

KING IN VIRGINIA

Working Timeline of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Visits to Virginia

Summer 1953 - Richmond

Sources: [6/10/1960 letter from Walter Fauntroy to MLK](#); [King Institute Timeline for Summer 1953](#)

Location: Virginia Union University

Details: King attended and spoke at an interseminary conference at Virginia Union University

September 27, 1956 – Hampton

Sources: [10/3/1956 Letter from MLK to Sylvester S. Robinson](#); [King Institute Timeline for Sept. 27](#); [Photo](#) [check Hampton University Archival and Museum Collection]

Location: Hampton Institute

Details: Speaking engagement

October 5, 1956 – Petersburg

Sources: [Walker recalls the days of working with King \(Citizens' Voice\)](#); [MLK, Petersburg had special connection \(Progress-Index\)](#); [9/25/1956 Letter from Harold Edward Pinkston to MLK](#); [12/20/1956 Letter from MLK to Wyatt Tee Walker](#); [King Institute Timeline](#)

Location: Mt. Olivet Baptist Church

Event: 21st annual convention of the Virginia State NAACP

Details: Invited by Wyatt Tee Walker. MLK stayed at Walker's home in Petersburg. Gave a talk on "Desegregation in the Future."

November 2, 1956 - Richmond

Sources: [Four Thousand Teachers To Open VTA Meet Oct. 31\(Norfolk Journal and Guide\)](#); [Letter from MLK to Wyatt Tee Walker 12/20/1956](#)

Location: Belgian Building, Virginia Union University

Event: 69th annual convention of the Virginia Teachers Association, Oct. 31 - Nov. 2

Details: Three-day session, Dr. King spoke on Friday afternoon on "Facing the Challenge of a New Age"

February 27, 1957 – Richmond

Sources: [King Institute Timeline for Feb 27](#); [King Institute Timeline for Feb 28](#); and [King Institute Timeline for March 1](#); Negro Leader to Speak Here. (1957, February 21) *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, p. 3.

Location: Virginia Union University

Details: Preaches "Remember Who You Are" (Feb. 27), "Going Forward by Going Backward," (Feb. 28), and "Three Dimensions of a Complete Life" (March 1) as part of VUU's annual Week of Prayer.

March 1957 – Petersburg

Source: [MLK, Petersburg had special connection \(Progress-Index\)](#)

Location: Foster Hall (talk) and Jones Hall (banquet), Virginia State College

January 2, 1958 - Newport News

Sources: [Montgomery's Rev. King In Newport News: 'Two Worlds: The Dying Old, The Emerging New \(Norfolk Journal and Guide\)](#); [Recalling King in Newport News \(RTD\)](#)

Location: First Baptist Church (now First Church of Newport News)

Event: Annual Emancipation Celebration program

Details: Spoke on "Facing the Challenge of a New Age"

January 1, 1959 - endorsement of Pilgrimage of Prayer, Richmond (not a VA visit)

Sources: [Dr. M.L. King Joins Pilgrimage Supporters \(Norfolk Journal and Guide\)](#), [12-3-1958 Letter from MLK to Virginia Ministers: "Dear Brother in Christ"](#), [1-16-1959 Letter from Wyatt Tee Walker to MLK](#)

Event: Pilgrimage of Prayer, protesting closing of VA public schools

Details: King sent a letter (dated Dec. 3, 1958) to churches across the state asking for participation in the march to protest the closing of public schools. King wrote, "Today is a day for great men, great ideas, great movements, a day of new self-esteem and dignity for Negro Americans; a day for all Virginians of good will to speak to our millions of disenfranchised and disinherited brothers all over the world. Virginia, in this critical hour, has the opportunity to give direction and destiny to our troubled South. As Virginia goes, so goes the South, perhaps America, and the world." The January 1, 1959 march was organized by the state NAACP, the Congress for Racial Equality, and the SCLC. A 7-minute pre-recorded message from King was played at the march.

January 1, 1960 - Richmond

Location: The Mosque (now Altria Theater); Virginia State Capitol

Event: Pilgrimage of Prayer and March on Capitol

Sources: [Expect 5,000 At Prayer Pilgrimage \(Norfolk Journal and Guide\)](#); [Open School, Marchers Ask Almond: Dr. M.L. King Heard by 2,600 Virginia Pilgrims](#); [AP Photo](#) / [MLK timeline](#)

Summary: Rally urging Governor Almond to use his emergency powers to open Prince Edward county schools. MLK: "Nothing is more sublime than suffering and sacrificing for a great cause." "Attempting to resist integration today is like standing against a tidal wave... it is an unstoppable movement." "We will wear you down by our capacity to suffer, and in the process we will win your hearts." "We stand on the threshold of the most constructive period in the nation's history in race relations. We stand on the Promise Land of Integration." Rally was followed by a march on the State Capitol.

Early June 1960 – Petersburg

Source: [MLK, Petersburg had special connection \(Progress-Index\)](#); [6-10-1960 Letter from Walter E. Fautroy to MLK](#)

Details: MLK recruited members for executive staff, announced at Gillfield Baptist Church that Rev. Wyatt Tee Walker would go with him to Atlanta (related: [3/5/1960 letter offering Wyatt Tee Walker position as SCLC executive director](#)). Dorothy Cotton also went to Atlanta. MLK spoke at June 1 meeting of Petersburg Improvement Association.

June 30, 1961 - Norfolk

Sources: [In Changing World: "It's Non-Violence, Or Non-Existence" \(Norfolk Journal and Guide\)](#); [Rev. King to Address Rally in Norfolk June 30 \(Norfolk Journal and Guide\)](#); [Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Visits Norfolk \(Norfolk Public Library\)](#)

Location: City Arena (now Harrison Opera House)

Event: rally sponsored by Virginia Christian Leadership Conference

Details: Addressed an audience of 2,500. Dr. Milton A. Reid also attended. (A previously scheduled visit in October 1958 was cancelled when he was attacked while autographing books in NYC.) MLK: "It is non-violence or non-existence." "If America is to remain a first class nation, it can't have second class citizens."

March 27-29, 1962 – Tour of Virginia

Sources: [Rev. King Heads 'Crusade' in Virginia's 4th District \(Norfolk Journal and Guide\)](#); [Push Creative Protest, Dr. Martin King Urges \(Norfolk Journal and Guide\)](#); [Dr. Martin L. King To Make Tour Of Virginia \(Norfolk Journal and Guide\)](#); [Dr. King's Speech at E.C. Glass H.S. \(Lynchburg Public Library\)](#); [MLK in Lynchburg \(Lynchburg Public Library\)](#); MLK essay after his visit: [Virginia's Black Belt \(N.Y. Amsterdam News\)](#)

Location: Fourth Congressional District (Petersburg, Hopewell, Lynchburg, and Prince Edward); Dinwiddie, Prince George, Chesterfield (need to confirm)

Event: Lectures, voter registration drive, trial of Rev. Curtis West Harris

Details: Tour of Virginia's Fourth Congressional District in support of a voter registration drive.

Gave an address in Lynchburg at E.C. Glass high school, sponsored by the Lynchburg Improvement Association.

Led a delegation of ministers and laymen to Hopewell for contempt trial of Rev. Curtis West Harris, after he refused to give names to Virginia Legislative Committee.

Virginia State College - Spoke Wednesday, March 28, to 2,000 students, staff, and visitors. MLK: "There is no need for immoral means to achieve moral ends."

Tour ended at First Baptist Church of Petersburg on March 28.

Trial of Rev. Harris set for March 29.

MLK: "The strongest resource that is possessed by those of us desiring to see an America free of racism is our strength in numbers." "Whenever a fighter for freedom, such as Rev. Mr. Harris, is under attack, every available person ought to witness with his person two fundamental concepts: His opposition to the persecution of those who believe segregation is an intolerable evil, and his unqualified support of those whose lives are a living embodiment of the necessity of striving toward freedom."

June 26, 1962 – Williamsburg

Sources: [Martin Luther King Jr. Stopped in Williamsburg to Spread His Civil Rights Message \(Williamsburg Yorktown Daily\)](#), [Photo](#)

Location: First Baptist Church on Scotland Street

Event: speaking event

June 28, 1962 – Newport News

Sources: [Recalling King in Newport News \(RTD\)](#); [Dr. Martin L. King Will Speak In Newport News \(Norfolk Journal and Guide\)](#)

Location: First Baptist Church (now First Church of Newport News)

Event: Southern Christian Leadership Conference Fund for Freedom Drive

Summary: Spoke to an audience of 700 at the church.

March 18, 1963 – [Telegram from MLK to Sen. Robert Kennedy](#), requesting investigation into inadequate police protection in Petersburg and use of police dogs on peaceful demonstrators. [Telegram to Governor Albertis Harrison](#).

March 25, 1963 – Charlottesville

Sources: [White Moderates Must Speak Out, Says King \(Norfolk Journal and Guide\)](#); [Plaque to Honor Martin Luther King Jr.'s 1963 Visit to U.Va. \(Cavalier Daily\)](#); [King Will Discuss Integration Future \(Cavalier Daily\)](#); [King, Martin Luther \(Cavalier Daily\)](#); [Martin Luther King at 81 \(La Crosse Tribune\)](#); [A Life, A Legacy: Dr. Wesley King Talks about Dr. King's Visit to UVA \(UVA Magazine\)](#); [Failure's brink: How MLK snatched success in Charlottesville \(The Hook\)](#); [MLK@UVA](#)

Location: Old Cabell Hall, University of Virginia

Event: Speaking event

Details: Spoke to audience of 900 (did not fill the auditorium). MLK: Tragedy is not the "strident clamor of the bad people but the appalling silence of the good people" "Segregation is a cancer...which must be removed."

From MLK in Charlottesville: "In fact, as the Cavalier Daily reminded readers, King had not been allowed to speak at Washington and Lee College (now University) in nearby Lexington the previous year." "Conspicuously absent were University officials– not only administrators, but members of the Student Council as well. In 1963, King was not, Gaston explains, 'someone who was really safe to celebrate.'"

Verify: March 26, 1963 – Danville

Source: [What is Bloody Monday and Why Don't We Know About It](#)

Details: Audience of 2,500

June 28, 1963 – Suffolk

Sources: [Martin Luther King Jr. – Suffolk VA \(Virginia Pilot, includes photos\)](#); [Additional Virginia Pilot Photos](#); [Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. addressed an estimated crowd of 7,500 at Peanut Park \(blog post\)](#)

Location: Union Hall, East Washington Street (press conference); Peanut Hall (talk)

Event: SCLC Rally

July 11, 1963 – Danville

Sources: [Danville Fears H-Bomb? Just Visit by Dr. King \(Norfolk Journal and Guide\)](#); [Speech in Danville \(video\)](#); [King's Visits to Danville recalled \(News Advance\)](#); [Residents Reflect on MLK's 1963 Visit to Danville \(WSET News\)](#)

Location: High Street Baptist Church

Event: speaking event; response to police violence in Danville

Details: MLK: Spoke after "Bloody Monday" (June 10, 1963) in Danville. "Wherever injustice is alive, it is a responsibility for people of good will to take a stand against it." "As long as the Negro is not free in Danville, Virginia, the Negro is not free anywhere in the United States of America."

August 1963 – [Photo: Richmonders boarding bus on Leigh Street to attend March on Washington \(RTD\)](#)

September 24-27, 1963 – Richmond

Sources: ['Freedom Now' Is Ringing Theme for SLC Session In Virginia \(Norfolk Journal and Guide\)](#); [SCLC Convention Program](#); [Photo \(RTD\)](#)

Location: Virginia Union University, Belgian Building

Event: 7th Annual Southern Christian Leadership Conference

Details: As president of the SCLC, MLK attended the conference and spoke on the final evening (Friday, Sept. 27) of the conference at Virginia Union University.

Verify: May 28, 1964 – Arlington

Source: [Draft remarks](#)

Event: World March Toward Human Rights Luncheon of the Legal Education Defense Fund, Inc. of the NAACP

Location: Americana Hotel

July 2, 1965 - Petersburg

Sources: [‘Can’t Beat Communism With Guns,’ Says King \(Norfolk Journal and Guide\)](#), [SCLC Program, Dr. King Calls for End to War in Viet Nam \(Richmond Times Dispatch\)](#), [Photo \(RTD\)](#)

Location: Virginia State College Athletic Stadium

Event: First convention of the Virginia branch of Southern Christian Leadership Conference

Details: Speaking to an audience of 2,000, MLK urged an end to the Vietnam war, and suggested the possibility of using teach-ins and peace rallies to protest the war. MLK: “We can beat communism with democracy, if we can make democracy work.”

October 29, 1966 - Norfolk (“Whirlwind Visit”)

Source: [Dr. King Scheduled for Whirlwind Visit Sunday \(Norfolk Journal and Guide\)](#), [Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Visits Norfolk \(Norfolk Public Library\)](#)

Location: New Calvary Baptist Church

Event: Installation services of Dr. Milton A. Reid

Details: Attended installation services, followed by press conference with reporters and NSC students. Dr. King’s last visit to Norfolk. Less than 3-hour visit.

June 2, 1967 - Petersburg

Sources: [Dr. King Will Speak at Banquet At VSC June 2 \(Norfolk Journal and Guide\)](#); [MLK, Petersburg had special connection \(Progress-Index\)](#)

Location: Jones Hall, Virginia State College

Event: Banquet to honor Rev. Dr. Curtis West Harris

Details: Invited by Hopewell Improvement Foundation. King gave 45-minute address.

March 30, 1968 - Norfolk, Suffolk, Southside (Lunenburg, Mecklenburg, Charlotte, Amelia, Brunswick, Nottoway) - planned tour but didn’t go (went to Memphis, assassinated April 4)

Sources: [To Norfolk, Suffolk On Va. Tour \(Norfolk Journal and Guide\)](#); [Dr. King To Be Speaker At Voters’ League Meet \(Norfolk Journal and Guide\)](#); [Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Visits Norfolk \(Norfolk Journal and Guide\)](#); [King to Visit Southside Va.](#); King Will Address Rally at City Church (1968, March 21) *Richmond Times Dispatch*, p. C-3.; King Delays Virginia Visit Because of Memphis Riot (1968, March 30) *Richmond Times Dispatch*, p. 1.;

Details: Intended to visit several cities to encourage participation at Poor People’s March on Washington, but cancelled to go to Memphis for sanitation workers’ strike.

April 1968 – [Photo: Broad Street blocked off by police after assassination \(RTD\)](#)

Virginia Roads, Parks, Etc.

- Hampton: Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard runs from Franklin Boulevard north, skirting the grounds of the Hampton VA Medical Center.
- Harrisonburg: Martin Luther King Jr. Way loops around the south side of Harrisonburg, from US 33 on its east end, to Virginia State Route 42 at its western terminus.
- Louisa: Louisa honors King's memory with Martin Luther King Lane, a short cul-de-sac running north off West Street.
- Norfolk: US 58 is designated the Martin Luther King Freeway as it passes through the two-lane Midtown Tunnel (Virginia).
- Petersburg: Martin Luther King Drive runs south off East River Road on the west side of Petersburg.
- Richmond: Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Bridge (formerly Leigh Street Viaduct connecting Shockoe Valley and Downtown Richmond).
- Hampton University; Martin Luther King, Jr. Building
- Spring Grove: VA 40 south out of Spring Grove is designated the Martin Luther King Highway. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_streets_named_after_Martin_Luther_King_Jr.#Virginia)
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Park Picnic Area, 8115 Fordson Road, Alexandria, VA
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Christian Church, 11400 North Shore Drive, Reston, Virginia 20195, (<http://mlkchristianchurch.org/>)
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School, 1000 Mosby Street, Richmond, Virginia
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Bridge and Statue, Roanoke, Virginia (<https://www.visitroanokeva.com/listings/martin-luther-king-jr-memorial-bridge-and-statue/8749/>)