

We will suffer and die if we have to . . .



Martin Luther King's role in the Civil Rights Movement began in 1955 when Rosa Parks, a seamstress, refused to give up her seat on the public bus to a white man. Her action led to a successful boycott of the Montgomery, Alabama bus system. King, a young minister, was elected president of the Montgomery Improvement Association, which coordinated the boycott. On June 4, 1956, the U.S. District Court ruled that racial desegregation on the city bus line was unconstitutional.

... I don't know what will happen now. We have got difficult days ahead. But it doesn't matter with me because I've been to the mountain top. Like anyone else, I would like to live a long life. But I'm not concerned with that. I just want to do God's will and He has allowed me to go up the mountain. I see the promised land. 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. I am happy tonight that I am not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.

You all know the story of Rip Van Winkle. . . . Everyone remembers that Winkle slept for twenty years. But what is important is that when he went up on that mountain to sleep there was a picture of King George hanging in the town.

When he came down, there was a picture of George Washington in its place.

Rip Van Winkle slept through a revolution, but we cannot afford to remain asleep. . . .

Our world is as a neighborhood. "We must all learn to live together as brothers, or we will all perish as fools. . . ."

There are two challenges to America. The challenges are racism and poverty.

In a few weeks a few of us are coming to Washington to see if the will to meet those challenges still lives among us.

We're not coming to engage in any histrionic action. We are not coming to tear up Washington.

We are coming to engage in dramatic, nonviolent action. We are coming, and we will stay as long as we have to. . . .

We will suffer and die if we have to. For I submit, nothing will be done until people put their bodies and soul into this.

April 3, 1968
Memphis, Tennessee



King was arrested 30 times and spent many days in jail. "Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust. All desegregation statutes are unjust because segregation distorts the soul and damages the personality. . . . It's better to go to jail with dignity than accept segregation in humility."



"It is not enough to be concerned about the soul of man; you've got to be concerned about the body and the environmental conditions, which may scar the soul." — April 1968

Fred Meyer
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