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| |  |  | | --- | --- | | Randolph, A. Philip (1889-1979) | [Next entry](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_ray_sandy_frederick_1898_1979) | |
| A. Philip Randolph, who Martin Luther King, Jr. called ‘‘truly the Dean of Negro leaders,’’ played a crucial role in gaining recognition of African Americans in labor organizations (*Papers* 4:527). A socialist and a paciï¬st, Randolph founded the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, the ï¬rst successful black trade union, and the [**Negro American Labor Council (NALC)**](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_negro_american_labor_council_nalc/).   The youngest son of a poor preacher deeply committed to racial politics, Randolph was born in Crescent City, Florida, on 15 April 1889. He graduated from Jacksonville’s Cookman Institute in 1911, relocating to New York City soon afterward. In 1917 Randolph and Chandler Owen founded the *Messenger*, an African American socialist journal critical of American involvement in World War I.   After the 1925 founding of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, Randolph succeeded in gaining recognition of the union from the Pullman Palace Car Company in 1937. When the union signed its ï¬rst contract with the company, membership rose to nearly 15,000. In 1941 Randolph threatened a march on Washington, D.C., if the federal government did not address racial discrimination in the defense industry. In response, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802, which banned discrimination in the defense industries and established the Fair Employment Practices Commission. Randolph also helped to form the League for Non-violent Civil Disobedience against Military Segregation, which inï¬‚uenced President [**Harry S. Truman’s decision**](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_truman_harry_s_1884_1972/) to desegregate the armed services in 1948.   After the [**American Federation of Labor**](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_afl_cio/) merged with the [**Congress of Industrial Organizations**](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_afl_cio/) to form the AFL-CIO in 1955, Randolph was appointed to the new organization’s executive council, when he became one of its ï¬rst two black vice presidents. As a labor ofï¬cial, Randolph won signiï¬cant union support for the civil rights movement and allied with King and other organizations on initiatives like the 1957 [**Prayer Pilgrimage for Freedom**](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_prayer_pilgrimage_for_freedom_1957/).   In 1959 Randolph founded NALC in an effort to effectively present the demands of black workers to the labor movement. Randolph and NALC helped initiate 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/), during which King delivered his famous ‘‘[**I Have a Dream**](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_i_have_a_dream_28_august_1963/)’’ speech.   Randolph devoted his life to the achievement of both racial and economic equality. On the occasion of Randolph’s 70th birthday, King participated in an evening honoring him at New York’s Carnegie Hall. King praised Randolph’s refusal ‘‘to sell his race for a mess of pottage,’’ and credited him with never being ‘‘afraid to challenge an unjust state power’’ or to ''speak out against the power structure'' (*Papers* 5:350). Randolph died on 16 May 1979 at age 90.   **SOURCES**   King, Outline of Remarks for ‘‘A Salute to A. Philip Randolph,’’ 24 January 1960, in *Papers* 5:350.  King to Randolph, 8 November 1958, in *Papers* 4:527–528.  Pfeffer, *A. Philip Randolph*, 1990. |