist church and a founder of Atlanta's NAACP chapter, and the son of Martin Luther King, Sr., who succeeded Williams as Ebenezer's pastor and also became a civil rights leader. Although, from an early age, King resented religious emotionalism and questioned literal interpretations of scripture, he nevertheless greatly admired Black social gospel proponents, such as his father, who saw the church as an instrument for improving the lives of Black people. Morehouse College president Benjamin Mays and other proponents of Christian social activism influenced King's decision after his junior year at Morehouse to become a minister and thereby serve society. His continued skepticism, however, shaped his subsequent theological studies at Crozer Theological Seminary in Chester, Pennsylvania, and at Boston University, where he received a doctorate in systematic theology in 1955. Rejecting offers for academic positions, King decided while completing his Ph. D. requirements to return to the South and accepted the pastorate of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama.

On December 5, 1955, four days after Montgomery civil rights activist Rosa Parks refused to obey the city's rules mandating segregation on buses, Black residents launched a bus boycott and elected King as president of the newly formed Montgomery Improvement Association. As the boycott continued during 1956, King gained national prominence as a result of his exceptional oratorical skills and personal courage. His house was bombed and he was convicted along with other boycott leaders on charges of conspiring to interfere with the bus company's operations. Despite these attempts to suppress the movement, Montgomery buses were desegregated in December of 1956, after the United States Supreme Court declared Alabama's segregation laws unconstitutional.

In 1957, seeking to build upon the success of the Montgomery boycott movement, King and other southern Black ministers founded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). As SCLC's president, King emphasized the goal of Black voting rights when he spoke at the Lincoln Memorial during the 1957 Prayer Pilgrimage for Freedom. During 1958, he published his first book, *Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story*. The following year, he toured India, increased his understanding of Gandhian non-violent strategies. At the end of 1959, he resigned from Dexter and returned to Atlanta where the SCLC headquarters was located and where he also could assist his father as pastor of Ebenezer.

Although increasingly portrayed as the pre-eminent Black spokesperson, King did not mobilize mass protest activity during the first five years after the Montgomery boycott ended. While King moved cautiously, southern Black college students took the initiative, launching a wave of sit-in protests during the winter

*(See "Biography" next page)*



and spring of 1960. King sympathized with the student movement and spoke at the founding meeting of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in April 1960, but he soon became the target of criticisms from SNCC activists determined to assert their independence. Even King's decision in October of 1960, to join a student sit-in in Atlanta did not allay the tensions. The 1961 "Freedom Rides," which sought to integrate southern transportation facilities, demonstrated that King could not control the expanding protest movement spearheaded by students. Conflicts between King and younger activists were also evident when both SCLC and SNCC assisted the Albany (Georgia) Movement's campaign of mass protests during December of 1961 and the summer of 1962.

After achieving few of his objectives in Albany, King recognized the need to organize a successful protest campaign free of conflicts with SNCC. During the spring of 1963, he and his staff guided mass demonstrations in Birmingham, Alabama, where local white police officials were notorious for their anti-Black attitudes. Clashes between Black demonstrators and police wielding police dogs and fire hoses generated newspaper headlines throughout the world. In June, President Kennedy reacted to the Birmingham protests and the obstinacy of segregationist Alabama Governor George Wallace by agreeing to submit broad civil rights legislation to Congress (which eventually passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964). Subsequent mass demonstrations in many communities culminated in a march on August 28, 1963, that attracted more than 250,000 protesters to Washington, D. C. Addressing the marchers from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, King delivered his famous "I Have a Dream" oration.

During the year following the March, King's prominence expanded as he became Time magazine's "Man of the Year" and the recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize (December 1964). Despite the fame and accolades, King faced many challenges to his leadership. Malcolm X's (1927-1965) message of self-defense and Black nationalism expressed the discontent and anger of northern, urban Blacks more effectively than did King's moderation. During the 1965 Selma to Montgomery march, King and his lieutenants were able to keep intra-movement conflicts sufficiently under control to bring about passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, but while participating in a 1966 march through Mississippi, King encountered strong criticism from "Black Power" proponent Stokely Carmichael. Shortly afterward, white counter-protesters in the Chicago area physically assaulted King in the Chicago area during an unsuccessful effort to transfer non-violent protest techniques to the urban North. Despite these leadership conflicts, King remained committed to the use of non-violent techniques. Early in 1968, he initiated a Poor Peoples campaign designed to confront economic problems that had not been addressed by early civil rights reforms, a movement that many believe was the catalyst to his assassination.

King's effectiveness in achieving his objectives was not only limited by philosophical differences between Black leaders, but also by the increasing resistance he encountered from national political leaders. FBI director J. Edgar Hoover's already extensive efforts to undermine King's leadership were intensified during 1967 as urban racial violence escalated and King criticized American intervention in the Vietnam War. King had lost the support of many white liberals, and his relations with the Lyndon Johnson administration were at a low point when he was assassinated on April 4, 1968, while seeking to assist a garbage workers' strike in Memphis. After his death, King remained a controversial symbol of the Black civil rights struggle; revered by many for his martyrdom on behalf of non-violence and condemned by others for his militancy and insurgent views.

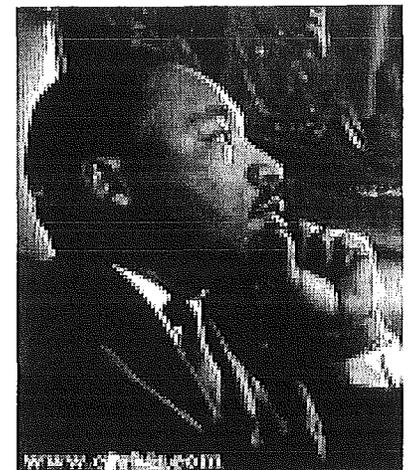
## Brother-to-Brother Music

### "Across the Lines" (Tracy Chapman)

Across the lines  
Who would dare to go?  
Under the bridge  
Over the tracks  
That separates whites from  
Blacks  
Choose sides  
Or run for your life  
Tonight the riots begin  
On the back streets of America  
They kill the dream of America

Little Black girl gets assaulted  
Ain't no reason why  
Newspaper prints the story  
And racist tempers fly  
Next day it starts a riot  
Knives and guns are drawn  
Two Black boys get killed  
One white boy goes blind

Little Black girl gets assaulted  
Don't no one know her name  
Lots of people hurt and angry  
She's the one to blame



**"Our nettlesome task is to  
discover how to organize  
our strength into  
compelling power."**

**-MLK-**