

Presidential Documents

Proclamation 7064 of January 16, 1998

Martin Luther King, Jr., Federal Holiday, 1998

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

America has been blessed with heroes throughout our history, men and women of vision and courage who have set our feet firmly on the path of freedom and equality. Some became heroes by leading us in times of struggle; some by shaping our values and challenging us to greatness. And a few, like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., have done all this and more.

A thoughtful man and one of deep personal faith, his conscience called him into action for the soul of our Nation. He mobilized thousands of other brave and principled Americans—black and white, renowned and unknown—and began a crusade for justice that continues today. In sit-ins, marches, demonstrations, and boycotts, he and many others met violence with nonviolence and ignorance with determination. They awakened the conscience of our Nation and succeeded in winning passage of historic civil rights legislation: the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Fair Housing Act of 1968. Pouring out his life in service, Dr. King made enormous and lasting contributions to improve the lives of millions of his fellow Americans.

Almost 35 years have passed since Dr. King challenged us from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial to live out the true meaning of our creed—that all men are created equal—and almost 30 years have passed since he was taken from us after an all-too-brief sojourn on this earth. A generation of young Americans has come of age without experiencing firsthand the power of his vision or the eloquence of his voice. Much has changed for the better in that time, but we still have much to do if we are to finish the work of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Following his example of service, we must build communities where everyone shares an equal opportunity for a good education and a good job, where our children can grow up without living in the shadow of guns, gangs, and drugs, and where we reject separation and isolation and instead celebrate together the blessing of our diversity. Last June, I established my initiative, “One America in the 21st Century,” to encourage a national dialogue among Americans about race and to spur concerted action that will bring Americans together. We must put aside the bitter refrains of accusation and recrimination and instead discuss and implement new ideas for forging a single Nation in the 21st Century out of our ever-increasing racial and ethnic diversity. By learning to talk to one another, to trust one another, and to work together in hope, we can and will come to the time Dr. King foresaw when “justice rolls down like waters.”

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim Monday, January 19, 1998, as the Martin Luther King, Jr., Federal Holiday. I call upon the people of the United States to observe this occasion with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities and to participate in the many community service activities taking place across the country on this day.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this sixteenth day of January, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-second.

William Clinton

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