

US Gives Tribute to Memory of Martin Luther King, Jr.

The United States honored the memory of Dr. **Martin Luther King Jr.** on Monday by holding tributes and commemorative services, with crowds of people expected to attend events in Atlanta, hometown of the slain civil rights leader.

With the inauguration of President Barack Obama taking place on the same day as the national holiday marking King's birth, among the many events is a so-called watch party at Atlanta's Ebenezer Baptist Church with the events from Washington shown on a giant screen.

A service at the historic church marks the 50 years that have passed since King's "I Have a Dream" speech, which he delivered in Washington in 1963, organizers said. The keynote speaker at the service was the Rev. Samuel Rodriguez, president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference.

Both King and his father, the Rev. Martin Luther King Sr., were pastors at Ebenezer Baptist Church. It sits on Atlanta's historic Auburn Avenue near the King Center, established in 1968 by the slain activist's widow Coretta Scott King, who died in 2006, on the avenue not far from the church is King's grandparents' home, where he was born in 1929.

King, who led the nation's struggle for civil rights and received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964, was assassinated in 1968 in Memphis, Tenn., at age 39.

Nearly a million people visit the King Center each year, viewing an eternal flame honoring King and crypts holding the remains of King and his wife and attending an array of programs promoting non-violent social change.

Around the nation, where Martin Luther King Day has been a federal holiday since 1986, banks, financial markets and government offices were closed.

A march along Atlanta's Auburn Avenue was set for later in the day, and a rally to address such issues as education, housing, peace, justice and voter registration, organizers said.

Also planned was a Day of Service, with an array of community service projects in Atlanta in honor of King.

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