

# Famous African Americans - Martin Luther King, Jr.

by ReadWorks



Martin Luther King, Jr. was one of the most important figures in the United States Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s. There is a national holiday in his honor that is celebrated every January. His famous "I Have a Dream" speech is still talked about today. He is a hero of civil rights in the U.S.

King was a Baptist minister from Atlanta, Georgia. King fought for equal rights for Black people in the United States. He had an incredible ability to speak and be heard. He was expressive and powerful with his words. He encouraged people to peacefully stand up for their rights.

King organized and led many marches and protests. He took part in the famous Montgomery bus boycott to protest the separation of Black and white people on public buses. He was also one of the leaders of the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. This march, during which 200,000 protestors gathered in Washington D.C., put pressure on the U.S. government to protect the civil rights of Black people. At the end of the march, King gave his famous "I Have a Dream" speech. King also helped get the Voting Rights Act of 1965 passed. This act said that states couldn't make it difficult for Black Americans to vote. King was also part of many other efforts for equality. Through his work, King gained the support of Black and white people. He inspired people throughout the world.

In 1964, King won the Nobel Peace Prize for his civil rights work. Ironically, his work for peace resulted in violent reactions. On several occasions, people threw rocks at King. Some even went so far as to bomb his family's house in Montgomery, Alabama. But the worst act of violence ended King's life. He was shot and killed at the age of 39.

King was killed at a young age but his memory lives on. He still inspires all types of people to stand up for equality. On Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, we remember all the work that King did and reflect on all the work there still is to do for equality.