

Annual Martin Luther King Jr. parade to honor longtime organizer

Some 2,000 marchers are expected in the Waikiki event that ends with a unity rally

By Deborah Manog
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Monday's Martin Luther King Jr. Day Parade is dedicated to the late William S. Rushing, who had devoted himself to organizing the local march since its inception more than two decades ago.

The 27th Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day Parade kicks off at Ala Moana Beach and culminates in an all-day unity rally at Kapiolani Park.

"This parade was his baby," said Rushing's wife, Patricia Anthony, president of the Hawaii Martin Luther King Jr. Coalition, which organizes the event. Rushing died Dec. 23.

The "People's Parade" features at least 60 organizations, including church groups, veterans and local unions — an estimated 2,000 marchers.

"This holiday represents all of the work that everyone put into the civil rights movement," said Marsha Joyner, a spokeswoman for the coalition. "Martin Luther King Jr. is a symbol for all of their struggles."

Hawaii was among the last three states to observe the holiday after President Ronald Reagan signed Martin Luther King Jr. Day into law in 1983.

Alice Talbott, who helped to spearhead the local movement for an official holiday in Hawaii, remembers collecting signatures in the hope that she and her future grandchildren would one day walk the streets of Waikiki as a tribute to the

slain civil rights leader.

Joyner says about 20 different ethnic groups campaigned for the holiday until then-Gov. John Waihee proclaimed the first Martin Luther King Jr. Day in Hawaii in 1989.

"It gives me chicken skin," said Talbott, about the vision turned reality. She and her grandchildren march in the parade every year.

Before the event, the Rev. Walter Brownridge, dean at St. Andrew's Cathedral, intends to ride with sanitation workers Monday morning during their rubbish pickup in remembrance of King, who was assassinated while supporting Memphis garbage workers on strike.

The unity rally continues all day following the parade, bringing the Kapiolani bandstand to life with music, entertainment, food and a children's playground area.

HOLIDAY HAPPENINGS

Martin Luther King Jr. events that are free and open to the public include:

Sunday

>> **The Queen & Dr. King concert:** The Royal Hawaiian Band performs a tribute at 2 p.m. at Kapiolani Park. (Rescheduled from Friday, as listed on the band's website)

>> **Hawaii island festivities:** Informational displays, social hour, potluck, live entertainment and personal reflections on King and the civil rights movement at Old Airport Beach Park in Kailua-Kona. For more information, call Kathy at 808-325-5252 or Virginia at 808-325-1112.

Monday

>> **27th Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day Parade & Unity Rally:** Sponsored by the Hawaii Martin Luther King Jr. Coalition, featuring local dignitaries, bands, 35 vehicles and 2,000 marchers. 9 a.m. from Ala Moana Beach Park to Kapiolani Park. The unity rally continues with entertainment, ethnic food and community booths.

>> **Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Service & Hawaii Peacemaker Award:**

Crossroads United Church of Christ joint service with St. Andrew's Cathedral at 7 pm. This year the peacemaker award goes to Ellen Godbey Carson, a member of Crossroads and a well-known civil rights attorney in Honolulu. Reception in Weaver Hall after the service.

>> **Wailuku, Maui, march:** Beginning at 8:30 a.m. with an opening ceremony and a march to follow. The public is encouraged to bring a lei to adorn the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Stone of Hope monument. For more information, see www.africanamericansonmaui.com or call Ayin at 276-6864.

>> **Kauai celebration:** Sponsored by the Interfaith Roundtable of Kauai, the annual celebration at the Lihue Neighborhood Center from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. features lunch, music, a video on King's life and guest speakers. For more information, see www.interfaithroundtableofkauai.org or call Jeffrey at 634-9992.