



“What You May Not Know About MLK”

As I reflect upon Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday, just a few weeks before the beginning of what we now know as Black History Month, I still find that there was so much I didn't know about him. For example, Dr. King was actually born Michael King Jr. on January 15, 1929, but his father, who was inspired by the Protestant Reformation leader, Martin Luther, and after a trip to Germany, King Sr., changed his own name as well as the name of his then five year old son, to what we know it as now!

Did you know that young Michael, now young Martin, was such a gifted student that he skipped grades nine and twelve, and thereby entered Morehouse College in 1944 at the age of 15 years old? Morehouse was the alma mater of his father and maternal grandfather, is it also the alma mater of my father, by the way. Young Martin graduated with a BA in sociology, went onto earn a divinity degree from Pennsylvania's Crozer Theological Seminary, and then finished his PhD in 1955 at Boston University. As King moved into the activism phase of his life, he would be jailed nearly thirty times, and escaped his first assassination attempt on September 20, 1958, in Harlem, NY at a book signing by a woman named Izola Ware Curry. Ms. Curry prefaced the attack upon Dr. King's life with: "I've been looking for you for five years!" and then plunged a seven-inch letter opener into his chest, nearly puncturing his aorta. After several weeks of recovery in the hospital, King released a statement affirming his nonviolent principles and stating that he felt no ill will against his attacker.

Let's stop here. Is the point of this writing dazzling you with obscure facts about Dr. King? No, my point is for you to resist being told only what others feel you need to know or need to tell you about this great man. Deny being spoon fed about anything. Don't settle for the convictions of others but create your own! Delve into the life of this great individual, and see for yourself how great his

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contributions were, and how they changed the trajectory of civil rights for ALL people. Why? If you do, the MLK holiday won't be just another day off, instead it will be a day of celebration, hope and vision!

In Dr. King's last sermon, which occurred at Mason Temple Church while in Tennessee supporting the strike waged by the Black garbage workers in the city of Memphis in April 1968; Dr. King foretold of his untimely end. "Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now...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. And I'm happy tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord. As said by Nelson Mandela, "The essence of bravery and greatness is to face life's challenges head-on."

---Genee Grimmett