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| |  |  | | --- | --- | | National Urban League | [Next entry](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_nationalism) | |
| Martin Luther King and the [**Southern Christian Leadership Conference**](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_southern_christian_leadership_conference_sclc/) (SCLC) joined with the National Urban League in the struggle for African American economic rights. In a 31 July telegram to the organization’s officers and delegates on the occasion of its 1963 national convention, King praised the Urban League, writing: ‘‘Your tenacious instance in seeking for the Negro community economic justice has paid large dividends.’’ He pledged SCLC’s ‘‘full support to your ultimate goals of complete economic[,] social[,] and spiritual freedom for all mankind.’’  Founded in 1910, the National Urban League counseled recent black migrants to urban areas in the North and South, assisted in the training of social workers for this population, and provided educational and increased employment opportunities in industry. The Urban League’s board was interracial from its earliest days.  Under the leadership of [**Lester Granger**](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_granger_lester_blackwell/), executive director from 1941 to 1961, the League supported [**A. Philip Randolph**](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_randolph_a_philip_1889_1979/)’s 1941 March on Washington Movement to combat discrimination against blacks during World War II, and advocated the integration of labor unions. In a 16 January 1957 telegram, Granger sent King greetings during the founding meeting of the SCLC and commended ‘‘your conference for the forthright steps you are taking to find practical solutions for the critical problems that Negro citizens are facing today.’’ On 23 June 1958 Granger joined King, Randolph, and [**Roy Wilkins**](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_wilkins_roy_ottaway_1901_1981/) in a meeting with President [**Dwight D. Eisenhower**](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_eisenhower_dwight_david_1890_1969/) to urge that the 1957 Civil Rights Act be enforced, and that the Department of Justice ‘‘act now to protect the right of citizens to register and vote,’’ and promote ‘‘non-discrimination in government employment’’ (*Papers* 4:428–429). League officials also participated in the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights with King, Wilkins, and other civil rights organizations and labor unions, to meet with congressional leaders in January 1960 on the progress of a new civil rights bill.  In September 1960 King addressed the Urban League during its Golden Anniversary Conference, and characterized the relationship between it and other ‘‘more militant civil rights organizations,’’ saying that both types of groups ‘‘must accept the other as a necessary partner in the complex yet exciting struggle to free the Negro, and thereby save the soul of America’’ (*Papers* 5:506; 507).  Leaders such as [**Whitney M. Young**](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_young_whitney_moore_1921_1971/), who headed the organization from 1961 until his death in 1971, brought the organization closer to full involvement in the civil rights movement. Although it could not fully join in protests because of its tax-exempt status, the League contributed through different actions, such as hosting meetings—like those held by King, Randolph, and other planners of the 1963 [**March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom**](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_march_on_washington_for_jobs_and_freedom/)—at its New York headquarters. Although Young disagreed with King in 1967 regarding his opposition to the [**Vietnam War**](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_the_vietnam_war_1961_1975/), the League endorsed SCLC’s [**Operation Breadbasket**](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_operation_breadbasket/) in Chicago that year.  **Sources**  Granger to King, 16 January 1957, MLKP-MBU.  King, ‘‘The Rising Tide of Racial Consciousness,’’ Address at the Golden Anniversary Conference of the National Urban League, 6 September 1960, in *Papers* 5:**499–508**.  King to Officers and Delegates of the Annual Convention of the National Urban League, 31 July 1963, MLKJP-GAMK.  Randolph, Granger, King, and Wilkins, ‘‘A Statement to the President of the United States,’’ 23 June 1958, in *Papers* 4:**426–429**.  Weiss, Whitney M. Young, Jr., 1989.  Wilkins to King, 8 February 1960, in *Papers* 5:**366–367**. |