

King's LI Tour Brings Throngs To the Streets

By Thomas A. Johnson

Twenty Negro men rushed up the stairs of a Long Island boarding house, stepped gingerly onto the roof, and began to cheer lustily—echoing the roar that came from 25 others on a roof across the road, and the estimated 800 more massed in the narrow street below.

The scene was a slum area of Inwood, and the roar was for the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. The Negro leader was making his first stop in a tour arranged by the Long Island chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality. The idea, a CORE spokesman said, was to "show him some of the slum areas and segregated schools and apartment houses on Long Island."

The scene was bedlam on Jeanette Street, known as "the hole" and "the bottom" to its Inwood residents, but by the more polite term, "blighted area" to municipal planners.

"I want to touch him," a woman shouted.

"Me, too," said a man. "I just want to shake his hand."

But the Rev. Dr. King, who had arrived at Kennedy Airport earlier in the day from Selma, Ala., had a tight schedule. He was to tour similar areas in Long Beach, Rockville Centre, Lakeview and Hempstead. And so a wedge of policemen and civil rights leaders held the people back. William Booth, president of the state chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, quieted the crowd somewhat with shouts of "let him speak."

The Rev. Dr. King stood by his limousine and spoke with a microphone: "We come to this com-

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munity to express our concern for the problems you face here." He thanked the predominantly Negro crowd for giving him courage and said, "We are in a common struggle . . . for freedom and human dignity . . . for what is constitutionally right and morally right . . . You have my support in all that you are doing to grapple with . . . all the problems."

The caravan was cheered in all the predominantly Negro areas, but nowhere with more enthusiasm than Inwood. About 300 persons met the motorcade in Long Beach, 500 in Rockville Centre, another 500 in Lakeview, and 800 in Hempstead, according to police estimates.

During the tour the Rev. Dr. King was described by the largely Negro welcomers as a "great man," "a modern Moses" and "a man doing a wonderful work." Two white nuns from the St. Agnes Cathedral School in Rockville Centre called him a "great leader." Several Negroes, some of whom said they had only slight knowledge of CORE and the NAACP, wanted the Rev. Dr. King to lead a civil rights movement on Long Island. When asked if they were not capable of leading themselves, one man said; "We are, but we need a spark—Dr. King is a spark."

In Long Beach, the Rev. Dr. King stopped at the rundown area at Riverside Drive and Harrison Avenue after his 25-car motorcade moved down contrasting Long Beach road. He told the crowd of Negroes and whites that "we are in a common struggle to free the soul of America . . . We are tied together in a single garment of destiny . . ." To the Negroes in the cheering crowd, he said: "We cannot continue to perish on a lonely island of poverty in a sea of prosperity. We are tired of de facto segregation in the North and legal segregation in the South . . . We want all the rights any other citizen has."

One man, coming late to the Long Beach rally, was a bit out of step with the day. "Who's that?" he asked a friend, unable to see the Rev. Dr. King

because of the crowd. "That's Martin Luther King," he was told. "Aw, heck," the man said, turning away. "I thought it was Sammy Davis Jr."

In Rockville Centre, the Rev. Dr. King was greeted with signs reading, "Build Urban Renewal Now," and one which read simply: "Help! Help! Help!" In his brief speech at Randall and Banks Avenues, he said: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere . . . I am with you in your struggles and your concerns . . . We know that the festering sore of segregation and discrimination debilitates the white man as well as the Negro . . ." He urged the crowd to "keep moving and keep going" in their struggle.

The Negro rights leader was received mostly by children in Lakeview at about 4 PM, and they appeared more aloof and less interested in his words than at any other stop. But the leader of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference received a loud ovation, when, in an observation on the segregation struggle in the community and nearby Malverne, he said: "Racial segregation is evil whether it is in Selma, Ala., Atlanta, Ga., or Malverne, Long Island."

In Hempstead, he spoke only a few words encouraging Negroes in their struggle for equal rights, but finally giving up when the loud-speaker system all but broke down completely.

The strongest criticism of the Rev. Dr. King from other civil rights spokesman has been that his personal influence on Negroes will tend to discourage the development of Negro leadership on the grass-roots level. His most outspoken critics on this issue are leaders of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Council, many of whose members refer disparagingly to the Rev. Dr. King as "De Lawd."

Whether the internationally recognized civil rights leader's appeal has the effect of detracting from the efforts of others did not seem to matter yesterday. As the Rev. Dr. King was led to his car at the end of the rally at the Willow Apartments, two young girls were heard above all the others. "I touched him," they screamed.