

Vera Taylor and Spencer Cause march down Rev. JJ Evans Boulevard in Long Beach on Monday.



NEWSDAY / HOWARD SCHNAPP

‘MARCH FORWARD’

King’s legacy celebrated in LI, NYC ceremonies, service

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Through service, activism and song, Long Islanders celebrated the legacy of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. on Monday, observing what would have been his 96th birthday.

The civil rights leader’s message of peace and justice re-

sounded with people who spent the day echoing his words and helping others. And the inauguration of President Donald Trump, happening simultaneously in Washington, D.C., seemed to loom large in the minds of some participants as they looked to the next four years.

In Long Beach, a crowd of several dozen people bundled up against the bitter cold to

walk in the annual MLK Commemorative March along West Park Avenue to the MLK Community Center on Riverside Boulevard.

“It is imperative, it’s urgent,” James Hodge, former chair of the center, said about honoring King.

“It’s important we don’t go backwards,” Hodge said, referring to challenges to voting rights and other issues impacting Black Americans today. “We have to continue to march forward with the strength of our ancestors and all those that fought so hard for us.”

Rahsaan Cruse Jr., of Long Beach, one of the grand mar-

shals of the parade, said it is vital to remember the civil rights battles his grandparents and great-grandparents and others went through.

“We are still in a time still fighting for our rights, a lot of things are in danger of being taken away from us,” said Cruse, 21.

Gov. Kathy Hochul was in New York City on Monday to speak at the annual Brooklyn Tribute to Martin Luther King Jr. at the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

She recalled the impact King had on her as a child and her large Irish Catholic family in Buffalo.

“My parents were social justice Catholics . . . marching against the war, marching for civil rights,” Hochul told the crowd. “They had their little kids, all of us, part of this journey.”

The day King was assassinated in 1968, nearly 10-year-old Hochul and her family “held hands, we prayed and we cried because we knew we lost one of the great ones.”

She noted that after King was arrested in Birmingham, Alabama, he continued to motivate people with his powerful messages against discrimina-

See MLK on A2

SPEAKERS STRESS

Daughter warns about danger of 'anti-woke' view

The Associated Press

ATLANTA — A massive 70-member choir belted out “Hallelujah” to open a Martin Luther King Jr. Day service Monday at his former congregation in Atlanta, followed by a stern message from his youngest daughter warning against anti-woke rhetoric.

The service at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta was among the most prominent commemorations of King planned across the country Monday. It also included seven people at the front of the stage holding large signs proclaiming “JUSTICE” “FREEDOM” and “DEMOCRACY.”

“We are living in a time when anti-woke rhetoric has become a weapon to divide us and distract us from the real issues of injustice,” King’s daughter, the Rev. Bernice King, said. “To be woke is to be aware of oppression and commitment to justice.”

The MLK holiday was half of the nation’s double-duty Monday: The inauguration of President Donald Trump created mixed feelings on King’s day for civil rights leaders who have opposed Trump’s rhetoric and stances on race and civil rights.

The keynote speaker at Ebenezer then made a reference to Trump, saying he had heard “that somebody had won a mandate.”

“I don’t care who you are, if you win 60% of the vote, you never win a mandate to violate justice,” said the Rev. William Barber II, co-chair of the Poor People’s Campaign. “You never win a mandate to hurt people.”

But in Washington, in a speech after taking the oath of office, Trump noted the significance of the King holiday.

“In his honor, we will strive together to make his dream a reality,” Trump said.

Ebenezer is where King was baptized as a child and ordained at 19 years old. He became the congregation’s copastor in 1960 alongside his father, the Rev. Martin Luther King Sr. King remained in that role until his assassination in 1968, and his funeral was held

at the church.

The church is now part of the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historical Park & Preservation District, which includes The King Center.

Monday marks the third time in the nearly 40 years since the federal King holiday became law that it coincided with a presidential inauguration. Presidents Bill Clinton and Barack Obama also were sworn in for their second terms on the holiday, which is the third Monday in January. King was born on Jan. 15, 1929.

King worried for solidarity

King himself worried the legal protections he dedicated his life to realizing would not be followed by greater anti-discrimination efforts or social programs. The celebrated Black civil rights leader proposed it would take white Americans embracing a deeper kinship with Black Americans and engaging in economic and social solidarity to see change.

There was a heavy security presence outside the Atlanta church, where more than two dozen police officers from across metro Atlanta stood guard with all-terrain vehicles,

On King Day, LI, NY events

MLK from A1

tion and hatred, and she referred to expected challenges in the next four years under Trump.

“If a young man can do that from a jail with no hope in front of him, we can raise up my friends, as a community, as a people, as New Yorkers and say, ‘We’ll fight for our rights with every fiber of our being,’” Hochul said. “So whatever comes our way for the next four years, we are ready.”

In Commack, about 40 volunteers gathered at the Suffolk Y Jewish Community Center to prepare more than 100 fresh, kosher meals for homebound seniors in surrounding communities, said Bat-Sheva Slavin, director of Jewish education for the Center for Jewish Life and Learning at the Suffolk Y JCC.



The Thea Bowman Gospel Choir sings Monday during the Martin Luther King Day of Service event at the Suffolk Y JCC in Commack.

They handled trays of homemade marinated chicken and chocolate brownies cooking in commercial-sized ovens, drizzling oil and seasonings over chopped vegetables. Nearby, chil-

dren colored cards that would accompany every hot meal.

“We feel this brings together the values that Dr. King taught with our Jewish values of ‘tzedakah,’ of ‘charitable giving,’

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