

Ten Facts about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

1. King's Birth Name Was Michael, Not Martin

King was born Michael King Jr. on January 15, 1929. In 1934, however, his father, a pastor at Atlanta's Ebenezer Baptist Church, traveled to Germany and became inspired by the Protestant Reformation leader, Martin Luther. As a result, King Sr. changed his own name as well as that of his five-year-old son.



2. King Entered College At the Age of 15

King was such a gifted student that he skipped grades nine and 12 before enrolling in 1944 at Morehouse College, the alma mater of his father and mater-

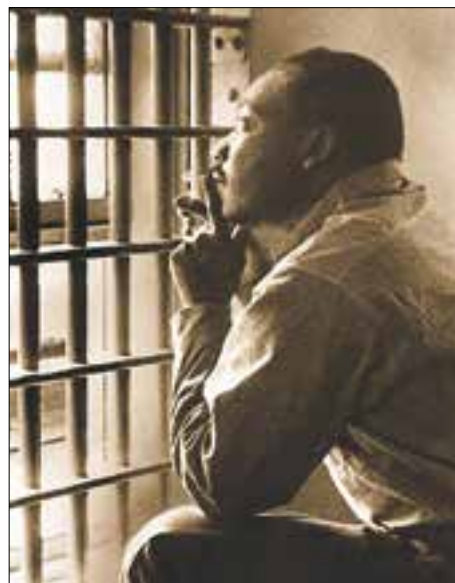
nal grandfather. Although he was the son, grandson and great-grandson of Baptist ministers, King did not intend to follow the family vocation until Morehouse president Benjamin E. Mays, a noted theologian, convinced him otherwise. King was ordained before graduating college with a degree in sociology.

3. King Received His Doctorate in Systematic Theology

After earning a divinity degree from Pennsylvania's Crozer Theological Seminary, King attended graduate school at Boston University, where he received his Ph.D. degree in 1955. The title of his dissertation was "A Comparison of the Conceptions of God in the Thinking of Paul Tillich and Henry Nelson Wieman."

4. King's 'I Have a Dream' Speech Was Not His First At the Lincoln Memorial

Six years before his iconic oration at the March on Washington, King was among the civil rights leaders who spoke in the shadow of the Great Emancipator during the Prayer Pilgrimage for Freedom on May 17, 1957. Before a crowd estimated at between 15,000 and 30,000, King delivered his first national address on the topic of voting rights. His speech, in which he urged America to "give us the ballot," drew strong reviews and positioned him at the forefront of the civil rights leadership.



5. King Was Imprisoned Nearly 30 Times

According to the King Center, the civil rights leader went to jail 29 times. He was arrested for acts of civil disobedience and on trumped-up charges, such as when he was jailed in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1956 for driving 30 miles per hour in a 25-mile-per-hour zone.

6. King's Last Public Speech Foretold His Death

King had come to Memphis in April 1968 to support the strike of the city's Black garbage workers, and in a speech on the night before his assassination, he told

an audience at Mason Temple Church: "Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now ... I've seen 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. And I'm happy tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord."



7. King Narrowly Escaped an Assassination Attempt a Decade Before His Death

On September 20, 1958, King was in Harlem signing copies of his new book, *Stride Toward Freedom*, in Blumstein's department store when he was approached by Izola Ware Curry. The woman asked if he was Martin Luther King Jr. After he said yes, Curry said, "I've been

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"Even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream."

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

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