

# MLK JR. AND THE JEWS

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Martin Luther King Jr. day is coming up this weekend and to commemorate such an incredible figure in the civil rights movement, and keep within the theme of my website, I decided to write this booklet detailing the special relationship MLK had with the Jewish people. Many today forget the bonds forged between the civil rights movement and Jews, but we must never forget that if one of us suffers, we all suffer, and must work together in Tikkun Olam (Repairing the world), as we have then, and so we

do today still!

*“My people were brought to America in chains. Your people were driven here to escape the chains fashioned for them in Europe. Our unity is born of our common struggle for centuries, not only to rid ourselves of bondage, but to make oppression of any people by others an impossibility. – Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. speaking to the American Jewish Committee 1958”*

Many Jews and Jewish organizations marched hand in hand with Reverend King from the onset of the civil rights movement, even taking to the streets in many of the marches and being subject to the same treatment by citizenry and police. Jews saw their own struggles in the struggles of black people in America, they found shared humanity and a desire for freedom for all to be paramount. Together we marched, we prayed, we chanted, and this struggle still continues to this day via the Religious Action Committee.

Rev. King was a brilliant man and saw bigotry, racism, and antisemitism as one in the same, just as Jews viewed and still view it today. When the civil rights struggles began, Rev. King had instant supporters of the light skinned variety, in his brothers and sisters, the Jews. Rabbi Robert Marx, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel are just two prominent Jewish clergy who marched and prayed alongside Rev. King throughout the civil rights movement.

Martin Luther King Jr. was a pacifist who believed in non-violent civil disobedience to fight against oppression pushed forth from government. Jews sympathized with the plight of black people in America, having just come out of the oppression and the holocaust during WWII in Europe. Jews

in America found the treatment of American blacks appalling and immediately joined forces, together as one.



Rev. King was an avid supporter of Jews and the state of Israel's right to exist, and Jews were avid supporters of equality and ending segregation. Truly, this was a match made in heaven!

Jews marched in Selma, in Washington, in Chicago, Jews were there at the "Bloody Sunday," in 1965, Jews even helped organize several events and campaigns alongside Rev. King. We were allies then, and we are allies today, this is all because of the work of Reverend King and our Jewish communities. In 1964 Rev. King won the Nobel Peace Prize for his works, beginning with the Montgomery bus boycott in 1955, then continued for the right to vote, workers' rights, and desegregation.

*"I have a dream that one day little black boys and girls will be holding hands with little white boys and girls. - Dr. Martin Luther King Jr."*

The virtues and morals MLK professed align with the virtues and morals Jews profess, and it is because of our unity, that every year synagogues around the country honor Dr. King's work. The principals of human dignity, equality, unity, brotherhood/sisterhood, tolerance, these are the things that brought individuals of all races and faiths together as one alongside Dr. King; principals which he lived by and was ultimately assassinated for on April 4<sup>th</sup>, 1968, for having.

His seminal works and deeds echo through the sand of time and are still as relevant today, as they were back when he first spoke them. His dream is the collective dream of each and every person who has human empathy today. We have come a long way, but there's still a bit further to go...

We can and will all do better, we will continue the work Dr. King started, still as allies, as brothers and sisters. We will continue to fight together until equality is had by all, until mutual respect covers America like a blanket of humanity. Till freedom rings from every mountain to every shore, we will continue to do the work of Dr. King.

*"True peace is not merely the absence of tension; it is the presence of justice. – Dr. Martin Luther King Jr."*

