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DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING AND THE JEWS

by Marc H. Tanenbaum

The life and monumental career of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. - whose birthday is observed on January 15th - was deeply intertwined with American Jews.

During a memorial observance we held for Dr. King in Atlanta some years ago, his father, the Rev. "Daddy" King, declared with deep emotion, "The Jewish people were the best and most trusted friends of Dr. King and the movement." He then detailed how ~~a~~ ^{an Atlanta} Jewish lawyer and accountant had literally saved the infant civil rights movement from politically-inspired efforts of the Internal Revenue Service to snuff it out.

I first met Dr. King in February 1963. I had the privilege of serving as the program chairman of the ~~the~~ National Conference on Religion and Race ~~held~~ held in Chicago. That ~~was~~ was the first national ecumenical platform at which was forged the alliance of Christians and Jews in support of Dr. King and the movement. The participation of the late Dr. Abraham J. Heschel and Cardinal Meyer of Chicago helped give civil rights moral credibility as well as troops. It was then that the decision was made to hold the August March on Washington

As Jews were committed to him and his moral cause, so was Dr. King a trusted supporter of every major Jewish cause. He vigorously opposed anti-Semitism, advocated the rights of Soviet Jewry, and supported Israel as "one of the great outposts of democracy in the world."

Blacks and Jews today would do well to study together Dr. Martin L. King's vision and words of healing and trusted collaboration.