

MARTIN LUTHER KING COALITION OF GREATER LOS ANGELES



JOBS, JUSTICE AND PEACE

MISSION STATEMENT

"The Martin Luther King Coalition for Jobs, Justice and Peace is a broad coalition of individuals and community groups committed to taking up the fight for social and economic justice and world peace where Dr. King left off, and to build a general popular movement capable of organizing around these issues, as well as the many new issues that have come to the fore in our own times, on a day to day basis."

Background on the MLK Coalition

The Martin Luther King Coalition of Greater Los Angeles (originally known as the Martin Luther King Coalition for Jobs, Justice and Peace) was formed in the fall of 2010. At that time there were three primary concerns that motivated our coming together:

One of those concerns was the militarization and commercialization of the annual Martin Luther King Parade held on Kingdom Day (Martin Luther King's Birthday) here in Los Angeles. With the passage of time, this event, which is the largest commemorative event in the African-American Community of Los Angeles every year, has become a showpiece for militarism and recruitment into the various armed services. Much of the March is characterized by the glorification of military service, ROTC, etc., as the road to financial security, education, job training, food, clothing, shelter and healthcare coverage for black and brown youth. These "material benefits" of service in the U.S. military come at a very high price in the form of disproportionate numbers of poor and working-class youth--- especially black and brown youth--- being sent into combat in a whole series of wars of questionable justification --- with disproportionate representation among the killed, the wounded and the permanently disabled. This was certainly NOT what Dr. King stood for. Dr. King was adamantly opposed to militarism, unjust wars, and warfare generally as a tool of great-power politics. He worked instead for a world based on the principles of peace and justice, and all of his efforts were directed toward opening other avenues of opportunity and access for all.



Secondly, the King parades have been controlled and regulated by a private, for-profit firm for some years past. In our opinion, this has resulted in the Kingdom Day Parades becoming more and more a profit-making venture than a true observance of Dr. King himself or his significant contributions to the day-to-day struggles to advance the conditions of poor and oppressed people in our society --- something which is more needed now than ever. Exorbitant fees are charged for any groups wishing to participate in the Kingdom Day Parades --- automatically excluding much of the community, which is hard-pressed financially, and diverting the focus of the parades from the many social issues and concerns that Dr. King committed his life to. Thus, in a period of massive unemployment, declining education and healthcare, attacks on social services, increasing police brutality, resurging racism and mass incarceration, the Kingdom Day Parades have truly failed to serve as a rallying point for advancing the very struggles that Dr. King ---and many others --- both lived and died for!



Thirdly, we recognized that all of these issues and concerns needed an on-going means of being addressed by a broad range of activists here in the L.A. area who were separated by geography, ethnicity, programmatic focus, and/or by certain differences in political perspective as well. Yet we shared many fundamental interests in common. First and foremost, we shared common concerns over the tightening grip of corporations and right-wing social movements over all of the basic institutions of this society --- political, economic, cultural and military. We recognized the dangers being posed by the emergence and advance of genuine fascist tendencies in the United States and the failure to generate an effective mass movement that could act as a countervailing force. Thus we decided to build the Martin Luther King Coalition specifically as a vehicle for engaging in joint action around commonly agreed issues, engaging each other in principled dialogue and debate, and as a means of supporting each other's work.

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We have initiated significant work around all of the issues outlined in our statement of principles. We have lent support to the work of a very wide range of community organizations and advocacy groups, and we have contributed to the development of an array of coalitions around specific critical community needs since our formation. Today our work continues in many parts of the Greater L.A. community.

MARTIN LUTHER KING COALITION

OF GREATER LOS ANGELES

MLK COALITION STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

1.) THE MLK COALITION IS COMMITTED TO THE PRINCIPLE OF POPULAR DEMOCRACY:

This means that MLK believes that the people of our communities must have the power to determine their own destiny. People can only exercise such self-determination when they actually have the power to define and control the basic decisions and institutions that impact on their day-to-day lives. This kind of power isn't generally developed by delegating most of the authority and responsibility for running things to professional politicians; it is rather by fostering direct participation and collective decision-making as much as possible that people develop politically, intellectually, and ethically.

That is why the MLK Coalition works primarily to build a movement based upon organizing those who are not professional politicians or public officials, but who are directly impacted by the various policies, institutions and concerns that have a general impact in our communities. We don't mean that we won't cooperate with elected officials or other public functionaries, especially when they are clearly responsive to community needs, and/or have influence or responsibility related to an issue that we are working on. But such relationships are secondary to our focus on developing the political consciousness and activism of those who are most often excluded from the political process. We are particularly committed to empowering those within our communities who are the least powerful, and whose social, political and material needs are usually the greatest.

2. THE MLK COALITION IS COMMITTED TO THE STRUGGLE AGAINST RACISM:

The MLK Coalition is fully committed to the struggle against racism in all forms. Racism creates and perpetuates inequality and conflict between people based upon arbitrary physical differences or biological characteristics such as skin color, hair texture, ethnicity, kinship or blood relationships. In some cases it revolves around things that have been socially or historically determined such as language, religion or cultural practices. In every case, the stress is on how individuals and groups differ from one another. Racism attempts to alienate people from one another on the basis of such differences, and always toward one end: the exploitation and oppression of one group by another (or others).

In the United States, especially, problems of race and racism are so persistent because the economic and class structure of this society were historically constructed largely on a "racial" basis. In the U.S., the concept of race has always involved a mixture of "color", ethnicity or "nationality", culture and power. Thus, in the United States, Native-Americans, African-Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos, etc., continue to be treated

differentially on the basis of color, nationality, and culture, despite many changes that have occurred on the surface of our society over the years. This in reality is the basis for the disproportionate concentration of poverty, poor health, incarceration, and other negative features of daily life within communities of color in this country, with the darkest-skinned communities almost invariably being found at the very bottom of the heap on just about every count.

At the heart of this equation is the question of power --- political, social and economic. It is this equation that the MLK Coalition seeks to change. This is where the concept of popular democracy meets the acid test. The MLK Coalition seeks to abolish racism through the political and economic empowerment of those communities that currently lack power; we also understand the necessity of promoting an anti-racist culture, both within our own ranks and in the communities in which we work.

3. THE MARTIN LUTHER KING COALITION IS COMMITTED TO THE STRUGGLE AGAINST SEXISM:

Sexism is the oldest form of human exploitation and oppression. Its roots lie in the sexual division of labor that grew out of woman's reproductive function and the dependence it enforced upon women and children during the earliest stages of human development. Thus, the first forms of slavery and exploitation grew up in close connection with the male-female (and parent-child) relation in the extremely harsh and primitive conditions of the earliest periods of human existence, and the resultant family, kinship and social forms of organization that could only slowly evolve as man and woman gained greater control or influence over their natural and social environment. In short, the roots of sexism run deep!

As with racism, sexism is anchored in ideas that various physical, biological and cultural differences between males and females should justify unequal relations between the sexes. Because these inequalities have existed for so long, and have been historically sanctioned in most cultures, these relations of inequality have come to seem "natural" to many. But the economic, social, and indeed the technological development of society have long been creating the conditions for the abolition of the political, social and economic inequality between the sexes.

That is why movements and strivings for the liberation of women have become a universal phenomenon in this period of history. The MLK Coalition supports and works for gender equality and the liberation of women from all forms of discriminatory and oppressive treatment: in our own organization, in society, in the workplace, in the community, and in personal relationships. In particular, we support the right of every woman to have full control over her own sexual life and reproductive functions.

4. THE MARTIN LUTHER KING COALITION IS COMMITTED TO THE STRUGGLE FOR EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS FOR SEXUAL MINORITIES:

The Martin Luther King Coalition recognizes the struggles of sexual minorities (Lesbians, Gays, Bi-Sexual and Trans-Gendered People) as a human rights issue. Historically there is solid evidence, across most cultures and time periods, that human beings have always manifested a variety of sexual orientations and/or identities. What has varied has been how different societies have dealt with this. Some societies have accepted this variety, while others haven't. Debate continues as to just what has determined the attitude of a society toward such differences.

One theory is that in those societies whose economic base is, or was, mostly labor-intensive and/or characterized by intense competition against other societies for the basic resources for survival (resulting in frequent and destructive warfare) that any form of sexuality or sexual identity which could in any way hinder or undermine the steady reproduction of workers and potential warriors was discouraged; thus, the origins of "hetero-sexism". Whether this specific theory is correct or not, there clearly is such a thing as heterosexism. Heterosexism is based on the idea that any variation from socially sanctioned heterosexual relations is simply based on moral or psychological shortcomings. The moral stigmatization of sexual minorities is used to justify social and economic discrimination and the exclusion or isolation of such minorities from open participation in the life of society. It frequently leads to overt acts of violence directed against individuals or groups who are either identified, or simply accused of being, members of a sexual minority group.

The influence of heterosexist ideology has often been so strong that individuals who have been identified as belonging to sexual minorities have frequently been shunned even by their own families, friends and communities. One of the principle reasons for all this conflict and strife is that members of sexual minority groups often tend to reject the socially established gender roles and behaviors that are imposed upon everyone in a patriarchal society. Such a rejection by some tends to open the possibility that others may question or challenge these, and other, social norms as well. In a society where at least half of the population has fewer political, economic and social rights and opportunities based upon gender, such "nonconformity" actually contributes to the undermining of established power relationships. It has been noted by numerous historians that movements for social recognition and acceptance of sexual minorities, in societies where such minorities have been historically repressed, generally emerge side-by-side, chronologically, with other movements that pose challenges to the established power relations within that society. In particular, there is generally a close link between the emergence of such movements and other movements challenging established gender roles, especially by large numbers of women.

The Martin Luther King Coalition supports full social recognition for sexual minorities; actively opposes heterosexist ideas and social practices, both within our

own organization and in the communities in which we work; and actively works to oppose the social, political, and economic isolation, exclusion and discrimination to which sexual minorities have been subjected historically. In particular, we will actively work to bring an end to acts of hatred and violence directed against those whose sexual orientation or gender identity challenges heterosexist "norms".

5. THE MARTIN LUTHER KING COALITION IS COMMITTED TO THE STRUGGLE FOR WORKERS' RIGHTS:

The accumulated wealth of human society is based, first and foremost, on human labor.

In most societies, those who have performed the greatest share of the labor that makes social life possible have rarely received equitable compensation or recognition for their work. Thus, the struggles of working people have always been one of the pillars of the struggle for social justice as such. The Martin Luther King Coalition for Jobs, Justice and Peace, drawing on the legacy of Dr. King himself, fully supports the struggles of working people for justice in the workplace. We support the right of workers to engage in collective bargaining. We support the right of all working people to decent wages, safe and healthy working conditions, and health and retirement benefits. We also support efforts to reduce the established length of the standard working week. We believe that this is necessary, both in order to allow working people to enjoy the fruits of their labor and to allow more of those who are being pushed OUT of the economy altogether to reintegrate into the workforce. The Martin Luther King Coalition will work to build an alliance between labor and community-based movements. We will also support or initiate efforts to organize and advocate on behalf of the unemployed. We recognize the right to a job or adequate income as fundamental human rights.

6. THE MARTIN LUTHER KING COALITION IS COMMITTED TO THE STRUGGLE TO ABOLISH POVERTY AND WANT.

7. THE MARTIN LUTHER KING COALITION IS COMMITTED TO THE FIGHT FOR DECENT AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING FOR ALL.

8. THE MARTIN LUTHER KING COALITION IS COMMITTED TO THE STRUGGLE FOR FREE, UNIVERSAL HEALTHCARE FOR ALL.

9. THE MARTIN LUTHER KING COALITION IS COMMITTED TO THE STRUGGLE TO END ALL FORMS OF POLICE ABUSE AND POLITICAL REPRESSION.

10. THE MARTIN LUTHER KING COALITION IS COMMITTED TO THE FIGHT FOR FREE AND UNIVERSAL EDUCATION FOR ALL WHO DESIRE TO LEARN.

11. THE MARTIN LUTHER KING COALITION IS COMMITTED TO SUPPORT ALL EFFORTS TO DEFEND AND UPGRADE OUR ENVIRONMENT AND REVERSE THE DAMAGE WHICH HAS BEEN INFLICTED UPON THE AIR, LAND AND WATER RESOURCES OF THIS PLANET. (THIS INCLUDES SUPPORT FOR ENERGY CONVERSION FROM FOSSIL FUELS TO WIND AND SOLAR POWER.)

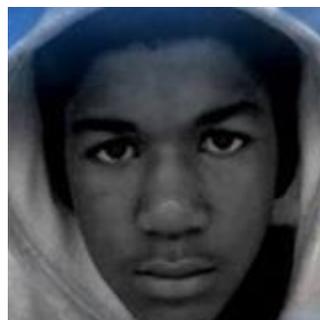
12. THE MARTIN LUTHER KING COALITION IS COMMITTED TO THE PRINCIPLE OF INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY AND IS ESPECIALLY COMMITTED TO SUPPORT FOR THE JUST STRUGGLES OF OPPRESSED NATIONS AND PEOPLES THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.

13. THE MARTIN LUTHER KING COALITION IS OPPOSED TO MILITARISM AND THE MILITARIZATION OF OUR ECONOMY AND SOCIETY.

14. THE MARTIN LUTHER KING COALITION IS COMMITTED TO THE DEFENSE OF CIVIL RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES.

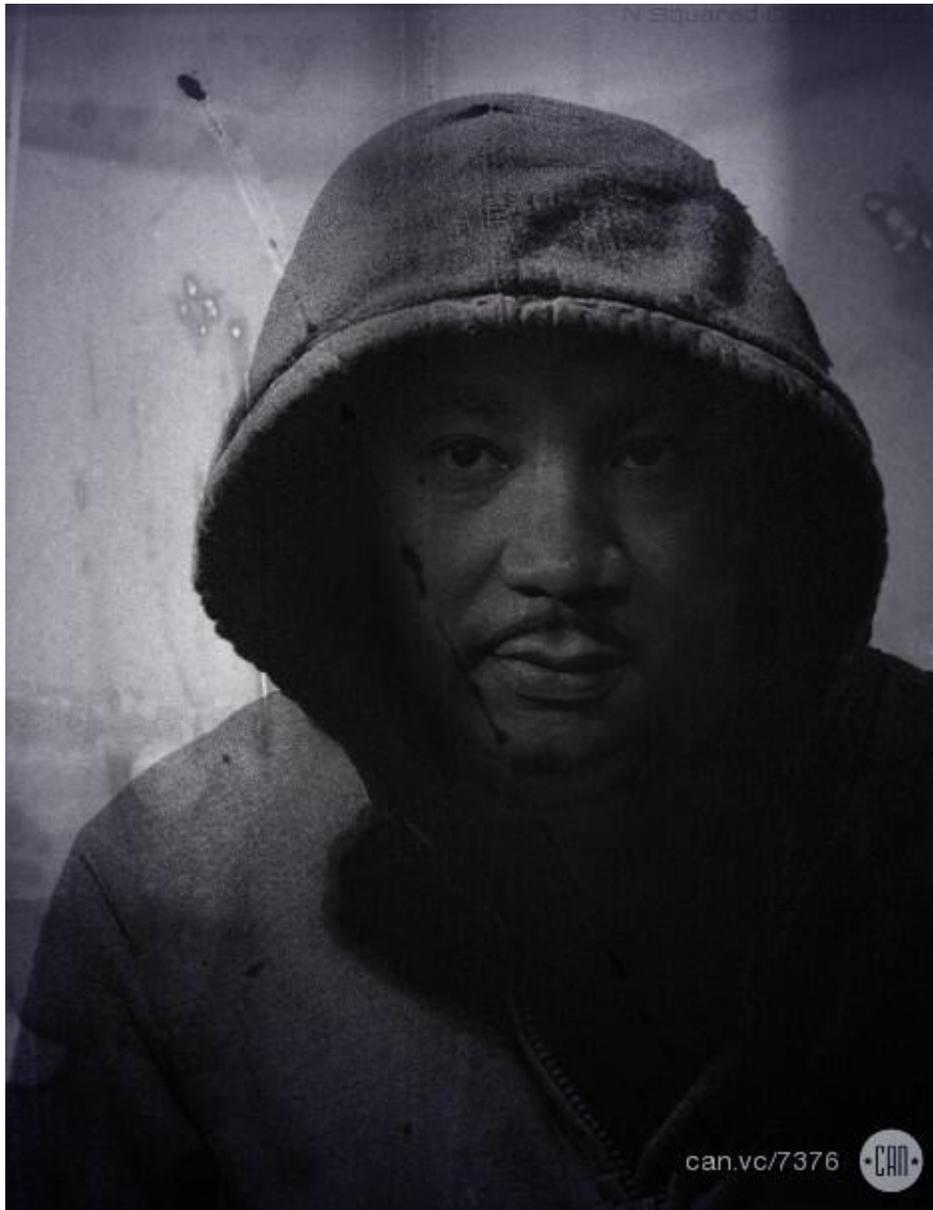
15. THE MARTIN LUTHER KING COALITION IS COMMITTED TO THE FIGHT AGAINST DISCRIMINATION AND REPRESSION OF IMMIGRANTS AND IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES.

16. THE MARTIN LUTHER KING COALITION IS COMMITTED TO DEFENDING THE RIGHTS, INTERESTS, OPTIONS AND FUTURE OF YOUTHS IN OUR SOCIETY.





**MARTIN LUTHER KING COALITION
OF GREATER LOS ANGELES
JOBS, JUSTICE AND PEACE!**



DR. KING DEDICATED HIS ENTIRE LIFE TO THE STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND EQUALITY FOR ALL. HE WORKED AND HE DIED IN THE EFFORT TO MAKE THIS WORLD A BETTER PLACE, BOTH IN HIS OWN TIMES AND FOR GENERATIONS TO COME. LET US REMEMBER AND HONOR HIM BY LIVING AND WORKING IN THAT SAME TRADITION.

--- MLK COALITION OF GREATER LOS ANGELES

(213) 400-9155