

and the symbol

most major cities
ing holiday.

of the legislation
that the nation
l another paid

e the merits of a
the issue of fed-
o insult King's
l demean the
lived and died
ctor never arose
ress when other
were created.

am asked why I
much time and
e King Holiday
the bill cele-
a single individ-
great, a particu-
rican history, re-
w profound, and
s, however righ-

even if the bill
nto law, it would
end of racism

Rep. John Conyers Jr. is a
Democrat from Michigan.

overnight, or the building of a
full-employment society, so ur-
gently needed, or a halt to the
madness of the arms race.

I have committed myself to
the passage of this legislation
because in making federal
laws, we also express a nation's
philosophy, and in fashioning
national symbols, we also
shape our humanity.

By passing the bill, Congress
and the American people will
be declaring, at last, their sup-
port for the ideals and the di-
rection that King was moving
us toward.

More than just a memorial
to a great leader, a public holi-
day in King's name would
stand as a living testament to
the democratic ideals of jus-
tice, peace, freedom, and rec-
onciliation among all peoples.

rats' boondoggle

One state in four
o Columbus Day.
s" like these, a
us just go about
Many stores, of-
tories are open

ork places that
I closed on holi-
ute, and the only
are invariably off
nth pay, are gov-
I places and gov-
oers.

ould be, I suspect,
l Martin Luther
informal survey I
q week of major
porations in the
Bay area sug-
artin Luther King
at best, be add-
of "floating" holi-
mbus Day, from
es may choose

ouldn't be any

Jeff Rigenbach is a syndi-
cated radio commentator.

mail that day, and government
offices would be deserted, but
most of the rest of us would be
at work. We'd not only be work-
ing, we'd be paying, through
taxes withheld from our pay-
checks, to give all the govern-
ment workers a day off.

What kind of tribute to Mar-
tin Luther King would that be?
His constituents were working
people. And some of his worst
enemies were bureaucrats.

True, it would be nice, at
long last, to have one official
national hero who stands for
peace and non-violence. But
Martin Luther King's memory
would not be honored by the
spectacle of black working peo-
ple paying to provide one more
three-day weekend for the FBI
officials who once tapped his
phone.

the national news media dur-
ing his denunciations of gov-
ernment-enforced segregation
in the South and in other areas

tragically killed. The unfolding
reality of King immediately
ceased; the steady process of
near-canonization began.

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r King
e been

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DAVID GARROW

Guest columnist

King's long struggle: A quest for justice

CHAPEL HILL, N.C. — Mar-
tin Luther King, Jr., symbol-
ized the black freedom strug-
gle that altered American race
relations forever and trans-
formed the U.S. South.

King challenged black
Americans to fight non-violent-
ly for the basic rights their
country had promised but de-
nied them. He reassured
whites that their past sins
would be forgiven if they now
would heed Christianity's moral
call for true racial justice.

Born to a family with deep
roots in the black church, King
brought the strength of that
heritage and a Ph.D. in system-
atic theology to his own minist-
ry and to his unsought role as
spokesman for an indigenous
bus boycott in the quite South-
ern city of Montgomery, Ala.
Chosen to lead by colleagues
deeply impressed with his pro-
found oratorical skills, King
rode the success of the 1956
Montgomery protest to national
fame at the age of 27.

The civil rights revolution
quickly expanded into one of
the most potent people's move-
ments in American history.
Mass protests in Birmingham,
Ala., forced millions of citizens
to see the horrifying reality of
violent racism, and King's own
"Letter from a Birmingham
jail" confirmed his intellectual
leadership of a crusade whose
popular power made him the
most influential American of
his generation.

King's "I have a dream"
speech at the 1963 march on
Washington exemplified the
moral challenge with which

David J. Garrow, author of
The FBI and Martin Luther
King and Protest at Selma, is
completing a comprehensive
study of King and the civil
rights movement.

the movement confronted
America. It also marked King
as the best orator of the centu-
ry and signalled the beginning
of a two-year period that pro-
duced the movement's greatest
legislative achievements — the
Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the
Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Many contemporaries did
not realize that King's private
skills as a sagacious political
strategist matched his public
ability as a stirring speaker.
The protests that King's South-
ern Christian Leadership Con-
ference organized in cities
such as Birmingham and Sel-
ma, Ala., were pragmatic ef-
forts to evoke dramatic racist
excesses from hot-tempered
Southern lawmen while the en-
tire country watched.

Time after time, those dem-
onstrations succeeded in exact-
ly the way King expected.

The final two years of his life
saw King expand his quest to
include economic justice for
poor people of all races and an
end to needless international
violence typified by the Viet-
nam War.

Assassinated before those
goals were attained, Martin Lu-
ther King left behind a legacy
of extraordinary achieve-
ments. He also bequeathed to
America a living challenge to
continue pursuing the ideals of
justice and equality to which
he had dedicated his own life.

Martin Luther King's birthday declared a national holiday?

