

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Civil Rights Movement Facts

- Rosa Parks' refusal to give up her seat to a white man on a Montgomery bus in 1955 ignited the Montgomery Bus Boycott, which led to the integration of city buses, and is widely considered the first step of the Civil Rights Movement.
- In January 1956 Dr. King was arrested for speeding. He was driving 30 mph in a 25 mph zone.
- Triggered by the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) was founded in 1957 with hundreds of black leaders as members who had a common belief in the power of nonviolent mass action.
- Martin Luther King, Jr.'s first book, *Stride Toward Freedom*, tells the story of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, was published in 1958 and earned him an Aims Field-Wolf Award.
- On September 20, 1958, Martin Luther King, Jr. was stabbed in a Harlem department store where he was signing and promoting his book, *Stride Toward Freedom*.
- The Greensboro Four were students who staged a sit-in protest at a Woolworth's lunch counter in North Carolina in 1960, pioneered this form of non-violent protests.
- In 1962, James Meredith, a black man, was denied acceptance to the University of Mississippi. He took his case to the U.S. Supreme Court, arguing that he was denied admission simply because he was black. The court ruled in his favor and his first day at school attracted a mob of people and incited riots that killed two, and injured hundreds.
- Dr. King wrote his *Letter From Birmingham City Jail* in April 1963 in response to a statement made by a group of Alabama clergymen who were critical of his behavior and decisions. This letter eventually came to be seen as one of Dr. King's most influential writings, recognized for its eloquence in spelling out his philosophy of non-violence.
- On August 28, 1963, in the shadow of the Lincoln Memorial and before an audience of more than 250,000 civil rights activists, Dr. King delivered his *I Have a Dream* speech.
- President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the first Civil Rights Act on July 2, 1964, making racial discrimination in public places such as theatres, restaurants, and hotels, illegal.
- On December 10, 1964, at the age of 35, Martin Luther King was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, making him the youngest recipient, the second American, and the third black man to receive the prize.
- Due to his belief in and commitment to nonviolence and civil disobedience, Martin Luther King is often aligned with Mohandas Gandhi, the Indian political and spiritual activist.
- Malcolm X, another prominent figure in civil rights issues of the 50s and 60s was assassinated in 1965, three years before Dr. King.
- In March of 1965 Alabama State Troopers attacked a civil rights march in Alabama, meant to protest the slew of violence being visited upon civil rights workers in the State. This was the event that prompted LBJ to sign the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

- Dr. King made his living as a Baptist Minister at Ebenezer Baptist Church, a congregation begun by his maternal grandfather.
- A routine drunk-driving traffic stop in the Watts section of Los Angeles on August 11, 1965 added to the racial tension that was rampant in the United States and led to six days of rioting. In the end, thirty-four people were dead, thousands had been injured, four thousand arrested, and there was nearly \$200 million in damage throughout the city.
- Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated on April 4, 1968 while standing on the balcony of his Memphis motel room. James Earl Ray, the identified assassin was sentenced to 99 years in prison where he died of liver failure on April 23, 1998.
- In 1983, fifteen years after the assassination of Dr. King, President Ronald Reagan signed a law creating the Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday, observed the third Monday in January.
- The first observance of the Martin Luther King, Jr. national holiday was in 1986.