

2012 Compilation— Presidential Documents

PROCLAMATIONS

Proclamation 8773 of January 13, 2012

Martin Luther King, Jr., Federal Holiday, 2012

*By the President of the United States of America
A Proclamation*

On a hot summer day nearly half a century ago, an African American preacher with no official title or rank gave voice to our Nation's deepest aspirations, sharing his dream of an America that ensured the true equality of all our people. From the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. inspired a movement that would push our country toward a more perfect Union.

At a time when our Nation was sharply divided, Dr. King called on a generation of Americans to be “voices of reason, sanity, and understanding amid the voices of violence, hatred, and emotion.” His example stirred men and women of all backgrounds to become foot soldiers for justice, and his leadership gave them the courage to refuse the limitations of the day and fight for the prospect of tomorrow. Because these individuals showed the resilience to stand firm in the face of the fiercest resistance, we are the benefactors of an extraordinary legacy of progress.

Today, Dr. King is memorialized on the National Mall where he once spoke, a symbol of how far our Nation has come and a testament to the quiet heroes whose names may never appear in history books, but whose selflessness brought about change few thought possible. Dr. King's memorial reminds us that while the work of realizing his remarkable dream is unending, with persistence, progress is within our reach.

On the Martin Luther King, Jr., Federal Holiday, we celebrate the man who fought for the America he knew was possible. Dr. King's faith in a God who loves all His children and a Nation grounded in the promise of equality

would not let him rest until victory was won. As we work to meet the challenges of our time—from fixing our schools so every child gets a world-class education to ensuring all Americans have access to strong and secure economic opportunity—let us draw strength from Dr. King’s stirring affirmation that “Everybody can be great because everybody can serve.” In his memory, let us continue climbing toward that Promised Land, one more fair and more just for all people.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim January 16, 2012, as the Martin Luther King, Jr., Federal Holiday. I encourage all Americans to observe this day with appropriate civic, community, and service projects in honor of Dr. King, and to visit www.MLKDay.gov to find Martin Luther King, Jr., Day of Service projects across our country.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this thirteenth day of January, in the year of our Lord two thousand twelve, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-sixth.

BARACK OBAMA

Proclamation 8774 of January 13, 2012

Religious Freedom Day, 2012

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

For nearly four centuries, men and women have immigrated to America’s shores in pursuit of religious freedom. Hailing from diverse backgrounds and faiths, countless settlers have shared a simple aspiration—to practice their beliefs free from prejudice and persecution. In 1786, the Virginia General Assembly took a bold step toward preserving this fundamental liberty by passing the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, which brought to life the ideal of religious tolerance from the texts of the Enlightenment in the laws of state. On Religious Freedom Day, we celebrate this historic milestone, reflect upon the Statute’s declaration that “Almighty God hath created the mind free,” and reaffirm that the American people will remain forever unshackled in matters of faith.

Drafted by Thomas Jefferson, the Virginia Statute formed the basis for the First Amendment, which has preserved religious freedom for both believers and non-believers for over 220 years. As our Nation has grown, so too has its diversity of faiths, cultures, and traditions; today, individuals of rich and varied beliefs call America home and seek to follow their consciences in peace. Our long history of religious tolerance and pluralism has strengthened our country, helped create a vibrant civil society, and remained true to the principles enshrined in our founding documents.

Our Nation is committed to religious liberty not only for all Americans, but also for individuals around the world. Internationally, we bear witness to those who live in fear of violence and discrimination because of their beliefs. My Administration continues to stand with all who are denied the