

# Martin Luther King Jr.

Martin Luther King Jr. was a Black man and was born in the USA on January 15<sup>th</sup> 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 Black and White people on public transport, in parks, restaurants and even public toilets. Furthermore, up until the 1960s, African- Americans in some states of the US could not vote in elections.

Black 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, a Black woman, was arrested after refusing to give up her seat on a bus to a White man. Martin Luther King Jr. called on Black Americans 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 Black 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-Americans. 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 October 14<sup>th</sup> 1964, he received the Nobel Peace Prize for combating racial inequality through non-violence.

As a result of Martin Luther King Jr.'s actions and words, 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.

Although there is still a long way to go for racial equality in America, the work of Martin Luther King Jr. was a big step in the right direction.

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

# Questions

1. Give two examples of places where Black and White people could not mix.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

2. Where did Martin Luther King Jr. make his famous 1963 speech? Tick **one**.

- New York City
- Chicago
- Washington DC
- Los Angeles

3. How many people saw Martin Luther King Jr. give his 'I Have a Dream' speech? Tick **one**.

- 250
- 250,000
- 25
- 2500

4. Match up the sentences.

Rosa Parks	called on Black people to not travel on buses in that area.
Martin Luther King Jr.	lasted for 385 days.
The protest	a United States court ruled that there would be no separate areas on Montgomery public buses.
In the end,	was arrested after refusing to give up her seat on a bus to a White man.

5. Complete the sentence by filling in the missing words.

King went on to organise other \_\_\_\_\_ against the unfair treatment of Black people.

# Questions

6. As a result of King's actions and words, and others like him, what did the US government do?

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7. How old was King when he died? Tick **one**.

- 29
- 39
- 49
- 59

8. Why do you think Martin Luther King Jr.'s funeral was so well-attended?

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# Answers

- Give two examples of places where Black and White people could not mix.  
**Accept any two of the following: public transport; parks; restaurants; public toilets.**
- Where did Martin Luther King Jr. make his famous 1963 speech? Tick **one**.
  - New York City
  - Chicago
  - Washington DC**
  - Los Angeles
- How many people saw Martin Luther King Jr. give his 'I Have a Dream' speech? Tick **one**.
  - 250
  - 250,000**
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  - 2500
- Match up the sentences.

Rosa Parks	called on Black people to not travel on buses in that area.
Martin Luther King Jr.	lasted for 385 days.
The protest	a United States court ruled that there would be no separate areas on Montgomery public buses.
In the end,	was arrested after refusing to give up her seat on a bus to a White man.

- Complete the sentence by filling in the missing words.  
King went on to organise other **non-violent demonstrations** against the unfair treatment of Black people.

# Answers

6. As a result of King's actions and words, and others like him, what did the US government do?

**As a result of King's actions and words, 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.**

7. How old was King when he died? Tick **one**.

29

39

49

59

8. Why do you think Martin Luther King Jr.'s funeral was so well-attended?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think his funeral was so well-attended because his words and actions had a positive effect on people's lives and they wanted to pay their respects for what he had done to help them; I think his funeral was so well-attended because he had inspired so many people to stand up for what they believe in.**