

# REMEMBERING DR. KING

## MLK Had Local Presence and Impact During Civil Rights Movement



In Atlanta, Georgia—just 15 miles from where Motiva's Doraville terminal stands today—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was born on January 15, 1929. Over 90 years later, the United States observes King's birthday on the third Monday in January to commemorate his monumental contributions to the civil rights movement.

In King's day—just decades ago—segregation was standard throughout the American South, enforced by local and state laws that created a physical, educational, and economic divide between Blacks and whites. It was this system that King sought to overturn, using peaceful protest to push for respect, inclusion, and equity for all African Americans.

While King is most commonly associated with places like Atlanta and Montgomery, Alabama, he was no stranger to southeast Texas. Over the course of his time as an activist, he made **several stops in the area**, visiting as early as 1958 to deliver a commencement address at St. John Missionary Baptist Church in Houston's Third Ward.

It was in 1962, standing in front of some 3,000 people at Houston's Old City Auditorium, when King declared that "the American Negro is about to gain his freedom." The following summer, in pursuit of that freedom, he made his way up the steps of the Lincoln Memorial and delivered his historic "I Have a Dream" speech in front of some 250,000 at the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.

Two years later, King visited Houston again, appearing for a speech to students at Texas Southern University. With civil rights legislation making its way through Congress, King told his audience they needed to move at "double-quick time" to get ready for the flood of social change that was coming.

In the weeks and months that followed King's Texas Southern address, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act were passed. These landmark legislations outlawed race-based discrimination and required states to allow minorities to participate in elections—two major steps that were made in large part because of King's activism.

On October 17, 1967, over 4,000 people packed into the Sam Houston Coliseum (built where the Hobby Center in Houston now stands) to hear King speak. Tensions had escalated across the country by then, and the event, which also featured Aretha Franklin and Harry Belafonte, was marred by protests. It was the last time King would visit the Bayou City—he was assassinated in Memphis just six months later, on April 4, 1968.

In the days following his death, a headline in the *Beaumont Enterprise* **called King** a "bridge between two races," and this continues to be the way he is remembered today.

"In a world full of poverty, he called for empathy; in the face of brutality, he placed his faith in non-violence," former President Barack Obama **said of King**. "His teachings remind us we have a duty to fight against poverty, even if we are wealthy; to care about the child in the decrepit school long after our own children have found success. ...

"Dr. King transformed the concepts of justice, liberty, and equality, and as he led marches and protests and raised his voice, he changed the course of history."



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### What's Coming Next?

While this article focuses on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, it is just one of many holidays and cultural celebrations plans Motiva plans to observe during 2021. During the first quarter, watch for more content and information about:

- Black History Month (February)
- Mardi Gras (February)
- International Women's Day (March)

**MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY CELEBRATIONS**

### Houston

Check out these Martin Luther King, Jr. Day celebrations in the Houston area:

- 33rd annual Martin Luther King Scholarship Breakfast (9 a.m. on KHOU 11)
- 43rd annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Parade (10 a.m. to noon; attend virtually at [htvhouston.net](http://htvhouston.net))