

MLK Jr. Biography

Martin Luther King, Jr. was a civil rights activist in the 1950s and 1960s. An activist is a person who works to change things. Mr. King led non-violent protests to fight for the rights of all people including African Americans. He hoped that America and the world could form a society where race would not impact a person's civil rights. Civil rights are the rights of people to receive equal treatment.

Martin Luther King, Jr. was born in Atlanta, GA on January 15, 1929. He went to Booker T. Washington High School. He was so smart that he skipped two grades in high school. Martin's dad was a minister and inspired Martin to become a minister too. King and his father were co-pastors at the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta for many years.

One major civil rights action started when Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a bus to a white man. She was arrested and spent the night in jail. As a result, Martin helped to organize a boycott of the public transportation system in Montgomery, Alabama. A boycott meant people refused to use the bus system. The boycott lasted for over a year. In the end, segregation on the Montgomery buses came to an end.

On Oct. 19, 1960, Mr. King was arrested for refusing to leave his seat at a segregated lunch counter. Many locations at the time separated or segregated people based on race. Black students in many cities would peacefully sit at a segregated lunch counter as a form of protest. King joined the student sit-in movement. By August, 1961, sit-ins had more than 70,000 participants in various cities.

In 1963, Martin Luther King, Jr. helped to organize the famous "March on Washington". Over 250,000 gathered at the Washington Monument to show the importance of civil rights. It was at this march where Martin gave his "I Have a Dream" speech. This speech has become one of the most famous speeches in history. The March on Washington was a great success. The Civil Rights Act was passed a year later in 1964.