

America In the 1960s

Up until the 1960s, African Americans in some states of the United States could not vote in elections.

There were separate sections for African Americans on public transport, parks, restaurants and even separate toilets.

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

African Americans were usually in badly paid work and lived in the poorest areas. Some African American adults and children were killed, beaten up, threatened and wrongfully put in prison.



Who Was Martin Luther King?



Martin Luther King was a Christian who was determined to make sure that all Americans had the same rights regardless of their race.

King became a civil rights activist early in his career. This means he campaigned for improved rights for people.

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

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 preached.

King called on African Americans to protest by not travelling on buses in the city.

The boycott lasted for 385 days, and the situation became so tense that King's house was bombed and he was arrested by the police.

The boycott concluded with a United States Court ruling that ended racial segregation on all Montgomery public buses.

King's role in the bus boycott transformed him into a national figure and the best-known spokesman of the American civil rights movement.

“I have a dream...”

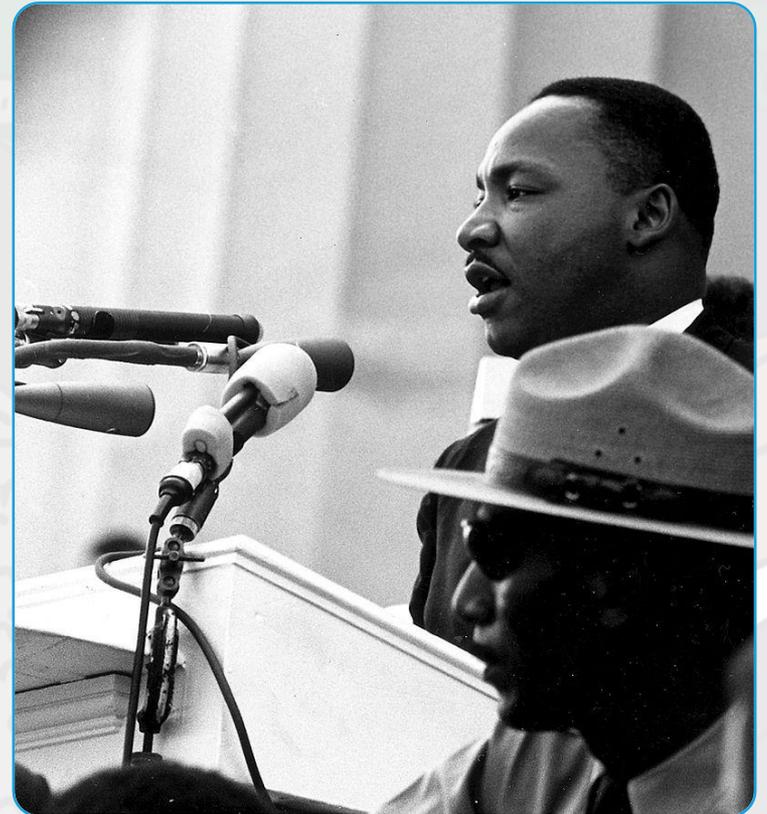
King went on to organise other non-violent demonstrations against the unfair treatment of African Americans.

When the authorities used force to end these peaceful protests, King gained even more support.

In 1963, he led a huge march on Washington, D.C., the US capital.

Here, in front of a crowd of 250,000 people, King made his famous “I have a dream” speech. Here is a short extract:

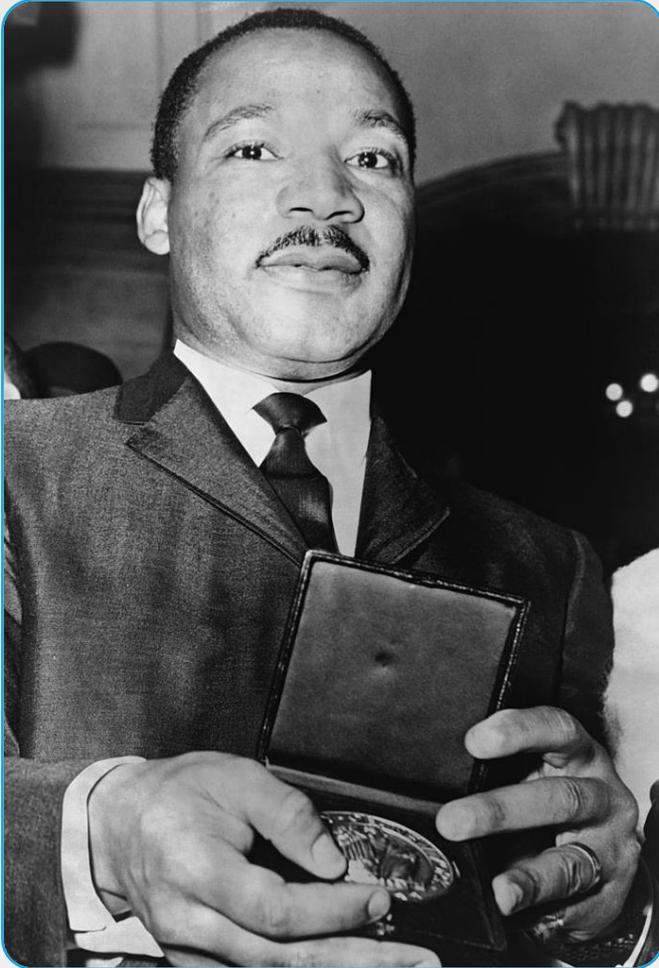
“I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character.”



Listen to Martin Luther King delivering his famous speech here:



Amazing Achievements



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

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

Tragically, just a few years later, in 1968, Martin was murdered.

About 300,000 people went to his funeral.

It is because of Martin Luther King, and others like him, that people in the United States have equal rights today.