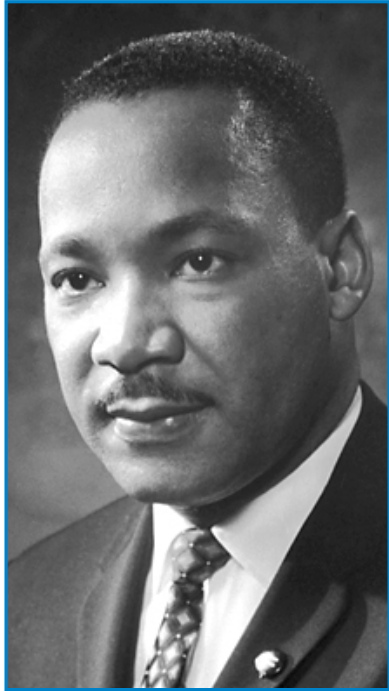


Martin Luther King Jr. Knowledge Organiser

Keywords



boycott	The practice of not using a service or purchasing goods from a company in the hope that the company will change a policy or practice.
MIA	Montgomery Improvement Association
non-violence	The belief that violence should not be used in protests or demonstrations.
CORE	Congress of Racial Equality, a civil rights group headed by James Farmer.
SNCC	Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, a group of students campaigning for civil rights.
sit-in	A protest where people sit down and refuse to leave a place.
SCLC	Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the civil rights group led by King.

Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott

1955 saw the start of the civil rights movement. Rosa Parks, a Black woman, decided to take a stand against segregation by refusing to give up her seat to a white man on the bus. Like many of the southern states, Montgomery, Alabama had a segregated bus service with certain seats for white people and others for Black people. Rosa's peaceful refusal to follow this system saw her arrested, an act that sparked huge protest.

The Black community in Montgomery formed an action group known as the MIA. This group, led by Martin Luther King Jr., boycotted the bus service which nearly bankrupted the company. This peaceful pressure saw the bus company give in and the MIA won a legal battle to have segregation banned on buses throughout the USA.

Inspiration

Born in Atlanta, Georgia, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was a Baptist Christian minister and Civil Rights leader. He was inspired to peaceful protest by Mahatma Gandhi, an important player in the battle against racism in South Africa and against British rule in India. Gandhi had shown the world that non-violent protest could lead to great change, and King was determined to use these methods to bring civil rights to the USA.



Freedom Rides

Many places in the USA refused to follow the new integrated bus rules. In places such as Birmingham, Alabama, this refusal to follow the new laws was met with peaceful protest. Black people rode on segregated buses, facing extreme violence as a result. It took pressure from President J. F. Kennedy to finally stop segregation on buses. 1961 saw the beginning of the 'freedom rides' with the result of 200 freedom riders being jailed.



Peaceful Protest

King and many civil rights groups led peaceful protests against segregation across America. Marches were frequent, as well as boycotts and sit-ins. Greensboro, North Carolina, saw students sitting in segregated restaurants as they faced abuse from white customers. 500 students sat-in at restaurants, libraries and churches during 1960 in Nashville, Tennessee. Although these protests were individually quite small, they became a powerful tool in the desegregation of many areas of the USA.

The March on Washington

In 1963, King led a march of 20,000 Black people and 50,000 white people to the centre of American government, Washington D.C. The march was entirely peaceful and culminated with King's famous 'I Have a Dream' speech:

'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.'

This speech led the way for the Civil Rights Act of 1964.



Assassination

King faced intimidation and harassment throughout his life. He was arrested 29 times during his 13 years at the forefront of the civil rights movement, he was threatened many times and was even the target of an alleged FBI operation that aimed to make him commit suicide. On April 4th, 1968 he was shot and killed by James Earl Ray whilst on the balcony of his motel. Ray spent the rest of his life in prison. The last speech King gave the day before his assassination included the words 'I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the promised land'.

Legacy

King received the Nobel Peace Prize for his leadership of the civil rights movement in 1964. He is remembered in an annual National Holiday each January in the USA.

The Civil Rights Act

1964 saw an Act that gave Black people equal rights in areas such as employment and housing.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 allowed Black people to vote in greater numbers than ever before.

The Civil Rights Act of 1968 saw further action against discrimination within the housing market.

