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In March of that year, 15-year-old Claudette Colvin refused to give up her seat to a white man, which was against the law at the time.

Nine months later, Rosa Parks was arrested in Montgomery for refusing to give up her seat on a public bus. Parks' case became the basis for the decision rendered in *Browder v. Gayle*, which found the Alabama and Montgomery segregation laws unconstitutional.

These two incidents led to a boycott of the public transit system coordinated by King and others at the SCLC. The boycott lasted 385 days and sparked a series of violent reprisals against the group's leaders, including the bombing of King's house.

However, King's high-profile role in the boycott elevated him to national prominence and to the undisputed leadership of the civil rights movement in America. King became president of the SCLC in

1957, propelling that organization to the forefront of the struggle for civil rights for all Americans.

This was not without further hardship. In 1958, King was signing copies of his book, "Stride towards Freedom, The Montgomery Story" when he was stabbed by a woman named Izola Curry. King nearly died from the attack and was in the hospital for several weeks following surgery. Curry was found incompetent to stand trial and was placed in a psychiatric institution.

Central to the message King shared with members of his congregation was the idea of nonviolence — or "Ahimsa" — taken from an earlier leader in the civil rights movement, Mahatma Gandhi.

King came to greatly appreciate the non-violent approach taken by Gandhi and worked diligently to convince other members of the movement that violence would only serve to frighten and alienate large numbers of the public.

His position on the use

of violence had shifted over the years and he implored his brethren to reject violence, even as he was the target of derision and hate for his efforts to facilitate a movement from subjugation to integration.

Threats of violence against his person and his family were common, yet King remained steadfast in his opposition to violence. He made an impassioned plea for calm after his house was bombed by members of the Ku Klux Klan in 1956: "If you have weapons, take them home; if you do not have them, please do not seek to get them. We cannot solve this problem through retaliatory violence. We must meet violence with nonviolence. Remember the words of Jesus: 'He who lives by the sword will perish by the sword.' We must love our white brothers, no matter what they do to us. We must make them know that we love them."

In 1964, King became the youngest person ever to receive the Nobel Peace Prize for his work combatting ra-

cial inequality.

One of the most significant civil rights protests of the era took place in Selma, Ala., in 1965. Again, King was a central participant.

Selma had been the site of a voter registration effort in 1964 when a local judge issued an action which was later found to be unconstitutional.

King attended a meeting with officials of President Lyndon B. Johnson's administration on that March to request an injunction from the Justice Department preventing protesters from being arrested for participating in the scheduled march. He was unsuccessful in this attempt.

Other leaders of the movement led a truncated march, which ended with police and residents beating and vilifying marchers.

The reaction to the violence, which was broadcast into American homes on the evening news, was significant and credited with changing the way the civil rights struggle was viewed by many in the country.

King was also heavily involved with another of the most polarizing issues of the 1960s — the war in Vietnam. King believed the millions of dollars being spent on arms and bombs should be put to use in the African American community to provide job training and housing for the underprivileged, regardless of ethnicity.

He also believed there was a connection between war and social injustice and made that argument in speeches and interviews.

"A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death," he argued.

His antiwar stance alienated some of King's mainstream supporters, like the

Reverend Billy Graham, but this did not deter him from continuing to oppose the Vietnam war until his assassination.

It was discovered years later, during the Congressional investigations undertaken by the Church Committee, that King had been the target of a coordinated campaign ordered by FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover to surveil King and use the information to discredit him. Hundreds of recorded conversations in the FBI archives detailed the thoughts and plans of the leadership of the civil rights movement and memos on how these recordings could be used to control the leaders of the SCLC and others involved in active protests against the federal government.

King gave perhaps his most famous speech at the "March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom" held on the Washington Mall, Aug. 28, 1963. King was one of the primary organizers of the march, which made specific demands including a law prohibiting racial discrimination in employment and an end to segregation in public schools.

King's impassioned plea to the half million people who attended the march is now considered by scholars and historians to be one of the most important speeches in American history.

"I say to you today, my friends, even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream..." said King. "... We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal ... I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character..."

In March 1968, King was

in Memphis to support black public works employees. The workers were on strike for higher wages and better working conditions. King addressed a rally in support of the striking workers where he seemed to be eerily speculating on his own demise, saying "... Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And 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..."

King was assassinated on April 4, 1968, at the Lorraine Motel as he was in the process of planning a national occupation of Washington D.C. to be called the Poor People's Campaign. He was 39 years old.

Just days after King's assassination, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1968.

The FBI and local law enforcement officers had King and his colleagues under surveillance at the time of the assassination and were unable to identify the location of the shooter at the time. Riots erupted in more than 100 cities across the country in the wake of King's assassination and James Earl Ray was eventually arrested and convicted of the crime, although members of King's family and inner circle believe there were other individuals or groups involved in the killing.

Martin Luther King Jr. received the Presidential Medal of Freedom posthumously from President Jimmy Carter in 1977 and President Ronald Reagan signed a bill creating a federal holiday to honor King in 1983.

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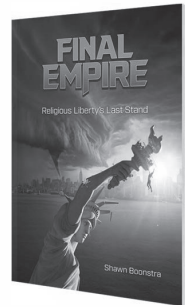
OPENING SESSION:
Thursday, January 23, 6:00 pm (Free Light Meal at 5:30 pm)
Republic Rising
History tells us that when Christopher Columbus set sail, he already knew the World was not flat. So, what was he really doing on his quest? We'll look at the evidence that points to Columbus' true goals, his deep convictions, and a journey that he believed was driven by the Hand of God.

SESSION 2: Friday, January 24, 6:00 pm (Light Meal at 5:00 pm)
Christianity Corrupted

SESSION 3: Saturday, January 25, 11:00 am (Lunch following)
The Earth Opens Up

SESSION 4: Saturday, January 25, 6:00 pm (Light Meal at 5:00 pm)
America's Last Stand

FREE BOOK: Final Empire by Shawn Boonstra (while supplies last)



Learn more at FinalEmpire.com
All Meetings will be at:

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