



Life & Time of MLK Jr.: (Atlanta to Memphis)

Therlee Gipson

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The first thought that comes to the mind for many Memphis visitors is the very thing Memphis has always wanted to forget: the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., which occurred on Friday, April 4, 1968. Following his assassination, there was a backlash against the entire City of Memphis population, who were themselves plagued by grief and guilt over the painful chapter in U.S. history that had transpired in their City. Memphis became the City that killed our Black leader. This is the furthest from the truth that could ever be imagined. The average citizen had no thought of malice toward Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., nor to a point of killing him in Memphis what so ever. However, Memphis suffered for many years to come in race relations. Following foreclosure in December 1982. Lorraine Motel changed its name to Lorraine Civil Rights Museum Foundation in 1984. The Lorraine closed as a motel on March 2, 1988 when sheriff's deputies forcibly evicted the last holdout tenant, Jacqueline Smith, in preparation for an \$8.8 million overhaul. Smithsonian Institution curator Benjamin Lawless created a design for saving historical aspects. The Nashville, Tennessee firm McKissack & McKissack, which claims to be the oldest minority owned architect firm in the United States, was tapped to design a modern museum on grounds of the motel that were not directly related to the assassination. The museum was dedicated on July 4, 1991 and officially opened to the public on Sept. 28, 1991. Over time, Lorraine began to deteriorate, and some hoped a wrecking ball would demolish what seemed only to be a sad reminder of that tragic spring afternoon. But fortunately, Memphis' overwhelming heartache did not lead to the destruction of such historically significant like Lorraine Motel which had a rebirth historic legacy. However, Lorraine Civil Rights Museum Foundation, Beal Street Blues festival and Graceland remain today as part of the City's and the nation's heritage. Memphis has become the number one destination in Tennessee for tourists. Therlee Gipson .

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