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Life

MLK & Obama

From "I have a dream" to "Yes we can"

THE NEWS JOURNAL • JANUARY 13, 2009

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By LELAND WARE

Barack Obama's election fulfills one of Martin Luther King's hopes for America. Before the 1960s, Southern officials used fraud and intimidation to prevent African Americans from voting. One of King's campaigns aimed at ending this abuse.

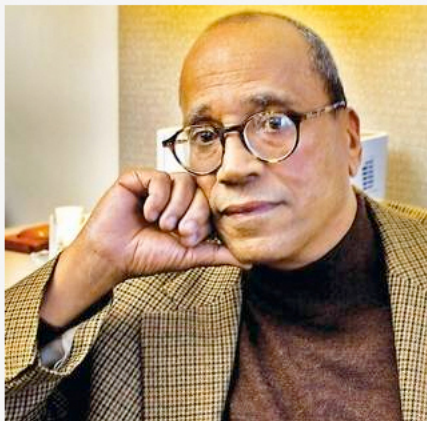
In 1965, after protesters were savagely attacked by police officers in Selma, Alabama, King led 25,000 demonstrators from Selma to Montgomery. King's exposure of voter suppression tactics prompted Congress to enact the Voting Rights Act.

On April 3, 1968, Dr. King spoke in Memphis, Tenn., and said: "I got to Memphis. And some began ... to talk about the threats. ... Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. ... But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. ... And I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land." The next day King was fatally shot by an assassin.

Forty years later, Barack Obama was elected president. In his election night speech, Obama alluded to King's final remarks when he said: "The road ahead will be long. Our climb will be steep. We may not get there in one year, or even one term, but America -- I have never been more hopeful than I am tonight that we will get there. I promise you: We as a people will get there."

Obama's election does not solve all of our racial problems, but it is a realization of one of Dr. King's dreams.

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