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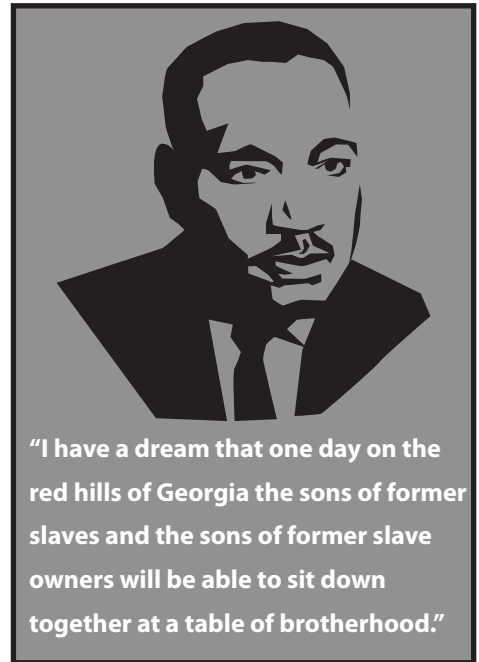
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# Who Was Martin Luther King Jr.?

Martin Luther King Jr. was an activist and leader during the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 60s in the United States. He is most well-known for his "I Have a Dream" speech, given during the "March on Washington" in 1963. He was a passionate leader in the movement for desegregation and racial equality for African-Americans, and has inspired many people to follow in his steps of nonviolent protest for justice.

## Where was he from?

Martin Luther King Jr. was born on January 15th, 1929, in Atlanta, Georgia. At that time, segregation, or the separation of people by race in places such as schools, restaurants, in public transportation, or churches, was the law. Martin experienced racial prejudice as a young person and suffered firsthand from these policies. He grew up in a loving family that believed firmly in racial equality and wanted a better future for their children. He had two siblings. His father was a minister in a church, which inspired Martin to become one as well.



Martin went to Booker T. Washington High School in Atlanta and skipped a couple of grades because he was so intelligent. He went to college at the age of 15 (most people start college at the age of 18!). He continued studying and got his doctorate degree from Boston University, graduating at the age of 25. In 1953, he married Coretta Scott, an author, singer, and civil rights activist, whom he met while studying together. They would go on to have four children. While studying for his doctorate degree, he began working as a minister in the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama.

## What were some of his actions as a civil rights activist?

Dr. King was inspired by Mahatma Gandhi, a leader from India, whose methods to fight for India's independence from colonial England were based on nonviolent protests.

One of his first actions as a civil rights leader was to boycott the public transportation of Montgomery, Alabama. To boycott means to refuse a particular product or service to make a protest or to ask for something to change. This particular boycott began when Rosa Parks, another important civil rights

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activist, refused to give up her seat to a white person on a bus in Montgomery. She was arrested and spent a night in jail. After this incident, Dr. King organized the boycott, which lasted over a year and resulted in the desegregation of public transportation in Montgomery.

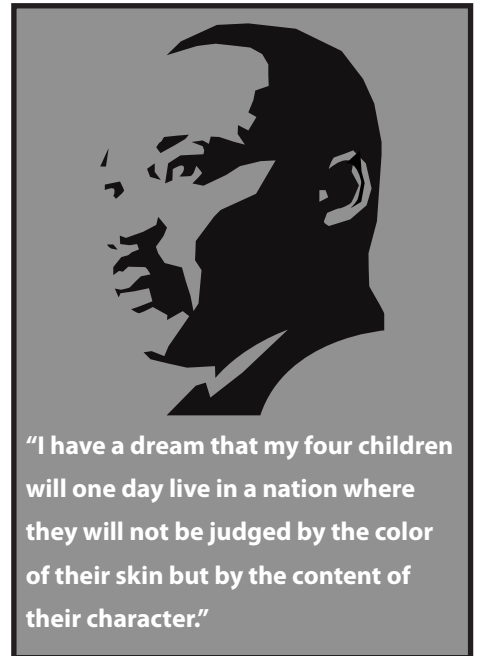
The speech that made Dr. King internationally known was given in 1963 during the “March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom” in Washington D.C. Approximately 250,000 people marched to show support for civil rights legislation. The march was successful and in 1964, the Civil Rights Act was enacted. This law banned discrimination of employment based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin. It ended racial segregation in private businesses and public facilities, and protected voting rights for minorities. That same year, Dr. King was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his role in the civil rights movement. During his life, he was arrested a few times for his activism, which included peaceful marches, sit-ins, and nonviolent demonstrations. But he never gave up and continued advocating for racial justice and equality. Together with many other civil rights activists, he worked closely with various communities to bring about change.

## How did he die?

On April 3rd, 1968, at the age of 39, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was killed in Memphis, Tennessee by a sniper bullet from a former convict who was unhappy with the message that Dr. King was sending. His death was mourned by people in the United States and abroad.

## How is he remembered?

After the tragic assassination of Dr. King, the U.S. government made every third Monday of January (in honor of his birthday) a national holiday to commemorate this iconic civil rights leader who helped bring about legislation and improved rights for African Americans. Many streets, parks, and buildings are named after him. There are also statues and memorials all around the world to honor him.



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Directions: After reading Martin Luther King Jr.'s biography, find evidence from the text to support or refute each statement in the table.

Text evidence FOR (support)	Statement	Text evidence AGAINST (refute)
	Martin Luther King Jr. was an important and powerful community organizer who made the United States of America better.	
	Martin Luther King Jr. believed in violent protest so others would listen to his point.	
	Martin Luther King Jr. was persistent.	

Using evidence gathered in the table, answer the following questions: **What were some of Martin Luther King Jr.'s most influential actions for civil rights and why were they so important?**

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