



THE KING CENTER  
Since - 1968

## About Dr. King

### OVERVIEW



#### Laying the Groundwork for Nonviolent Change

Dr. King's vision expands globally and a trip to India increased his understanding of Gandhian ideas of nonviolent resistance.

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During the less than 13 years of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s leadership of the modern American Civil Rights until April 4, 1968, African Americans achieved more genuine progress toward racial equality in America than produced. Dr. King is widely regarded as America's pre-eminent advocate of nonviolence and one of the great history.

Drawing inspiration from both his Christian faith and the peaceful teachings of Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. King led the 1950's and '60s to achieve legal equality for African-Americans in the United States. While others were advocating "necessity," including violence, Martin Luther King, Jr. used the power of words and acts of nonviolent resistance, organizing, and civil disobedience to achieve seemingly-impossible goals. He went on to lead similar campaigns in conflict, always maintaining fidelity to his principles that men and women everywhere, regardless of color or human family.

Dr. King's "[I Have a Dream](#)" speech, [Nobel Peace Prize lecture](#) and "[Letter from a Birmingham Jail](#)" are among his most important writings in the English language. His accomplishments are now taught to American children of all races, and students worldwide. He is the only non-president to have a national holiday dedicated in his honor, and is memorialized on the Great Mall in the nation's capitol. He is memorialized in hundreds of statues, parks, streets, and public facilities around the world as a leader whose teachings are increasingly-relevant to the progress of humankind.

Some of Dr. King's most important achievements include:

In 1955, he was recruited to serve as spokesman for the Montgomery Bus Boycott, which was a campaign by the African American community in Montgomery, Alabama to force integration of the city's bus lines. After 381 days of nearly universal participation, many of whom had to walk miles to work each day as a result, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the boycott was unconstitutional.

In 1957, Dr. King was elected president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), an organization dedicated to the advancement of the African American community.

leadership for the now burgeoning civil rights movement. He would serve as head of the SCLC until his assassination, which he would emerge as the most important social leader of the modern American civil rights movement.

In 1963, he led a coalition of numerous civil rights groups in a nonviolent campaign aimed at Birmingham, AL described as the “most segregated city in America.” The subsequent brutality of the city’s police, illustrated by young blacks being assaulted by dogs and water hoses, led to a national outrage resulting in a push for unprovoked violence. It was during this campaign that Dr. King drafted the “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” the manifesto of Dr. King today required-reading in universities worldwide.

Later in 1963, Dr. King was one of the driving forces behind the March for Jobs and Freedom, more commonly known as the “March on Washington,” which drew over a quarter-million people to the national mall. It was at this march that Dr. King delivered his “I Have a Dream” speech, which cemented his status as a social change leader and helped inspire the nation to act on civil rights. He was named Time magazine’s “Man of the Year.”

In 1964, at 35 years old, Martin Luther King, Jr. became the youngest person to win the Nobel Peace Prize. His “I Have a Dream” speech is thought by many to be among the most powerful remarks ever delivered at the event, climaxing at one point with the statement that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word in reality. This is why right temporarily defeats left only to be more fully and triumphantly triumphant.”

Also in 1964, partly due to the March on Washington, Congress passed the landmark Civil Rights Act, essentially ending legal segregation in the United States. The legislation made it illegal to discriminate against blacks or other minorities in public accommodations, education or transportation, areas which at the time were still very segregated in many places.

The next year, 1965, Congress went on to pass the Voting Rights Act, which was an equally-important set of laws that removed barriers to voting for African-Americans, who in some locales had been almost completely disenfranchised. This was followed by the Selma to Montgomery, AL March for Voting Rights led by Dr. King.

Between 1965 and 1968, Dr. King shifted his focus toward economic justice – which he highlighted by leading the Poor People’s Campaign in Washington, DC – and international peace – which he championed by speaking out strongly against the Vietnam War. He also led the “Poor Peoples Campaign,” which was a broad effort to assemble a multiracial coalition of impoverished people for economic change.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s less than thirteen years of nonviolent leadership ended abruptly and tragically on April 4, 1968, when he was assassinated at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee. Dr. King’s body was returned to his hometown of Atlanta, GA, where a funeral ceremony was attended by high-level leaders of all races and political stripes.

For more information regarding the assassination trial of Dr. King. [Click here.](#)

For more information regarding the Transcription of the King Family Press Conference on the MLK Assassination in Atlanta, GA. [Click Here](#)

For more information regarding the Civil Case: King family versus Jowers. [Click here.](#)

Later in 1968, Dr. King’s wife, Mrs. Coretta Scott King, officially founded the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Non-Violent Social Change, which she dedicated to being a “living memorial” aimed at continuing Dr. King’s work on important social issues around the world.

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