

## King, Martin Luther, Jr.



Picture  
Martin Luther King, Jr.

Martin Luther King, Jr., (1929-1968) was an important civil rights leader in the United States. He fought for the freedoms and rights of African Americans and other people. King won the 1964 Nobel Peace Prize for leading peaceful protests. Today, the United States celebrates King's birthday with a national holiday on the third Monday in January.

King was born on January 15, 1929, in Atlanta, Georgia. He became a Baptist minister in 1948. In 1955, King received a Ph.D. degree from Boston University in Massachusetts. At that time, African Americans were treated unfairly in many ways. In some parts of the United States, they were not allowed to use the same schools, hotels, and restaurants as whites. Many people also tried to keep blacks from voting. King worked in peaceful ways to fight against this unfair treatment.

In 1955, King led a protest against the bus system of Montgomery, Alabama. That year, a black passenger named Rosa Parks was arrested for disobeying a state law that said blacks had to give up their seats to white passengers. In 1957, King received the Spingarn Medal, a medal given each year by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to an outstanding African American.



King was a great speaker. He opposed the use of violence as a way to get fair treatment for African Americans. Through the work of King and others, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and other laws were passed to protect people's rights.

Though King encouraged peaceful action, many people used violence against him. Some people threw rocks at him and bombed his home. On April 4, 1968, King was shot and killed in Memphis, Tennessee. His widow, Coretta Scott King, continued King's civil rights work after he died. She died in 2006.

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