

King Inspired Nation, World

Biography of a civil rights hero

Martin Luther King Jr., (Jan. 15, 1929-April 4, 1968) was born Michael Luther King, Jr., but later had his name changed to Martin.

His grandfather began the family's long tenure as pastors of the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, serving from 1914 to 1931; his father succeeded him, and from 1960 until his death Martin Luther acted as co-pastor.

Martin Luther attended segregated public schools in Georgia, graduating from high school at the age of 15; he received the B. A. degree in 1948 from Morehouse College, a distinguished historically black institution of Atlanta from which both his father and grandfather had graduated.

After three years of theological study at Crozer Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania where he was elected president of a predominantly white senior class, he was awarded the B.D. in 1951. With a fellowship won at Crozer, he enrolled in graduate studies at Boston University, completing his residence for the doctorate in 1953 and receiving the degree in 1955. In Boston he met and married Coretta Scott, a young woman of uncommon intellectual and artistic attainments. Two sons and two daughters were born into the family.

In 1954, Martin Luther King became pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Ala. Always a strong worker for civil rights for members of his race, King was, by this time, a member of the executive committee of the National

Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the leading organization of its kind in the nation. He was ready, then, early in December, 1955, to accept the leadership of the first great black nonviolent demonstration of contemporary times in the United States, the bus boycott described by Gunnar Jahn in his Nobel presentation speech in honor of King.

The boycott lasted 382 days. On Dec. 21, 1956, after the Supreme Court of the United States had declared unconstitutional the laws requiring segregation on buses, blacks and whites rode the buses as equals. During these days of boycott, King was arrested, his home was bombed, he was subjected to personal abuse, but at the same time he emerged as a black leader of the first rank.

In 1957 he was elected president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, an organization formed to provide new leadership for the now burgeoning civil rights movement. The ideals for this organization he took from Christianity; its operational techniques from Gandhi.

In the 11-year period between 1957 and 1968, King traveled over six million miles and spoke over 2,500 times, appearing wherever there was injustice, protest, and action; and meanwhile he wrote five books as well as numerous articles.

In these years, he led a massive protest in Birmingham, Ala., that caught the attention of the entire world, providing what he called a coalition of conscience, and inspiring his "Letter from a Birmingham Jail", a manifesto of the black revolution; he planned the drives in Alabama for the registration of blacks as voters; he directed the peaceful march on Washington, D.C., of 250,000 people to whom he delivered his address, "I Have a Dream", he conferred with President John F. Kennedy and campaigned for President Lyndon B. Johnson; he was arrested upwards of 25 times and assaulted at least four times; he was awarded five honorary degrees; was named Man of the Year by Time magazine in

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Dr. Martin
Luther
King Jr.

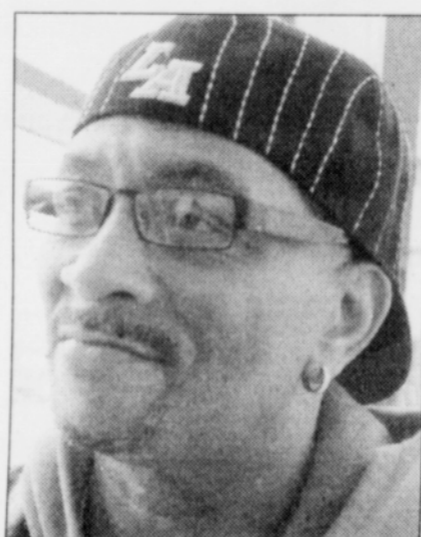
In the Neighborhood

What is the most influential part of Martin Luther King Jr.'s legacy and how is it being felt today?



To unite everybody as one.
We are equal.
— VALLIE DOYLE

Everybody can have a dream. I just hate that he's gone.
— RONALD HARRIS



His speech on the mountain top about how we should be judged by the content of our character and not the color of our skin.
— TERESA SCHOATES

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