



- » Home
- » News
- Local News
- Local Sports
- Calendar
- Opinion
- Obituaries
- Lifestyle
- Photo Galleries
- Celebrations
- Weather
- Travel
- Nation/World
- Technology
- » Entertainment
- » Communities
- » Customer Service

Email Newsletter

» ADVERTISEMENT »

» ADVERTISEMENT »

tony's
click for specials
Fancy Food Outlet, your source for everyday gourmet foods

Controversy in Context: Renaming streets after MLK

Enfield, Trumansburg, Dryden, Danby, Varna, Cayuga Heights. This list goes on and on. While State Street is officially located within the City of Ithaca limits, public opinion regarding its possible renaming to Martin Luther King Jr. Street has not been restricted by any such boundaries. If The Ithaca Journal opinion page is any indication, it has become clear over the past couple of months that there is much disagreement about how, and in some cases if, King's life and legacy should be honored.

For nearly two years, the Ithaca community has debated the possible renaming of a local street in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The first proposal, created in 2004, originated with a group of young men participating in Ithaca High School's Circle of Recovery class. The students and their teacher, Gino Bush, initially proposed to rename Green Street. The original petition was reframed, however, given Archer Green's historical connections to the local community. The new petition was submitted to memorialize King by renaming State Street. As stated by the petitioners, State Street was selected because it runs through the city and connects a number of diverse neighborhoods. Ironically, it appears the street's prominence is simultaneously the cause for its selection as well as its opposition.

» ADVERTISEMENT »

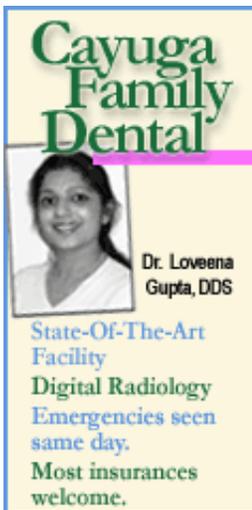
NORTHEAST FAMILY DENTAL
WELCOMING NEW PATIENTS
 Full range of Dental Services using the latest technology
NEW LOCATION
 2329 N. Triphammer Rd • Ithaca, NY
(607) 257-0060

The controversy surrounding King renaming is actually a national, if not international, issue. To date, at least 730 communities across the nation have renamed streets in honor of King. But while the states and locations may vary, one constant remains: controversy.

For these reasons and many more, we are pleased to extend a community invitation to hear one of our nation's leading experts on Martin Luther King Jr. street renaming, Dr. Derek Alderman. Alderman will present a public lecture titled "Renaming Streets after Martin Luther King Jr.: Putting the Controversy in Context" at 7:30 p.m. April 11 at The History Center in Tompkins County.

Alderman will bring to Ithaca a thoroughly researched perspective on commemoration of King through street renaming. Says Alderman, "Streets named after King illustrate the important yet contentious ways in which race, place, and memory intersect through the American landscape." Alderman will remind us why it is important to examine this critical issue through the lens of history. He will explore the political origins and historical development of the

street-naming movement, define the symbolic qualities of street naming as a means of commemorating King, and address the political



Cayuga Family Dental

Dr. Loveena Gupta, DDS

State-Of-The-Art Facility
Digital Radiology
Emergencies seen same day.
Most insurances welcome.

controversy and struggle that underlies street-naming practices. The practice and its controversies not only provide opportunities for valuable public discourse, but also provide insights into issues of racial equality and social justice that are very much a part of today's local landscape.

The effort to bring Alderman to Ithaca begins, in part, with Ithaca College's Martin Luther King Jr. Scholars Program. In full disclosure, and as namesakes themselves, a number of MLK scholars support and assist the renaming effort. However, Alderman's visit is not an attempt to convince the community to believe similarly. Dr. Martin Luther King stated in his "Letter from the Birmingham Jail" that the first step in nonviolent direct action is to gather information - a collection of facts. In short, the public talk offered the MLK scholars a win-win scenario - the ability to learn more about the role and importance of renaming and historical commemoration while employing a Kingian model.

Lastly, finding ways to recognize individuals from past generations who inspire us all to be active participants in civic matters is, without argument, critical to the health of our community. What better location to host this event, therefore, than The History Center, a place through which the stories of local experience flow, connecting local history with that of the world around us. Located in the heart of downtown Ithaca, The History Center provides a central, common-ground forum for the exploration of this topic that is both rooted in history and focused on the future.

We hope you join us at The History Center on April 11 as we continue to investigate the history and importance of our own cultural landscape.

King Street lecture planned

The History Center in Tompkins County extends a community invitation to hear one of our nation's leading experts on Martin Luther King Jr. street renaming. Dr. Derek Alderman will present a public lecture at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, April 11 at The History Center, 401 E. State St., Ithaca, titled "Renaming Streets after Martin Luther King Jr.: Putting the Controversy in Context." To learn more about Alderman and this event, visit www.TheHistoryCenter.net or www.ithaca.edu/diversity.

Putting the Controversy in Context is being made possible thanks to a partnership between the Office of Multicultural Affairs and the Martin Luther King Jr. Scholars Program at Ithaca College, and The History Center in Tompkins County. Additional assistance is being provided by Interface, a division of the Community Dispute Resolution Center, and the William Henry Miller Inn.

...
Sean Eversley-Bradwell is assistant professor in the Center for the Study of Culture, Race and Ethnicity at Ithaca College. Matthew Braun is the executive director of The History Center in Tompkins County.

Originally published April 7, 2006

 Print this article  Email this to a friend  Subscribe Now