

Martin Luther King Jr. Day

As we head into a long weekend and the chance to be with family and friends, our cause for justice, against the waves of bias, hatred and the ravages of poverty, gives our CPCS community a special reason to honor the legacy of the Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King, Jr., who was born on Jan. 15, 1929.

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Photo Illustration: Lindsey Bailey/Axios

As we reflect on the life of the Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King Jr., it is essential to understand the great dimension of this powerful leader that too often goes untold.

The singular moment of Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech at the Washington Mall during the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, when 200,000 people joined in support, is unique for many reasons.

- For example, one little-known, yet wonderful dimension to this moment was that Dr. King did not plan to reference his "dream" as he spoke the words that have

become so widely remembered and revered in one of the most powerful speeches in American history.

- **The deeper story** recounts that the internationally renowned Queen of Gospel, Mahalia Jackson, stood just behind Dr. King at the rostrum and urged him to shift away from his planned remarks to speak of his “Dream” as he had done on prior orations.

“Tell them about the dream, Martin.”

Ms. Jackson, the granddaughter of enslaved people, was essential to the cause for civil rights.

- She was frequently the opening singer at Dr. King’s speeches, including at Montgomery Bus Strike rallies and other singular events in this movement.
- Her songs transcended the faith and experience of formerly enslaved people, carrying the weight of that burden, and infused with the fierce and certain determination that the Black community would prevail.

Dr. King treasured his relationship with Ms. Jackson, a friend and confidante he sought out in moments of his deepest sorrow and pain, sometimes to have her sing over the phone and ease his mind.

- In that March on Washington moment, there is clear evidence that Dr. King heard Ms. Jackson, leaving his prepared notes and launching into an impromptu transition that started... “And so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream....”

In this brief exchange, we can see and appreciate how Dr. King warmly embraced and heeded the wisdom of his circle of friends and confidantes. This is yet another measure of Martin Luther King's greatness as a civil rights leader.

- This experience of trust and sharing in the struggle for fairness and equality is essential for us to incorporate as public defenders in our own struggles for our clients. They too have something to share, either in their defense or as people with ideas and perspectives worthy of consideration, toward the trust we must establish in these relationships.

To share a flavor of the measure of Mahalia Jackson and her relationship to Dr. King, here are three short videos of her singing at two events in the movement, along with an image below that pays tribute to one of the pieces.

- **I've Been Buked and I've Been Scorned** / [March on Washington](#) (1963)
- **How I Got Over** / [March on Washington](#) (1963)
- **Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho** / [Chicago Movement for Freedom](#) (ca. 1965-1967)



I've Been Buked and I've Been Scorned,
Charles White, Chicago, Illinois, 1918–Los
Angeles, California, 1979

Please consider making a small gesture in honor of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., this weekend—volunteer in your community or where our clients live, take in a film or piece of art on the civil rights movement, or maybe share some thoughts with your family about this singular American patriot and freedom fighter.

The bottom line is that CPCS is deeply committed to the principles for which Dr. King lived and died.

- Our vision is grounded in the hope that we can build an organization that steadfastly pursues justice, with humility, insight, and respect.
- Your work and commitment can help us realize this dream.