



# 10 essential ways to commemorate Martin Luther King Jr.

USA TODAY NETWORK Matt Alderton, Special to USA TODAY Published 8:00 a.m. ET Feb. 3, 2018



(Photo: Atsushi Nishijima, Paramount Pictures)

There's much more to Martin Luther King Jr. than his dream and the famous speech he gave about it on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in 1963. Celebrate his life by learning something new about one of America's most influential figures. Explore the man behind the myth with these places, films, books and songs.

## Attend a performance of *The Mountaintop*

Written by playwright Katori Hall, *The Mountaintop* is a fictional account of King's final night. Set at Memphis' Lorraine Motel on the eve of King's assassination, it depicts an imaginary interaction between King and a hotel maid, whose rapport with the reverend reveals his human vulnerabilities. The play is currently touring the country through April 23 courtesy of L.A. Theatre Works.

## See the movie *Selma*.

A seminal event in both King's life and the civil rights movement, the 1965 march from Selma to Montgomery, Ala., protested discrimination against black voters. In her 2014 film, director Ava DuVernay tells the story of the epic march and the fearless man who led it. The film was nominated for the Academy Award for best picture and won for original song.



Statues of three women walking next to a replica of a city bus memorialize the Montgomery's bus boycotts. (Photo: Adrian Sainz AP)

## Tour the National Civil Rights Museum

The National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis occupies the former Lorraine Motel, where King was felled by an assassin in 1968. The museum's highlight is "King's Last Hours," an exhibit commemorating King's final night in Room 306, which is preserved behind glass. The site where King died is as powerful a place as there is to consider his life and legacy.

## Visit the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site

Walk in King's footsteps — literally — at the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site, which spans 23 acres in Atlanta. The site includes King's birth home; his tomb; Ebenezer Baptist Church, where King was co-pastor with his father; and the Martin Luther King Center for Nonviolent Social Change, established by King's family to continue his work.

## Listen to U2's *Pride (In the Name of Love)*

You know the song. What you might not realize, however, is that the lead single from U2's 1984 album *The Unforgettable Fire* is about King. Just listen to the lyrics: "Early morning, April Four/Shot rings out in the Memphis sky." Despite its historical error — King died in the evening — the song earned a special honor from the King Center in 2004.

## Read *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.*

After King's death, his estate commissioned Clayborne Carson, a professor at Stanford University, to assemble, edit and publish his papers, including previously unpublished letters and diaries. The result, *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, is an absorbing account of King's life and philosophy — in his own words.

## Watch the TV miniseries *King*

NBC's Emmy-winning *King* still feels relevant 40 years after it aired. Originally broadcast on three consecutive nights in 1978, it stars Paul Winfield as King, whose biography and ideas are vividly portrayed. Although there are some historical errors and omissions, overall it's an informative and compelling tribute.

## Read Coretta Scott King's *My Life, My Love, My Legacy*

No one knew King better than his wife, Coretta Scott King, who died in 2006. This book, published last year, is based on recorded interviews with journalist Barbara Reynolds. It tells stories from her life before and after King's death, including anecdotes about her marriage, the civil rights movement, and her work to carry on her husband's legacy.

## Read *Martin's Big Words*

King is an inspiration to Americans young and old. Doreen Rappaport's picture-book biography, *Martin's Big Words: The Life of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.*, is ideally for sharing his message with children. Featuring illustrations by Bryan Collier, it combines famous King quotes with original writing to tell his life story to young readers (and their parents, too).

## Listen to the *I Dream* concept album

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King wanted to unite people, and nothing unites like music. In that spirit, composer Douglas Tappin wrote *I Dream*, a rhythm-and-blues opera based on the last 36 hours of King's life. Featuring a fusion of musical styles, it's being staged this spring by Opera Carolina in Charlotte. Listeners nationwide can partake by downloading *I Dream* (The Concept Recording) from iTunes or Google Play Music.

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