Martin Luther King Jr NHP

YouGuides Tour Transcript

1. Auburn Avenue

You're inside of Auburn Avenue. This is the community that Dr. King grew up in. The neighborhood of Dr. King grew up in was a very progressive neighborhood. This neighborhood at one time was considered to be one of your wealthiest African American neighborhoods in the United States. They had about four or five black millionaires come off the street. Originally what happened was the blacks that owned their own businesses in the downtown district of Atlanta, they was kicked out of that district. This was the only area they could go to to start their own business. So since their backs was against the walls and they had no one else to support them, they started their own insurance companies, their own banks, funeral homes, newspapers, radio stations, and pharmacies. And what made this community so successful was, if you own your own insurance company and I own my own bank, you made me the chairman of board of your insurance company, while I made you the chairman of board of my bank.

2. Charles L. Harper Home

Currently we're in front of the Charles L. Harper home. This house was occupied by one of the first African American principals in the city of Atlanta. He was a principal at Booker T. Washington High School, but as you can see, his house was right on the same street that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. grew up on.

3. Bryant Preparatory School

This area that we're in right now is the Bryant Preparatory School. The Bryant Preparatory School played a very important role in Dr. King's life because Dr. King's father was attending this school when he met Dr. King's mother. And he met Dr. King's mother on the front porch as he was walking by and he talked to her and then, you know, the rest is history.

4. Queen Annes

So we're in Dr. King's neighborhood, and one of the things that the National Park Service did was they preserved the neighborhood and put it back to the original way it was when Dr. King was here. So as you walk up and down the street, the sidewalks are put back in 1930s. The homes that you see are painted back to the 1930 period. What they did was they went down and it kept on chipping the paint until they got down to the last color. Once they reached the last color, that's the color of the homes that they painted. These homes are what they call Queen Anne Victorian style homes. Your well-to-do would have lived on this end of the street.

5. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr's Birthplace

We're currently in front of the birth home of Dr. Martin Luther King's. This is the house that Dr. King's grandparents purchased in 1909. They paid $3,500 for this house, where they was charged a monthly mortgage was $30 a month for the next 100 months, with a $500 down payment. Dr. King lived in this house with his parents, his grandparents, and he had an aunt and uncle. Dr. King's parents lived upstairs,

while his grandparents, the Williams family, lived downstairs. And the room Dr. King was born inside is upstairs on the second level.

6. Neighborhood

This is Dr. King's home, but this is also the community that he grew up in. And the community Dr. King grew up in was pretty interesting. If you just take a look at the neighborhood, you'll notice on one end of the street, you have your smaller homes. But when you take a look on the opposite end of the street, you'll notice you have your larger homes. It was just a coincidence the Dr. King house sat right directly in the middle of where the working class well-to-do live, and where the working class poor live. And as growing up as a child, he could see those two groups of individuals coming together and working together, and that's probably what made him speak about the beloved community.

7. Neighbors

Directly across the street was the store and Dr. King, when he was a young child, would actually go across the street to play with the store owners' children. And one day when Dr. King turned five years old and they started getting prepared to go to school, the parents told Dr. King, he could no longer play with the kids. Dr. King did not realize why he could not play with the kids, so he came back talking to his grandmother, and that's when his grandmother talked to him about segregation and what it was like during that period of time.

8. Shotgun Houses

We're currently in front of the shotgun homes in Dr. King's neighborhood. The shotgun homes would have been where your lower income would have probably stayed in the community during that period of time. Most of them was textile mill workers who worked in a textile mill company that wasn't too far away from here. But if you want to know the term of a shotgun home, a shotgun home is a house that goes straight through. If you open to the front door of the house, you see directly to the back door of the house. And the reason why they call it a shotgun home, they said if you ever had a shotgun and you shot through the house, it would actually hit every room that was located inside the house. Now, depending on what parts of the country you come from, some places call them boxcar homes, some places call them railroad flats, but here in the south, the term is shotgun home.

9. Firestation

We're currently in front of the fire station, Fire Station Number Six. This fire station was here when Dr. King grew up as a child. This fire station was not integrated though until 1963. So as Dr. King grew up in his neighborhood, as he walked up and down the street, he could only see white firemen during that period of time. Even though Dr. King spoke about how important it was for us to integrate, the Fire Station Number Six on the corner of his street was not integrated until 1963.

10. Ebenezer Baptist Church

We're currently In front of historical Ebenezer Baptist Church. This is the church where Dr. King's father and grandfather preached at for 81 years. This is also the church where Dr. King was baptized and also the church where he was ordained as a young child. Once again, we're going to go inside a church that the National Park Service have preserved and restored and put back to the original way it was when Dr. King was here.

11. Fellowship Hall

We're currently inside of Fellowship Hall. Fellowship hall is where Dr. King was baptized. This is where the church would have met during that period of time. This was also, from 1914 to 1922, where the congregation worshipped at downstairs until upstairs was completed. But you had all types of organizations that would have met here with the church, because this is where they would have the church functions. This is where the church would've came together to eat. This is where the church would have came together to have programs. Yes, they had services upstairs, but downstairs is where the fellowship halls, where they came to fellowship with their members and their congregation during that period of time. So the Southern Christian Leadership Conference was started right here. You also had a lot of your usher board meetings and different things happening from right here at this location.

12. Fellowship Hall Artifacts

So here in Fellowship Hall, we have some artifacts of Dr. King's. Like over here is the microphone that Dr. King would speak from when he was co-pastor here from 1960 to 1968. We also have a communion tray that the congregation used back during that period of time of 1960 and 1968. And as we go upstairs, we will see the actual communion table, and we will also see the actual tithing box the way it was when Dr. King was here.

13. Sanctuary

So we're here inside historic Ebenezer Baptist Church. The last day at church service inside of historic Ebenezer Baptist Church was March 7th of 1999. The first day they had church service across the street, in the new sanctuary - Horizon Sanctuary - was March 7th of 1999. So the Ebenezer history goes all the way back to 1886, but since 1886, the church has only had five pastors. The founding pastor, his name was John A. Parker. He founded the church in 1886, but he left the church in 1894. And then Dr. King's grandfather, Reverend A.D. Williams, took over as pastor from 1894 to 1931. Then Dr. King's father, Martin Luther King Sr., took over as pastor from 1931 to 1975. So between Dr. King's father and his grandfather, they both pastors inside this church for 81 years. They pastored inside a church for 81 years. Dr. King was a co-pastor under his father from the period of 1960 to 1968. He did preach his first sermon, he would preach two Sundays out the month inside this church, but he was only a co-pastor from the period of 1960 to 1968. He couldn't be a full-time Civil Rights leader and a full-time pastor, so he sacrificed being a pastor while he was a full-time Civil Rights leader during that period of time.

He was a pastor of a church. He was a pastor of Dexter Avenue Baptist church in Montgomery, Alabama, and he pastored at that church when he was at the age of 26 years old. Then Dr. King's brother took over as co-pastor from 1968 to 1969, but his brother died a year after Dr King's death. He died in a drowning accident in his backyard swimming pool. His brother was one week away from turning 39 years old when he died, and of course, Dr. King died at the age of 39 years old. And then Joseph Roberts took over his co-pastor from 1975 to 2005, and the current pastor Dr. Raphael Warnock has been here ever since 2005. So when you hear Dr. King in his sermon say things like “longevity has its place”, you know definitely here in the sanctuary longevity has to have its place in order to have five pastors since 1886.

14. Restoration

Inside the sanctuary we have put everything back to the way it was when Dr. King was here in 1960-1968. So when you walk inside of the sanctuary, you'll see that the pews are the original pews that was here during that period of time, the windows are the original windows that was here during that period of time. And when you get real close, you'll see the communion table, you'll see the tithing box. You also see the

podium and you'll see the mic in the pulpit furniture. All this was put back to the way it was when Dr. King was here.

15. Legacy of leaders

What I would like to do is point out a couple of windows to you. One of the windows at the top will show you Dr. King's grandfather, Reverend A.D. Williams. A.D. Williams, like I said, pastored here from 1894 to 1931. He was a powerful, powerful pastor. Not only did he preach from the pulpit, but he also believed in helping his community. One of the things he did was he was helped start the first African American high school here in the city of Atlanta: Booker T Washington High School. He also helped bring the NAACP to the city of Atlanta. And Reverend Williams protested a newspaper in 1906, who wrote some wrong reports about the African American community. He protested the newspaper, where the newspaper eventually ended up folding back during that period of time. So you can see the Civil Rights power of Dr. King's grandfather, and how that was also instilled in Dr .King. Now we can talk about Dr. King's father. And we can talk about the strength of his father, because his father, from this pulpit, told his congregation how important it was for them to own their own properties. He also helped - he wanted equal pay for the African American teachers and white teachers. So he protested and went down to the Board of Education to protest equal pay for white teachers and black teachers. So in 1935, he marched from this location to city hall, where he fought for the rights for African Americans to vote during that period of time. So you can see Dr. King came from a very, very politically inclined family that believed in making social change, not only from the church, but also throughout Atlanta and throughout the world.

16. ML and MD

As you can see right here, we have the balcony inside the church. The balcony was the overflow for the congregation, and a lot of people will go up into the balcony. And they said, Dr. King and his brother would enjoy sometimes going up to the balcony. Of course, Dr. King's real name was Martin Luther King, his brother's real name was Alfred Daniel, but they went by the initials M.L. and A.D. But one day while Dr. King's father was in the pulpit preaching, and he said he was really preaching, he was preaching pretty hard, he noticed up in the balcony that his two kids was upstairs playing. I said, one of the things that Dr. King's father did was in the middle of his sermon, he called out “Martin, A.D., I need y'all to come downstairs right now.” So Dr. King and his brother had to walk all the way from the top, all the way to the front, and get into the front row. And as they came into the front row, Dr. King's father asked them, “What was I preaching about? And I need y'all to share with me, what did I just say?” and they had to tell what he was preaching about right there. But if you can imagine being a young kid and being up in a balcony playing and your father catch you playing while he's in the middle of doing a sermon, and have to call you downstairs in order for you to sit right in the front, you can imagine how embarrassing it might've been for Dr. King and his brother on that day.

17. Place of Music

So inside of Ebenezer Baptist Church, Dr. King's family was very musically inclined. Dr. King's mother and grandmother was choir directors down at Ebenezer Baptist Church, so occasionally they would play the piano and, you see the organ, they would occasionally play the organ. But also Ms. Coretta Scott King, Dr. King's wife, was in the choir along with Dr. King’s sister, Ms. Christine King Farris, and also her brother-in-law, Isaac Farris, was also a part of the church. And they sung in the choir during that period of time. So you can see that this church, Ebenezer Baptist Church, was not only a church for social issues, but it was also a family church.

18. Alberta Williams King

It was six years after Dr. King's assassination that his mother was shot to death on this organ while she was playing the organ during church service. The gunman came inside the church. They said he stood up, started shooting. He killed the deacon. He wounded two other people inside the church on that day.

19. Remembering Dr. King

As you come inside the church, just see the clock set at 10 30. And the reason why it's set at 10: 30, that was the time of Dr. King's funeral service. The church was basically just family members and dignitaries who could attend on that day of service, but outside there was over a hundred thousand folks. They walked 3.4 miles from this location to Morehouse College where they had a second service with Dr. King, where they went to bury Dr. King at South-View Cemetery. But inside this church, one major thing happened during the service: Mrs. King requested Dr. King's last sermon that he did inside of Ebenezer Baptist Church to be played, which was the "Drum Major Instinct", that happened inside of this church. And then that sermon, you probably heard it a million times, that's when Dr. King said, "I don't want a long funeral. And if you have someone to deal with my eulogy, tell him not to talk too long, not to talk about how many wars that I won, but how I wanted to love and how I wanted to serve and how I want to help other individuals."

20. Power of the Podium

We're in the podium where Dr. King would speak from. And of course from this podium Dr. King changed the world. He did powerful things to improve the conditions of African Americans and people of this country. But at one time when Dr. King was young, do you know that he received a "C" in Speech? And he received a "C" in Speech, and what happened was when he received that "C" in Speech, he never quit. He constantly kept on working at it, and he became one of the greatest orators of all time. I share that because especially for the young folks, I want you to realize that even though you might not succeed, or you might fail in something, you have to get back up and keep on working at it. Because if Dr. King never got back up and worked after he received that "C" in speech, we never would have probably heard about his "Mountaintop" speech. We never would have probably heard about why he had a dream. We never would have heard about the "Drum Major Instincts". We never would've heard "Why I Oppose the Vietnam War." We probably would've never saw the letter from Birmingham Jail. But all that was done because Dr. King never gave up. He continues to keep on working and working and he became one of the greatest orators of all times, even though he once received that "C" in speech, he realized that he could be better and he could be greater. And look what he did. He ended up changing the world from this pulpit that you're looking at right now.