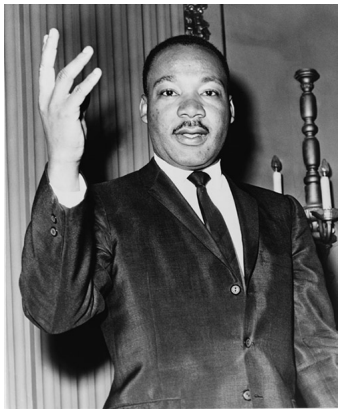






p style="text-align: center;">**Marchers brave cold, rain**

A man stood along East Historic Highway 66 and stared as people filled the front entrance of the Gallup Cultural Center in the early afternoon of Jan. 16. Others slowed their cars and

watched as people begin to walk, mostly silently, to Gallup's Larry B. Mitchell Recreational Center on East Montoya Boulevard.

The procession, held annually in honor of the late slain civil rights leader the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., began with an inter-faith prayer circle of people of various religious denominations and culminated with speakers and a dance performance at the Mitchell Center.

The theme of this year's event was "Community Togetherness."

"I don't know of any other event in Gallup that brings together so many people in January," event organizer Mona Frazier said. "This is always a great moment."

At the Gallup Cultural Center, close to 100 participants listened as retired educator and artist Dana Chandler read an excerpt from King's "The Inner Truth." The speech was given at the Riverside Church in New York City in 1967. Originally from Boston, Chandler is a retired sociology professor from Simmons College in Boston.

"I was at the march on Washington in 1963," Chandler said. "I remember those days. They aren't too far gone. I look forward to the time when we can move beyond marching and open up a dialogue about those things that divide us."

After the march, about 200 people gathered at the Mitchell Center for a slate of speakers. Gallup City Councilor Allan Landavazo gave brief opening remarks and Danielle Hutchinson, a student at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque, sang the National Anthem. Cal Curley, the field representative for U.S. Senator Tom Udall, D-New Mexico, greeted those in attendance.

The meaning of the march and speaker session was felt and understood by everyone in attendance.

“He was a great man, a very great man,” Gerald O’Hara, a Pennsylvania native and long-time Gallup resident and a candidate for a seat on the Gallup-McKinley County Board of Education, said.

“I don’t think anyone can say enough about Martin Luther King. Just a great person,” he said.

Brenda Hollingsworth-Marley of the New Mexico Humanities Council of Albuquerque gave a short presentation called, “Footsteps to Freedom.” Hollingsworth-Marley’s presentation focused on the civil rights struggles during the 1960s – specifically the roles of women such as Rosa Parks and Coretta Scott King.

Mary Ellen Pellington, city library director and a former keynote speaker at the event, called the march and presentations a precursor to what the library does for the public in February, which is Black History Month.

While marching to the Larry B. Mitchell Center, Jedidiah Tsinnijannie, 9, carried a black and white sign that read, “Stand Up for Your Rights.” He was attending with his parents and sister.

“It’s my sign,” the youngster said. “Martin Luther King.”

The entire event saw members of Gallup’s black community, the Muslim community, Native Americans, Hispanics, and whites participate. Also attending either the Gallup Cultural Center march and Mitchell Center tribute were Gallup City Councilor Fran Palochak, Veterans Helping Veterans, and the Rev. Ruth Gilbert of Howard Chapel, among many others.

King was a civil rights pioneer who was assassinated in April 1968 in Memphis. Frazier, who is originally from New Orleans, and Chandler, noted that King’s message is more important today than ever, considering the political and economic divides throughout the world.

By Bernie Dotson

Sun Correspondent