

Martin Luther King Jr.

Martin Luther King Jr. was African-American and was born in the USA on 15th January 1929. As a child, he enjoyed playing sports, playing the piano and going to school. Sadly, life was often hard. Some people treated him differently because of the colour of his skin.

Times were hard for African-American people living in the USA. There were separate areas for African-American people and white people on public transport, parks, restaurants and even in toilets.

Did You Know...?

In 1955, Rosa Parks, an African-American woman, was arrested after refusing to give up her seat on a bus to a white man.

African-American children were not allowed to go to school with white children. They had to go to separate schools that didn't have many resources to help with their learning.

Martin Luther King Jr. was a Christian who wanted to make sure that all Americans had the same rights regardless of their race. He became a civil rights activist. This means that he campaigned for improved rights for people.

In 1963, Martin Luther King Jr. led a huge march in Washington DC, the US capital. In front of the enormous crowd, Martin Luther King Jr. made his famous "I Have a Dream" speech. Here is a short piece of that speech:

It is because of Martin Luther King Jr., and others like him, that the law was changed to state that everyone in America had the same rights regardless of their skin colour. The law was also changed so that everyone could vote.

I have a dream that one day little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as brothers and sisters.

In 1964, he received the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to end racial prejudice in the United States.

Every January, there is an American national holiday to celebrate his birthday.

Did You Know...?

Martin Luther King Jr. was only 39 years old when he died. Many thousands of people went to his funeral.



Martin Luther King Jr.

Martin Luther King Jr. was African-American and was born in the USA on 15th January 1929. As a child he enjoyed playing sports, playing the piano and going to school. Sadly, life was often difficult. Some people treated him differently based on the colour of his skin.

At the time, there were separate areas for African-American people and white people on public transport, parks, restaurants and even in public toilets. Furthermore, up until the 1960s, African-American people in some states of the US could not vote in elections.



African-American children were not permitted to go to school with white children. They had to go to separate schools that didn't have many resources to help with their learning.



Martin Luther King Jr. was determined to make sure that all Americans had the same rights regardless of their race so he became a civil rights activist. This means that he campaigned for improved rights for people.



The 1955 Bus Boycott

In 1955, Rosa Parks, an African-American woman, was arrested after refusing to give up her seat on a bus to a white man. Martin Luther King Jr. called on African-American people to protest by not travelling on buses in that area. This protest lasted for 385 days and ended with a United States Court ruling that ended separate areas for African-American people and white people on all Montgomery public buses.

Martin Luther King Jr. went on to organise other non-violent demonstrations against the unfair treatment of African-American people. In 1963, Martin Luther King Jr. led a huge march in Washington DC, the US capital. Here, in front of a crowd of 250,000 people, King made his famous “I Have a Dream” speech. Here are some short extracts:



I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character.

I have a dream that one day... little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers.

Did You Know...?

On 14th October 1964, he received the Nobel Peace Prize for combating racial inequality through nonviolence.

As a result of the words and actions of Martin Luther King Jr. and others like him, the US Government brought in laws to ensure equal rights for all US citizens and to give everybody the chance to vote.

Martin Luther King Jr. was only 39 years old when he died. The funeral was attended by around 300,000 people. Every January, there is an American national holiday to celebrate his birthday.

Martin Luther King Jr.

Martin Luther King Jr. was the leader of the African-American civil rights movement. He spoke out against laws which kept black and white people separate and led marches demanding fair laws for all people. Martin Luther King Jr. was determined to ensure that all Americans had the same rights regardless of their race.

He was born on 15th January 1929 in Atlanta, Georgia, USA. His father was a pastor and his mother had been a teacher. Martin Luther King Jr. loved to play with his friends but, as his friends got older, two of them stopped playing with him. The father of one of the boys didn't like his son playing with Martin Luther King Jr. because Martin Luther King Jr. was African-American. He was deeply hurt and upset and couldn't understand why the colour of his skin would make any difference.



For African-American people living in the USA, life was challenging. There were segregated areas for African-American people and white people on public transport, in parks, restaurants and even in public toilets. Up until the 1960s, African-American people in some states of the US could not vote in elections.

In some states, African-American children had to go to separate schools from their white peers. These schools were often poorly funded and equipped.

The 1955 Bus Boycott

In 1955, Rosa Parks, an African-American woman, was arrested after refusing to give up her seat on a bus to a white man in the city where Martin Luther King Jr. preached. Martin Luther King Jr. called on African-American people to protest by not travelling on buses in that area. The boycott lasted for 385 days and the situation became so tense that Martin Luther King Jr.'s house was bombed. Other people were furious and wanted to retaliate with violence but Martin Luther King Jr. said that things needed to be solved peacefully and stressed the importance of white and black people getting along. The boycott concluded with a United States Court ruling that ended racial segregation on all Montgomery public buses.



Martin Luther King Jr. went on to organise other non-violent demonstrations against the unfair treatment of African-American people. In 1963, he led a huge march on Washington DC, the US capital. The march on Washington involved 250,000 people travelling to the Lincoln Memorial (Abraham Lincoln was the American president who abolished slavery). Here, in front of the enormous crowd, King made his famous “I Have a Dream” speech. Here are some short extracts:



I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character.

I have a dream that one day little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers.

Did You Know...?

In 1964, King received the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to end racial prejudice in the United States.

Rules in America began to change. The US Government brought in laws to ensure equal rights for all US citizens and to give everybody the chance to vote.

Tragically, on 4th April 1968, King was assassinated outside his motel room. His funeral was attended by 300,000 mourners.

In 1983, US President Ronald Reagan declared that the third Monday in January each year would be a holiday to remember King’s achievements and the ideas of living in a world which was fair for everyone, no matter what the colour of their skin.