

President Obama Dedicates MLK Memorial
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By AP / STACY A. ANDERSON

(WASHINGTON) — President Barack Obama saluted Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Sunday as a man who "stirred our conscience" and made the Union "more perfect," rejoicing in the dedication of a monument memorializing the slain civil rights leader's life and work. "I know we will overcome," Obama proclaimed, standing the 30-foot granite monument to King on the National Mall. "I know this," the president said, "because of the man towering over us."

Obama and his wife, Michelle, and Vice President Joe Biden and his wife, Jill, joined a host of civil rights figures for the dedication on the sun-splashed Mall. Designed as what King described as a stone of hope hewn from a mountain of despair, the memorial is the first to a black man on the National Mall and its parks. "He had faith in us," said Obama, who was 6 when King was assassinated in 1968. Obama told the crowd, "And that is why he belongs on this Mall: Because he saw what we might become." ([Watch TIME's video reflecting on how the memorial does justice to King.](#))

The dedication is special meaning for the Obamas, and the first couple and daughters Malia and Sasha made a more private visit to the site on Friday night, before the crowds and the cameras arrived. Obama credits King with paving his way to the White House. Before his remarks, the president left a copy of an inaugural speech in a time capsule at the monument site. In his talk, he on King's broad themes — equality, justice and peaceful resistance — as the nation confronts, 43 years later, some of the same issues of war, an economic crisis and a lingering distrust of government in some quarters.

Referring to citizen protests against the wealthy and powerful that have spread from Wall Street and Washington, even abroad, Obama said: "Dr. King would want us to challenge the excesses of Wall Street without demonizing those who work there."

The monument, situated between the Lincoln and Jefferson memorials in what the designers call a "line of leadership," was 15 years in the making. Many speakers noted that its designers could not have predicted then that the monument would be dedicated by the nation's first black president. It's a vision that King likely couldn't have imagined, notwithstanding his larger-than-life dream.

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