

# **MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. MEMORIAL PROGRAM OUTLINE.**

\*Make sure you are at the TALK sign 10 minutes prior to the talk, and stay for at least 10 minutes if no visitors at the hour.

\* The talk sign should always have the next time placed on the sign no later than the end of your talk.

## **WELCOME:**

-Introduce yourself: *"Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_ , and on behalf of the National Park Service, welcome to the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial."*

- Answer safety and logistic questions:
  - Offer brochures to all visitors.
  - Length of talk (10-15 minutes).
  - This will be a walking tour, and will finish in the memorial.
  - Restrooms and gifts are located at the Bookstore.
  - Weather and safety issues (No climbing the memorial).

**THEME:** The Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial was designed and built to help us remember the life and legacy of both Dr. King and the Civil Rights movement of which he played a such a significant part of.

## **INTRODUCTION:** (Start at talk sign)

-In 1996, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, of which Dr. King was a member while attending Morehouse College, was given permission by Congress to establish a memorial to Martin Luther King, Jr. in Washington, DC.

-In 1998, the Washington, DC Martin Luther King, Jr. National Memorial Project Foundation, Inc. was created to raise the \$120 Million needed to construct the memorial. The money was raised from private individuals and corporations, not the federal government. McKissick and McKissick, the oldest minority-owned architectural firm in the nation, are the architects of record and responsible for turning the idea into reality.

-The memorial was dedicated on August 28<sup>th</sup>, 2011, the 48<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom of 1963. It was at this march that Dr. King gave the famous "I Have a Dream" speech, one of the iconic moments of the Civil Rights movement. More than 200,000 people saw Dr. King give that speech, right here on the National Mall, while millions more saw it on TV. The march is often credited with pressuring Congress, President Kennedy, and President Johnson in the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

(TRANSITION): It was this speech that has formed the inspiration of several elements for the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial, and the first element is just ahead.

**THE MOUNTAIN OF DESPAIR:** (Stop just in front of the entrance, making sure to leave a passage for other visitors).

-At the March on Washington, Dr. King said,

*"This is our hope. This is the faith that I go back to the South with. With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day."*

-It is this passage that inspired the ROMA Design Group of San Francisco in their winning design for this memorial. In the year 2000, 906 designers from across the country gathered at the Verizon Center in Washington, DC to propose their vision for the future memorial. The ROMA Design Group's submission described the memorial as if a boulder had been floated down the Potomac River to the Tidal Basin.

These two massive features in front of us are the "Mountain of Despair," two sides of the boulder.

-The mountain's towering height reminds us of the legacy of the institution of slavery and the scars that linger today. It reminds us of the heights that were scaled in the struggle for Civil Rights in this country, of the horrible obstacles that the policy of segregation had put in the path of its citizens.

(TRANSITION): It is this despair that these walls represent. You will notice that something has happened to it. Something is missing!

**THE STONE OF HOPE:** (Walk past it, and about 20 feet out, so that visitors can comfortably look up and see the statue).

- The ROMA Design Group envisioned that at the edge of the water, the boulder had cracked open, and a "Stone of Hope" had been forced out of it.

-This positioning of the "Stone of Hope," pulled forward and with the statue of Dr. King emerging from it, is evoking the memory of the *struggle* of the Civil Right movement. That movement took the despair of segregation, represented by the mountain, and created something beautiful out of it.

-The "Stone of Hope" was sculpted by Master Sculptor Lie Yixin of Changsha, China. It is built of 41 blocks of Pink Shrimp Granite, also from China. Master Sculptor Lie was discovered by members of the foundation at "Minnesota Rocks!" an International Stone Craving Symposium held in St. Paul, MN in 2006. He was selected based upon artistic talent and after several interviews with the foundation. Previously, he had won three national competitions, was recognized as a "Master Sculptor" and awarded a lifetime stipend by the Chinese government.

-The pose of Dr. King is based upon a memory of him as well: a photo. He was in a contemplative moment, a period of calm, before the storm of the struggle. So concerned was the foundation with having an accurate portrayal, they had the sculptor craft four different versions of the statue. The children of Dr. King visited Master Lie's studio, and selected the one that most closely resembled their father. The only major change from the photo is that here, Dr. King is holding a roll of paper, instead of a pen, to show the importance of his writings, and influence of other writings (i.e. the Declaration of Independence).

-A historic event that has become part of the fabric of the nation's heritage is evoked by the symbolic location of the Stone of Hope. Behind the statue is the Lincoln Memorial, where Dr. King delivered the "I Have a Dream," speech. Across the water of the Tidal Basin stands the Thomas Jefferson Memorial. The statue of Dr. King is looking to the promise of the Declaration of Independence, written by

Jefferson. While speaking at the Lincoln Memorial, Dr. King told the audience that the Declaration of Independence, and the ideals contained within it, was a "Promissory note," to the people of America. The March on Washington was an attempt to "Cash a check," to have America live up to the ideals of its founding document. Together, this placement creates a "line of leadership," from Jefferson, to King, to Lincoln.

-On the south side of the Stone of Hope are inscribed the words that were the inspiration for the memorial, *"Out of the mountain of despair, a stone of hope."* These are from the "I Have a Dream," speech, of August 28, 1963, at the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.

-On the north side are inscribed the words that Dr. King himself said was how he wanted to be remembered. This is taken from a sermon that was given on February 4, 1968, entitled "The Drum Major Instinct," and foreshadowed King's death by two months. Despite all his accomplishments, this was what meant the most to him. *"Yes, if you want to say that I was a drum major, say that I was a drum major for justice. Say that I was a drum major for peace. I was a drum major for righteousness. And all of the other shallow things will not matter. Georgia, 1968."*

(TRANSITION): At this point you will notice the final feature of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial; a 450-foot long inscription wall that encircles the whole space. 13 different quotations of Dr. King, selected by a panel of historians, represent the themes of King's life, and the memorial's as well: **Justice/ Democracy/ Hope/ Love**. These quotations are taken from throughout his career, beginning in 1955 with the Montgomery Bus Boycott, and ending with the sermon preached at the National Cathedral in Washington, DC on March 31, 1968. This was four days before he was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee. The "I Have a Dream" speech is not included, as it is forms the basis of the memorial, and is the most well-known of his speeches. The Foundation wanted to ensure the memory of his other famous speeches and writings. The selections are in no specific order, allowing you to explore at will. We will look at a couple together, but then I will leave you to do just that.

**INSCRIPTION WALL:** (Lead the visitors to the first panel north of the Mountain of Despair).

*"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. Alabama, 1963"*

-This passage is taken from "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," written April 16, 1963. Dr. King was arrested for conducting a mass demonstration without a permit. He went to jail on April 12, and was released April 19.

-He penned this letter on scraps of paper that he found, or was given to by a friendly guard. Eventually he was able to get a legal pad from his lawyers.

-You may remember the images from May 7<sup>th</sup>, three weeks later; Police Commissioner "Bull" Conner turned fire hoses on four thousand demonstrators in the street of Birmingham.

-Justice is the theme of this passage. Dr. King's "Letter" is a response to local white religious leaders who had condemned the peaceful protests, and the role of "outside agitators," like King. He justifies his actions by demonstrating the connections between all people, and that all suffer from the injustice of segregation.

-The "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" also list out the steps to a non-violent campaign, ideas that were central to Dr. King's mission in life. He had studied the life of other non-violent practitioners, like

Gandhi, even going so far as to travel to India, to meet people who had known him. Both Gandhi and Dr. King were inspired by other non-violent thinkers, such as Henry David Thoreau and Jesus Christ.

(TRANSITION): It is this belief in non-violence that accounts for much of the fame that's attached to Dr. King. The last quote that I wish to show you attests to both Dr. King's ideas of justice for all, and to the regard in which he was held by the international community.

**INSCRIPTION WALL:** (Lead the visitors to the second panel north of the Mountain of Despair).

*"I have the audacity to believe that peoples everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity, equality, and freedom for their spirits. Norway, 1964"*

- The international world was so impressed with his leadership and ideals, that in December of 1964, Dr. King was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. At that time, he was the youngest person to have received the prize (35). This inscription is from his acceptance speech to the Nobel committee, in Oslo, Norway.
- The awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize also gave Dr. King a new platform, and a chance to broaden the message of Civil Rights in America, to human rights throughout the world.
- This inscription shows Dr. King's hope for the world, and his definition of what democracy can be.
- It also goes beyond the political injustice of segregation, to the social injustice of poverty.

## **CONCLUSION:**

The memory of Dr. King is embodied within this memorial, and shows the hopes and ideals that he inspired. Thank you for visiting this special place.

Please be sure to explore the rest of the memorial. If you have any questions, I will be in the memorial for the next few minutes. Thank you very much and have a great day/night!

### *(Background History)*

*-The first Africans held as slaves in the American colonies came in 1619, to the colony of Virginia. President Lincoln began the process of ending the institution of slavery with the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863, which ended it in the states that were rebelling against the Union. In December of 1865, the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment to the U.S. Constitution was passed, which ended legalized slavery in the United States, for all time.*

*-Segregation was legalized by the US Supreme Court in 1896, with the landmark decision of Plessy v. Ferguson, which created the policy of "separate but equal." It became a major feature of life in America, with signs saying "whites only" and "colored" posted above the most basic of amenities. Schools, stores, parks, lodging, and transportation were all affected by this policy.*

*-In 1954, the US Supreme Court reversed this decision, with the case of Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, ruling that separate school facilities were inherently unequal.*

*-The Civil Rights Act of 1964 outlawed discrimination in public accommodations and employment.*

*-The Voting Rights Act of 1965 outlawed discrimination in the voting booth.*

*-The Civil Rights Act of 1968 outlawed discrimination in housing (passed after Dr. King's death).*