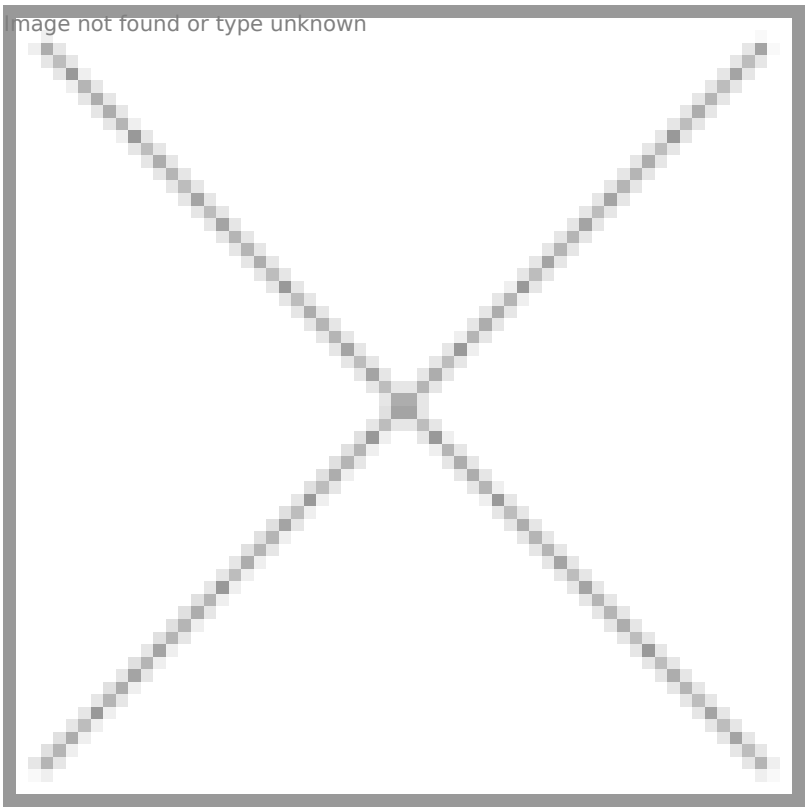
AVRASYA İNCELEMELERİ MERKEZİ
CENTER FOR EURASIAN STUDIES

TASC CELEBRATES DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY

19.01.2021

Turkish American National Steering Committee - TASC (18 January 2021)

Monday, January 18, 2021, commemorates the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. This year also marks the 53rd anniversary of his tragic killing. Let us continue his struggle for justice, equality, and freedom.



Today the Turkish American Community honors the life and legacy of a remarkable man, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and his commitment to equality, justice, and freedom.

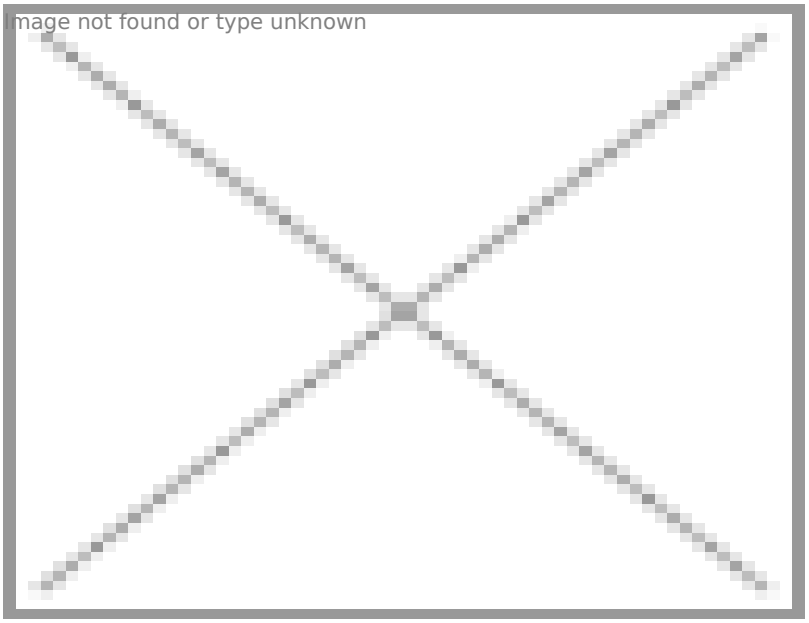
Dr. King never wavered from his path of peaceful opposition to segregation and discrimination. Indeed, segregation was still exercised in America, one hundred years after the Civil War, which claimed the lives of over 620,000 people. The Civil War was the bloodiest American conflict ever.

Dr. King faced years of violent opposition by the American government, including arrests, incommunicado detention, and severe interrogation and mistreatment. He did not yield. He continued to use the most powerful weapon he had -- his mind, his heart, and his ability to speak.

He was eventually assassinated on April 4, 1968, but not silenced.

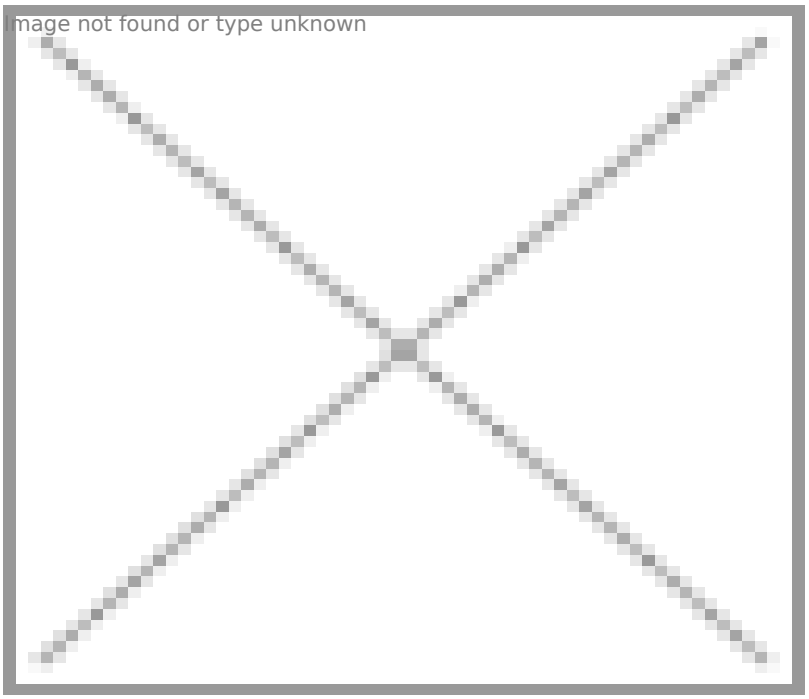
Turkish Americans proudly served the cause of equality and justice, standing against segregation. The Turkish Embassy was one of few places in Washington DC where all Americans, regardless of their race, ethnicity, or religion, could meet in peace and be treated with dignity.

The United States Senate warned the Turkish Embassy not to permit African Americans to attend Embassy social events. The US Department of State offered a "compromise" that Black Americans be admitted from the back door of the Embassy. Turkish Ambassador Munir Ertegun responded that all guests of the Turkish Republic would enter through the front door as equals. Maryland police arrested the Ambassador's son, Ahmet Ertegun, for violating segregation laws in Annapolis. Ahmet Ertegun eventually founded Atlantic Records, where he promoted countless African American and progressive musicians.



African American leaders and musicians pose before the bust of Atatürk at the Turkish Embassy, the 1950s (Photo: Library of Congress)

As Atlantic Records Chairman, Ertegun expressed: "I began to discover a little bit about the situation of African Americans and experienced immediate empathy with these victims of such senseless discrimination because although Turks were never slaves, they were regarded as second class citizens by Europe because of their Muslim beliefs."



Atlantic Records Chairman Ahmet Ertegun and Ray Charles (Photo: Reuters)

Kaynak/Source: