

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Martin Luther King, Jr. (January 15, 1929 – April 4, 1968) was an [American](#)



[clergyman](#), activist, and prominent leader in the [African American civil rights movement](#). He is best known for being an iconic figure in the advancement of [civil rights](#) in the United States and around the world, using [nonviolent](#) methods following the teachings of [Mahatma Gandhi](#). King is often presented as a heroic leader in the history of [modern American liberalism](#).

A [Baptist](#) minister, King became a [civil rights activist](#) early in his career. He led the 1955 [Montgomery Bus Boycott](#) and helped found the [Southern Christian Leadership Conference](#) in 1957, serving as its first president. King's efforts led to the 1963 [March on Washington](#), where King delivered his "[I Have a Dream](#)" speech. There, he expanded American values to include the vision of a color blind society, and established his reputation as one of the greatest orators in American history.

In 1964, King became the youngest person to receive the [Nobel Peace Prize](#) for his work to end [racial segregation](#) and [racial discrimination](#) through [civil disobedience](#) and other nonviolent means. By the time of his death in 1968, he had refocused his efforts on ending poverty and stopping the [Vietnam War](#).

With assistance from the [Quaker](#) group the [American Friends Service Committee](#) and inspired by Gandhi's success with non-violent activism, King visited [Gandhi](#)'s birthplace in India in 1959. The trip to India affected King in a profound way, deepening his understanding of [non-violent resistance](#) and his commitment to America's struggle for civil rights. In a radio address made during his final evening in India, King reflected, "Since being in India, I am more convinced than ever before that the method of nonviolent resistance is the most potent weapon available to oppressed people in their struggle for



justice and human dignity. In a real sense, Mahatma Gandhi embodied in his life certain universal principles that are inherent in the moral structure of the universe, and these principles are as inescapable as the law of gravitation."

King was [assassinated on April 4, 1968](#), in [Memphis, Tennessee](#). He was posthumously awarded the [Presidential Medal of Freedom](#) in 1977 and [Congressional Gold Medal](#) in 2004; [Martin Luther King, Jr. Day](#) was established as a [U.S. federal holiday](#) in 1986.

King's wife, Coretta Scott King, followed her husband's footsteps and was active in matters of social justice and civil rights until her death in 2006. The same year that Martin Luther King was assassinated, she established the King Center in Atlanta, Georgia, dedicated to preserving his legacy and the work of championing nonviolent conflict resolution and tolerance worldwide.



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