# Social Movement of African American Residents in Hawai‘i: Through Analysis of the Martin Luther King Jr. Day Celebration

**January was designated as the MLK Day celebration week. I utilize two Honolulu daily newspapers, the Honolulu Adviser and the Honolulu Star-Bulletin, which merged in 2010 to form the Honolulu Star-Advertiser, an African American monthly newspaper in Hawai‘i, the Afro-Hawai‘i News, and the annual brochures of MLK Day celebration to analyze their activities. The first part of this essay traces the history of organizers to promote MLK Day celebration activities in Hawai‘i. This part explores how African American residents in Hawai‘i effected the creation of the MLK Day state commission as Coretta King, chair of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Federal Holiday Commission, requested during her visit to Hawai‘i in 1987. Later, it examines how they have carried out the annual celebration events every year up to the present after the state commission concluded its term the office. The second part focuses on the activities during the MLK Day celebration week in Hawai‘i. Richard Merelman has clarified differences between whites- and black-organized MLK Day celebration activities. He argues that while white Americans project black culture positively, they often avoid addressing the issue of white domination and black resistance. On the other hand, African Americans recognize themselves as victims of white supremacy and may fail to embrace political agency that challenges their oppression. By examining each activity, this part considers how MLK Day has been celebrated in Hawai‘i and residents of Hawai‘i have “consumed” or understood King and the Black Freedom Movement. Finally, this paper aims to uncover subjectivities and solidarity of African Americans in Hawai‘i. Due to their small population (2.5 percent of the total population on the islands) and their status as “non-locals,” African Americans have been marginalized in multicultural Hawai‘i. In addition, African American residents are considered as “non-locals” in Hawai‘i because of their association with the military and the socially constructed racial lines between blacks and non-blacks. The “non-local” status has had negatively affected African American residents in Hawai‘i. Kimetta R. Hairston shows African American military dependent school children’s claim that they have to dismiss their own identity as African Americans and follow Hawai‘i’s cultural practices to be included in the local society as they navigate the complexity of race relations beyond black/white racial paradigm.**

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Martin Luther King Jr. dedicated his life to the nonviolent struggle for racial equality in the United States. His legacy still inspires millions. Joining his father as co-pastor of the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, King continued to use his oratorical gifts to urge an end to segregation and legal inequality. Throughout the 1960s, he was arrested during nonviolent protests in Alabama, Florida and Georgia. While incarcerated after one such arrest, in 1963, King penned the Letter from Birmingham City Jail, outlining the moral basis for the civil rights movement. That August, he delivered his famous "I Have a Dream" speech to more than 200,000 people gathered on the National Mall in Washington. (© AP Images). Martin Luther King, Jr. was a social activist and Baptist minister who played a key role in the American civil rights movement from the mid-1950s until his assassination in 1968. King sought equality and human rights for African Americans, the economically disadvantaged and all victims of injustice through peaceful protest. He was the driving force behind watershed events such as the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the 1963 March on Washington, which helped bring about such landmark legislation as the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act. King was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964 and is