

## Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee Host Mr. Ovide Duncantell at MLK Memorial

Written by Forward Times Staff  
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The Martin Luther King Jr. National Memorial stands in tribute to Dr. King's enduring message of hope, non-violence, and the tireless pursuit of justice. Through his perseverance and moral leadership, Dr. King helped make our nation, which had been painfully divided into separate and unequal parts, whole.

"Dr. MLK with no official rank or title who somehow gave voice to our deepest dreams and our most lasting ideals, a man who stirred our conscience and thereby helped make our union more perfect... If he were alive today, I believe he would remind us that the unemployed worker can rightly challenge the excesses of Wall Street without demonizing all who work there; that the businessman can enter tough negotiations with his company's union without vilifying the right to collectively bargain," commented President Barack Obama.

"The day was a sobering, chilling and joyous occasion. To be surrounded by those whose shoulders we stood on for so long and to note that they were able to be at this monumental occasion, including Dr. Joseph Lowery and Dr. Cotton who participated in this movement, was in itself a more than satisfying experience. To further have the opportunity to march for jobs and speak to throngs of people the day before the commemoration helped me recommit to Dr. King's enduring message in spite of opposition, in spite of distractions and chords of discords, the values of this nation must prevail. Everyone should be free and everyone should have the opportunity for success. In these tough times I now understand that the vulnerable cannot be the brunt of our political dissension in Washington and everyone, the rich and poor alike, must draw together to provide this nation with a pathway forward. The American Jobs Act must pass. We must make the necessary cuts with responsibility and raise the necessary revenue with responsibility. We owe this to Dr. King's legacy. As I said in Washington on Saturday we cannot turn back," commented Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee.

Thru the leadership of Harry Johnson and Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated the monument was established to oversee the development of the memorial project, the Washington, D.C. Martin Luther King, Jr. National Memorial Project Foundation, Inc is a non-profit fundraising arm of the fraternity. The foundations mission is to commemorate the life and work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. by leading a collaborative funding, design and construction

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process in the creation of a memorial to honor his national and international contributions to world peace through non-violent social change. As a Member of the Homeland Security Committee, Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee worked closely with Interior Secretary Salazar in order to expedite the security permitting that had been bogged down for a long period of time. Expediting those permits enabled the construction schedule to move forward to meet the time frame set for the grand celebration.

The story of Dr. King is pressed upon the Congresswoman. She is reminded of her work with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and the SCOPE program for college students and she remembers hearing Dr. King's inspiring words before that time and before his death fill a great void in our nation, and answered our collective longing to become a country that truly lived by its noblest principles. She was the only person from her college that worked in this program that allowed her to work with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in South Carolina, North Carolina, Georgia and Alabama. Yet, Dr. King knew that it wasn't enough just to talk the talk, that he had to walk the walk for his words to be credible. And so we remember this man of action, who put his life on the line for freedom and justice every day.

Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee had Ovide Duncantell join her in Washington, DC for this past weekend's dedication because he is an integral part of why this monument was built. Comcast of Houston, the main sponsor of the recent Gospel of Heritage Program in Houston sponsored Mr. Duncantell's trip to this great event. Mr. Duncantell did not start out to organize a parade. He continues to be a fighter. Mr. Duncantell is an activist who believes in going through what he has to in order to make sure justice is served. Mr. Duncantell was fortunate to meet the Reverend Martin Luther King, Sr. in 1978. The Reverend Martin Luther King, Sr.. was one of the first guests of the Black Heritage Society to visit Houston in regards to the naming of the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Street. That 1978 meeting transformed him. Mr. Ducantell through his hard work and dedication has made sure the heritage and memory of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. still lives on in the Houston area.

"It was an enjoyable event and historical event and I want to thank the Congresswoman for making it all possible. It was one the most enjoyable days of my life," commented Mr. Ducantell.

It is fitting, even poetic, that among those who dedicated the memorial this weekend was the first African American President of the United States. This milestone and the daily contributions to our society by African Americans leaders and pioneers in public service, business, science, education, and the arts form a living tribute greater than any fashioned in stone. Today, Americans of all races and creeds are working together to translate Dr. King's dream into reality. October 16, 2011 marked the official dedication of the Martin Luther King Jr. memorial.

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In this new century, faced with new challenges, Dr. King's words are just as meaningful, and his message of hope, even in the face of seemingly endless darkness, is just as urgent.

Dr. King's historic efforts for civil rights, and the legacy he left for the nation transformed racial equality in America, yet there is still much work to be done. Too many minorities are adversely affected by poverty, unemployment and homelessness. Too many inner city schools that serve minority populations are crumbling and too many African Americans experience racial inequality. Yet in the face of this ongoing struggle, Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee was reminded of the words of Dr. King, inscribed on the memorial dedicated to his achievements, and Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee is certain that hope is alive, and that hope is real. Despite the challenges we face, as individuals and as a nation, despite instability, in our homes, and across the globe, hope remains. In the words of Dr. King, 'we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope'.{jcomments on}