

National Black Church Initiative

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For Immediate Release

The National Black Church Initiative Commends the Dedication of the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Memorial

*NBCI Wishes to Thank All Those Involved in the Creation of the
National Mall's Newest Monument to Peace and Social Justice*

The National Black Church Initiative (NBCI), a faith-based coalition of 34,000 churches comprised of 15 denominations and 15.7 million African Americans committed to the eradication of racial disparities, is enormously proud and thrilled concerning the construction and dedication of the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Memorial on the National Mall. NBCI has striven to promote messages of peace and equality, exactly what Dr. King fought for all his life. A picture of Dr. King is on NBCI website to remind us of the huge and unfulfilled tasks of giving hope to the poor, and eradicating racism and militarism that the Black Church has pledged to carry out.

It is ironic, however, that our first African American President, Barack Obama, who would preside over the dedication of the King Memorial, does not have on the top of his agenda Dr. King's three priorities: the empowerment of the poor, the eradication of racism and an end to militarism. The president has consistently failed to address the issue of racism since his presidency and has dodged every opportunity to teach the nation about the importance of equality. In addition, he has been one of the most militaristic presidents in the history of our country. We are in three wars, and he has authorized the use of drones and assassin squads to the nth degree against Afghanistan, Yemen, and other places where there is suspected terrorism. He

has failed to use the Office of the Presidency as a bridge for peace through diplomacy and non-violence. The Libyan, Egyptian, and Syrian conflicts as well as the Arab Spring gave the President a wonderful opportunity to bring together those who would brutalize God's people and those who yearn for peace. The Black Church believes it is not too much to ask for our president to beat 'swords into plowshares' as can be read in Isaiah 2:4 & Micah 4:3: "They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore". He seems to be a Nobel Peace Prize Winner without a record of peace.

The Rev Anthony Evans, President of NBCI said "I love Dr. King and I love his family, and I thank the almighty God for him because he listened to the fundamental teachings of Jesus and understood it in light of human dignity and worth. There are those who would say that it took a long time for this Memorial to happen. I would respond by saying it's according to God's time. There is nothing but one thing I would have changed – that is that it would have been fundamentally right and appropriate for the sculptor and the designer of the memorial to have been Black. But nonetheless, God's will continues to shine despite those of us who are proud of the artistic value that African Americans bring to a project. So God Bless all who will see it and adhere to the principles that has its foundation in the Christian faith and artfully articulated by Dr. King."

Dr. King, on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, famously said, "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." The Martin Luther King, Jr. National Monument is a symbol of that faith and a reminder of what that 'stone of hope' has built. It is important to remember that Dr. King was, above all else, a man of the Church and his powerful sermons and public addresses of equality and freedom can still be heard today wherever the Black Community gathers to worship. His statue standing on the mall represents the power and strength of 300 years of the Black Church and will preside over our nation for many years to come.

There are many people responsible for this remarkable achievement, but there are those who have spent long, thankless hours making sure the legacy of Dr. King was well represented. We would like to recognize first all of the countless volunteers who marched in the civil rights movement and who died and were injured in the cause of justice and peace in this nation. In addition, Alpha Phi Alpha, Dr. King's own fraternity, for its dedication and tenacity in helping to make this memorial a reality. In January 1984, inspired by George Sealy, fraternity brothers Alfred Bailey, Oscar Little, Eddie Madison, and John Harvey proposed building the memorial, first to the fraternity's Board of Directors, and eventually to the President of the United States.

NBCI would like to also recognize Harry Johnson, Sr., for coordinating and orchestrating the \$120 million necessary to make this memorial a reality. The project would have floundered without his leadership and direction. Rep. John Conyers, who proposed the bill to make Dr.

King's birthday a holiday, needs to be recognized as well for striving to remind our nation once a year of the need for non-violence and social justice.

We also commend the King Family, John Carter, Former President Bill Clinton, Morgan Freeman, the National Park Services, Samaire Armstrong, Bishop McClendon, all the individual donors, the corporate donors, and the celebrities who donated their time and money to this project for their contributions to this memorial. We would like to reiterate the sentiment John Carter expressed to congress on March 24th, 1998: "We now have an opportunity to break the trend of memorials to war and erect a monument which delivers a message of lifelong peace in our land. A memorial which embodies not just the image of Dr. King, but the image of America, which is often called the melting pot of the world." Too often this country spends too much time and money glorifying war; it is time we taught our children there is also glory in peace.

About NBCI

The National Black Church Initiative (NBCI) is a coalition of 34,000 African American and Latino churches working to eradicate racial disparities in healthcare, technology, education, housing, and the environment. NBCI's mission is to provide critical wellness information to all of its members, congregants, churches and the public. NBCI offers faith-based, out-of-the-box and cutting edge solutions to stubborn economic and social issues. NBCI's programs are governed by credible statistical analysis, science based strategies and techniques, and methods that work. Visit our website at www.naltblackchurch.com. The Baby Fund is online at <http://www.babyfund.info/>.