

# EDUCATION FIT FOR A KING

## A Historical Backgrounder



### LEGACY: A FAMILY TRADITION

Martin Luther King Jr. is a member of a long line of King men who were drawn to the excellent education steeped with moral development that Morehouse College offers.

- Dr. Adam Daniel Williams, class of 1898, Atlanta Baptist College (now known as Morehouse College)
- Dr. Martin Luther King Sr., father, class of 1930
- The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., class of 1948
- The Rev. A.D. Williams King, brother, class of 1960
- Martin Luther King III, son, class of 1979
- Dexter King, son (attended 1979 to 1984)

### CHARACTER: "THE GOAL OF A TRUE EDUCATION"

Morehouse was fertile ground for the young Martin Luther King Jr., who entered the college as an early-admission student in 1944 at the age of 15. It was on the grounds of the only college for African American men that he met great social activists, thinkers, theologians and educators who would become mentors.

Dr. Benjamin E. Mays, the Morehouse president who is considered the architect of the College's reputation for excellence, proved to be an incomparable inspiration to King, as well as to the numerous students who came through Morehouse during his tenure. Mays, in his weekly chapel addresses and weekly newspaper columns, urged Morehouse men to be "sensitive to the wrongs, the sufferings, and the injustices of society" and to "accept responsibility for correcting these ills."

*"We must remember that intelligence is not enough. Intelligence plus character – that is the goal of true education."*

Some outstanding professors also shaped the man who would one day be one of the world's most renowned civil and human rights leader. As a sociology major, King was introduced to the problem of segregation by department chair Dr. Walter P. Chivers. Dr. George D. Kelsey, director of the School of Religion, inspired him to think beyond his early fundamentalist instruction regarding the Bible and theology. The influence of these incredible men undoubtedly led King to abandon his pursuit of law and medicine and, instead, enter the ministry.

Four years later, as King finished his final year at Morehouse, it was evident that he had transformed into the leader he was destined to become when he wrote in the student publication, *The Maroon Tiger*: "We must remember that intelligence is not enough. Intelligence plus character – that is the goal of true education."

### LEADERSHIP: LINKING GREAT MINDS

King continued his education at Crozer Theological Seminary and at Boston University's School of Theology, where he earned a doctorate in systematic theology. But it was through the mentors, professors and alumni at Morehouse College that King was linked to the teachings, principles, methods of social reform and support that marked his ascent to becoming a civil rights icon.

Benjamin E. Mays introduced him to the teachings of the Indian social reformer Mahatma Gandhi and his method of non-violent protest. His favorite professor, George D. Kelsey, set an example of what an ideal minister could be, someone who could combine the tradition of religion with the issues faced in the modern world. Kelsey also exposed him to Henry David Thoreau's "Essay on Civil Disobedience." King said he read the essay several times, transfixed by the idea of "refusing to cooperate with an evil system."

Each of these men helped shaped the King who would transform a nation.

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## THE KING TIMELINE AT MOREHOUSE

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**1929**

Martin Luther King Jr. is born in Atlanta on January 15

**1944**

Martin Luther King Jr. enters Morehouse as an early-admission student at the age of 15



A young Martin Luther King Jr. attends chapel in Sale Hall.

**1948**

Martin Luther King Jr. receives the bachelor of arts degree in sociology from Morehouse. He continues his education at the Crozer Theological Seminary in Boston, and later at Boston University's School of Theology

**1957**

King receives his first ever honorary degree from Morehouse, presented to him by Dr. Benjamin E. Mays, the school's sixth president

**1959**

King delivers Commencement address at the College

**1966**

King delivers keynote address in celebration of the College's 100th anniversary

**1968**

King's body is carried from Ebenezer Baptist Church to the Morehouse campus for final funeral service

**1970**

Coretta Scott King is awarded an honorary degree from Morehouse

**1978**

The Martin Luther King Jr. Chapel, the world's largest religious memorial to King, is dedicated by Ambassador Andrew Young

**1981**

The chapel is renamed "The Martin Luther King Jr. International Chapel" in honor of King's international acclaim as a Nobel Peace Prize winner

**1984**

The King statue is unveiled on the King Chapel plaza

**2001**

The Gandhi, King, Ikeda Community Builders Prize is established, awarded to individuals deemed to be exemplary leaders among global citizens

**2006**

Coretta Scott King is posthumously awarded the Gandhi, King, Ikeda Community Builders Prize

## ABOUT MOREHOUSE COLLEGE

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Ranked three times as the number one college in the nation for educating African American students by *Black Enterprise* magazine, and recognized by *The Wall Street Journal* as one of the top feeder schools for the 15 most prominent graduate and professional schools in the country, **Morehouse College** is the nation's largest, private liberal arts college for men. Founded in 1867, the College enrolls approximately 3,000 students. The College offers 26 majors in three academic divisions: Humanities and Social Sciences, Science and Mathematics, and Business Administration and Economics. Morehouse offers a number of programs and activities to enhance its challenging liberal arts curriculum through the Leadership Center at Morehouse College, Morehouse Research Institute, and Andrew Young Center for International Affairs. Morehouse is one of only two Historically Black Colleges or Universities (HBCU) to produce three Rhodes Scholars.

Prominent alumni include Martin Luther King Jr., Nobel Peace Prize winner and civil rights leader; Dr. David Satcher, former U.S. Surgeon General and director of the National Center for Primary Care at the Morehouse School of Medicine; Shelton "Spike" Lee, filmmaker and president of 40 Acres & A Mule Productions; Samuel L. Jackson, Academy Award nominated actor; Maynard H. Jackson, founder of Jackson Securities and the first African American mayor of Atlanta; and Nima A. Warfield, the first African American Rhodes Scholar from a HBCU.



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