

Seattle's Fight To Honor Dr. King

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act in more bold ways in terms of their insensitivities," added Rye.

In April of 1983, Seattle City Council President Jeanette Williams sent a letter to Mayor Royer asking him to instruct the city departments to "immediately implement the legislation," although the legal challenges were still pending.

In the letter, she wrote: "When the council passed the legislation several months ago, it was with the intent that implementation would proceed immediately."

But the mayor's office maintained that he wanted the signs to go up once and for all, and not get into a situation where the signs might have to be taken down.

On Aug. 27, 1983, the Aug. 27th Committee, a group of more than 120 organizations, held a march and rally to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the March on Washington led by Dr. King that drew over 20,000 people to the streets and send a clear message that people of all races, colors, and creeds wanted to see the signs up.

And finally after being totally fed up with the delay from the Mayor's office, the August 27th Committee printed their own adhesive "Martin



Luther King, Jr." street signs, to place over the top of the existing Empire Way signs, and held a major demonstration on Nov. 19, 1983 to rename the streets. The late Sam Smith, former Seattle City Councilman and the dean of Black politicians in the Northwest, put up the first sign on the corner of Martin Luther King, Jr. Way & South Jackson.

And on Nov. 30, 1983, the Washington State Supreme Court ruled that the City of Seattle has the right and the legal authority to change the name of the street.

On December 1, 1983, the first official signs renaming Empire Way to

Martin Luther King, Jr. Way were put up by the city. Ironically, it was the same day in 1955 that Rosa Parks refused to get up and move to the back of the bus, and it was that act of defiance that ushered in the Civil Rights Movement and brought Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. into national prominence.

The final sign was put up on Jan. 14, 1984.

During the entire process, Mr. Rye and his family were subjected to hostile and harassing phone calls and messages, and received threats on his life, and received criticism from both

outside and within his community. But he continued the battle he started until it was over and the community is proud of his efforts.

"All during this process my family received all kinds of death threats," said Rye.

"My mother had a phone call from someone who knew each of her six children's names, where they worked, where they lived, and it really frightened her to no end."

"Everything we were doing was lawful, and we followed a process," said Rye. "This is a democracy, we do have first amendment rights, we were able to prevail, and we didn't force anyone to change the name of their business."

An excerpt from a front page article in the September 18, 1984 issue of The Seattle Medium reads: "Rye was faced with the constant criticism by fair weather and armchair civil rights leaders who felt he was only seeking publicity and that he was pushing too hard and should back off. Yes, it was indeed a struggle and a challenge just to keep the struggle non-violent. A struggle that even Martin would have been proud of."

**"OUR LIVES
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The Seattle Seahawks are proud to support the vision of Dr. Martin Luther King.

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