

# The Content of Our Character

Honoring Martin Luther King, Jr.

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By: Becky St. Clair

“It was a time of segregation and injustice,” says Christon Arthur, provost of Andrews University. “It was a time of bigotry and hatred; a time when people of color were treated as less than human and with contempt. It was in that environment that the stalwart of a man [Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.](#) stood against the prevailing tide and proclaimed his dream that we should be judged not by the color of our skin but by the content of our character.”

King was a Baptist minister best known and remembered for his activism and leadership during the [Civil Rights Movement](#) of the 1960s. He organized boycotts, movements against segregation and protest marches, and presented inspiring speeches such as his famous “[I Have a Dream](#)” speech which established his reputation as one of the greatest orators in American history.

King helped found the [Southern Christian Leadership Conference](#), and through this organization, of which he served as president, he and others fought racism, segregation, poverty and even war.

On April 4, 1968, as he stood on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee, Martin Luther King Jr. was shot, breathing his last in the hospital an hour later. His encouragement of nonviolent civil disobedience left a legacy for generations to follow.

“Dr. King, more than any other individual, deserves the credit for the civil rights successes that we enjoy,” says Arthur. “The United States of America has a checkered history of racial discrimination and injustice. African Americans and other minorities have been subjects of discrimination and injustice, simply because of their race and ethnicity. It is a history we should never forget, because if we do then we run the risk of repeating it.”

In honor of Martin Luther King Jr. Day and the ongoing progress being made as a result of his work and ideology, Andrews University is holding two important events next week.

On Tuesday, Jan. 17, the Office of the Provost invites the campus and community to a special forum at 11:30 a.m. in the Howard Performing Arts Center. The guest speaker is Danny E. Sledge, manager

of the Diversity & Inclusion Program at [Lakeland Health](#), speaking on “Civility in the Age of Trump.” There will also be a panel discussion with four student participants.

For the regular University chapel on Thursday, Jan. 19, at 11:30 a.m., there will be a presentation at Pioneer Memorial Church by Andrew Collins and Jameel McGee. In 2005, police officer Collins accused and arrested McGee for dealing drugs. Collins later admitted to making up the entire story and served a year and a half in prison for falsifying police reports, planting drugs and stealing. McGee was exonerated, but he spent four years in prison for a crime he didn't commit. Unbelievably, the two men have since become friends. The campus and community are invited to come hear their amazing story of grace and forgiveness.

“King’s message was that civil rights were human rights and we were created equal, and are endowed by our creator with inherent inalienable rights,” Arthur states. “Thus, we pause to reflect upon and celebrate the life and work of Dr. King because these United States of America are stronger and the rights of all the people of this great country are enshrined in law because of him.”

For more information about either of these events, please contact Lorraine London-Polite at [lhorraine@andrews.edu](mailto:lhorraine@andrews.edu) or 269-471-6690.

## Featured Works by Martin Luther King, Jr.

- [Listen to "Letter from a Birmingham Jail"](#) (written from Birmingham, Alabama, 4/16/63)
- [View a scanned version](#) of "Letter from a Birmingham Jail"
- [Read "Why Jesus Called A Man A Fool"](#) (sermon from Mount Pisgah Missionary Baptist Church, 8/27/67)
- [Listen to "Why Jesus Called A Man A Fool"](#)
- [View a scanned version](#) of "I Have A Dream" (speech from the march on Washington, 8/28/63)
- [Listen to "I Have A Dream"](#)

## Related Links:

- [Who was Martin Luther King, Jr.?](#)
- [More about the Civil Rights Movement](#)
- [The Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change](#)
- [Office of the Provost](#) at Andrews University

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