KTSW

A DREAM THAT BECAME A LEGACY: SAN MARCOS CELEBRATES MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY

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CULTURE

By Felicity Guajardo

Director of News and Culture

Yro12@txstate.edu

On this historic day of Jan. 20th, 2025, San Marcos celebrated the life and memory of Martin Luther King Jr. who paved the way for equality and workers' rights for Black Americans during the Civil Rights Movement.

The Dunbar Heritage Association (DHA) of San Marcos organized the 23rd Annual MLK Walk and Celebration at the LBJ MLK Crossroads Memorial.

As a winter storm warning was issued to Central Texas areas just yesterday, the San Marcos community persisted and lined up as early as 8:15 A.M. in 20-degree temperatures to get registered for the Freedom Walk.

The energy of the community, mixed with many Texas State student organizations such as Black Student Alliance, Black Men United, Alpha Kappa Alpha and many more, brought contagious smiles through the historically Black neighborhood of Dunbar.



Dunbar Heritage Association leads the Freedom Walk to Dunbar Recreation Center on Monday, Jan. 20th, 2025. Felicity Guajardo/KTSW 89.9

The Freedom Walk led to Dunbar Recreation Center where Ralph Merriweather, a 75-year resident of San Marcos and a retired union organizer for International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW)gave a powerful keynote speech about labor rights and a reception followed.

A Breakdown of the Dunbar Heritage Association MLK Celebration

The theme of this year's MLK Walk and Celebration honored the work of organizer A. Phillip Randolph, a labor unionist who originally began the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. This is where Martin Luther King Jr. made his famous "I Have a Dream" speech.

Pastor Jonafa Banbury, secretary for DHA, says the theme of African Americans and labor also honors the progress Martin Luther King Jr. made to expand equal pay to Black Americans.

"He wasn't just seeking equality. He was seeking equal pay and fair labor treatment for African Americans, which is what made him an enemy in the United States. But we revere him, and we respect him now because we take for granted some of the work that he did that we now enjoy," Banbury said.

The Wreath Laying Ceremony kicked off the celebrations at 9:15 A.M. where student and local community organizations bestowed a wreath onto the LBJ MLK Crossroads Memorial to symbolize unity within the community.

Shannon Marshall, a member of DHA, says the wreaths can symbolize many things.

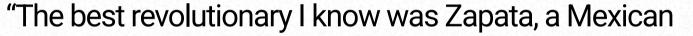
"And as all of y'all look around, we all are different in many aspects—and as a wreath we symbolize unity, renewal, and faith. The circular shape of a wreath can represent wholeness in a circle of life," Marshall said.



A community member lays a wreath on the LBJ MLK Crossroads Memorial on Monday, Jan. 20th, 2025. Felicity Guajardo/KTSW 89.9

Once the wreaths were presented by all organizations many eagerly lined up to walk from the crossroads into the Dunbar Historic Neighborhood.

From there, Ralph Merriweather gave the keynote speech noting A. Philip Randolph's efforts in union organizing and Merriweather's own experiences as an international union organizer for IBEW in 1986.





revolutionary," Merriweather said.

"He said, 'I would rather die on my feet fighting than on my knees begging,' That resonated in me during my whole organizing career."

Ralph Merriweather, retired union organizer for International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) gives a keynote speech on Monday, Jan. 20th, 2025. Felicity Guajardo/KTSW 89.9

Although Merriweather said that training union organizers across the country could be dicey, he always remembered that it was for the greater good.

"Sometimes the guys would look at you in fear that if they did this, the contract was going to do certain things to them...but you have to let them know that this is your best opportunity to get working conditions, health insurance, not for you, but for you and your family," Merriweather said.

The community's thoughts

Overall, the MLK Celebration was a hit in both the Texas State and San Marcos community. This year's celebration had the most attendees to date in San Marcos since the start of the annual MLK Freedom Walk.

"I think it's one of the biggest turnouts that we've had because it's merging of communities, the Texas State community with the San Marcos community, but we also have people from Buda and Kyle and Caldwell...," Banbury said.

Aric Weeks, secretary for Black Student Alliance at Texas State, says that the day was filled with many reminders about what community means to him.

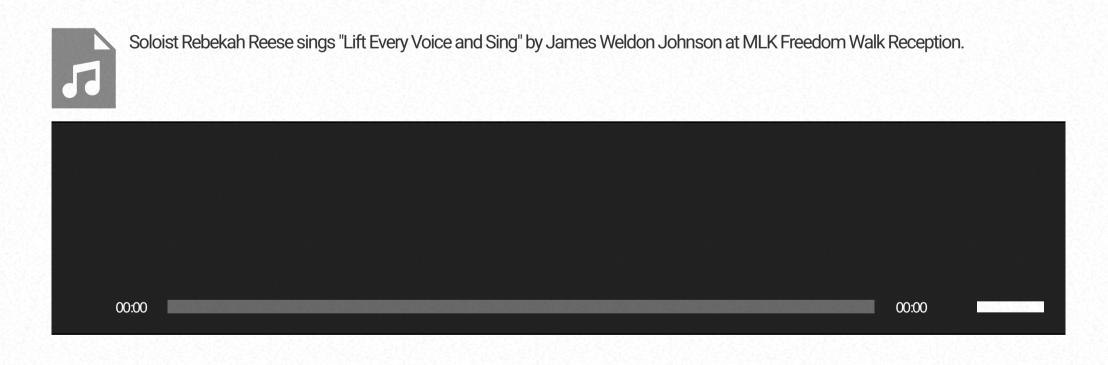
"So, this is my first time experiencing it, but it's been honestly wonderful just seeing not just Black Texas State, but almost the entire community, like we saw other people from the different fraternity, sorority councils here," Weeks said.

"I just love seeing people come together for a common cause, which is, you know, the pursuit of freedom."

With the coincidental overlap of Inauguration Day and Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Weeks feels today was just even more reason to be a part of this celebration.

"It's Inauguration Day and over here, especially on college campuses, we definitely feel some type of way about it, but it's good knowing that we can still unionize and still celebrate the moral pillars that the people that came before us put so we can be here today," Weeks said.

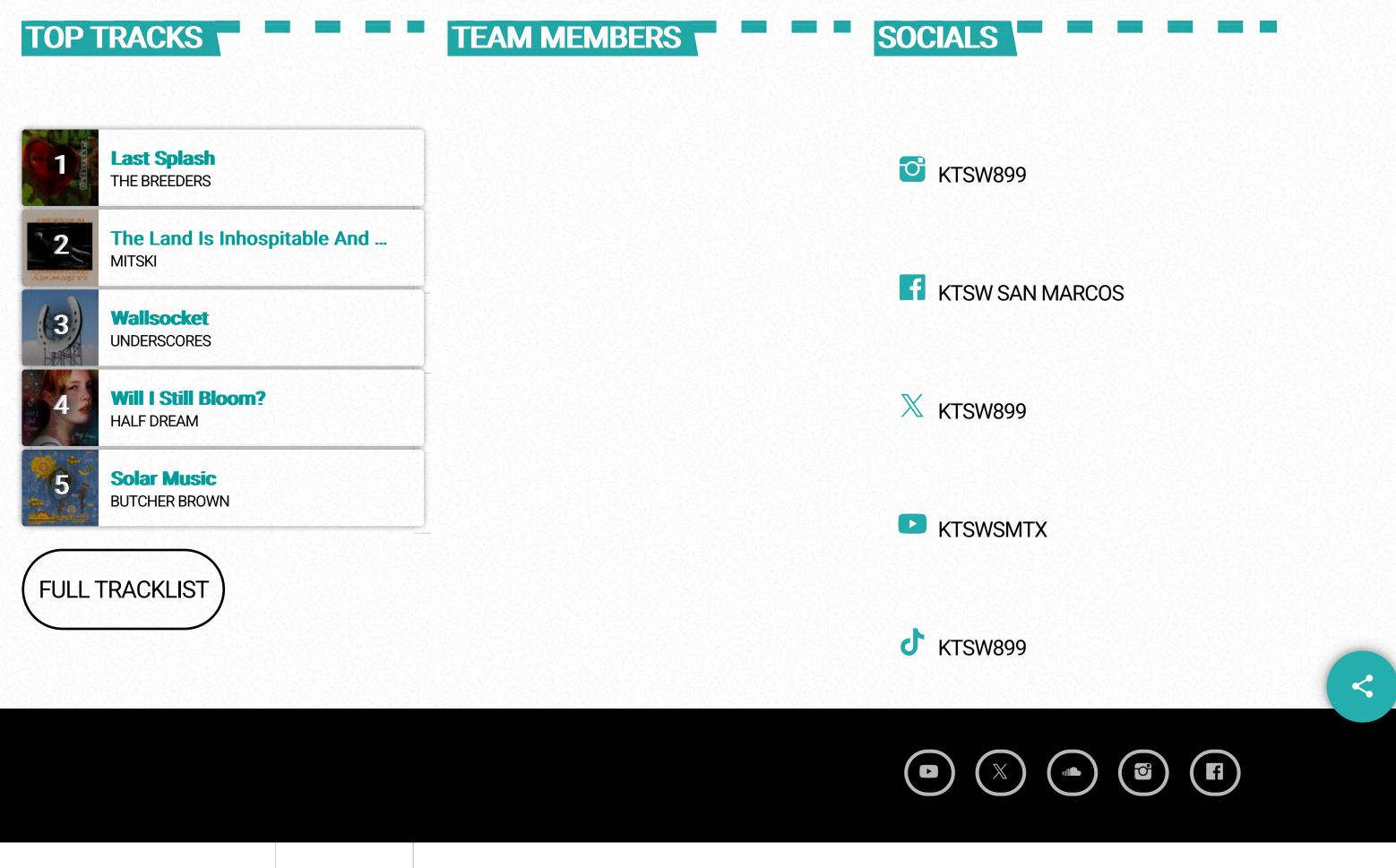
Martin Luther King Jr. turned 96-years-old on Jan. 15th.





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