

Tisha Nelson

# VOCABULARY

boycott

discrimination

segregation

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## THINK ABOUT IT

1. Use a cause and effect graphic organizer to describe some of the milestones of the Civil Rights movement. Explain why the event happened (the cause) and what happened (the effect).

Cause	Effect

2. Why do you think Martin Luther King, Jr. was able to accomplish so much during his brief career? Use evidence from the book to support your answer.

## CITIZENSHIP IN ACTION

More than 50 years after his death, the words and actions of Dr. King continue to inspire people around the world. He faced many obstacles yet continued to stand up for what he believed in.

### Your Turn!

Think of what you could do to keep Dr. King's legacy alive. Could your classmates help you make it happen? Could community leaders help you out? What actions could you take to start your own movement?

# Celebrating Martin Luther King, Jr.

Tisha Nelson

Series Editor  
Mark Percy



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# A Lasting Legacy

Imagine not being allowed to go to a restaurant because of your skin color. This is a type of racism. Racism is a type of **discrimination**. It occurs when people mistreat others because of their race or the color of their skin. Racism comes in many forms. It exists all around the world.

One man fought so hard against racism that we still celebrate him today.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.



Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was born in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1929. He grew up to become an important Civil Rights leader.

Dr. King worked hard to give African Americans equal rights. He encouraged activists to stand up for peace and equality. Throughout his life, he made great progress in advancing civil rights in the United States.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day was created to honor Dr. King's legacy.



# A Long History ...

Europeans started coming to the Americas hundreds of years ago. People of color did not have the same rights as white people at that time. Millions of Africans were forced to come to the Americas as enslaved people.

Enslaved people in the United States were often forced to work on large farms. Many died because of how they were treated.

Ships were used to take captured Africans to another country. The Africans were forced to stay belowdecks.



## The Beginnings of Change

### *For Your Information*

brates the  
ed people

A circular graphic with a blue border. Inside, a raised fist is shown, with chains and shackles attached to its wrists. The background features a sunburst pattern of orange and yellow rays. Below the fist is a dark banner with the word "Juneteenth" in yellow. The number "7" is in the bottom right corner.

7

## Segregation

Jim Crow laws were passed in the South in the late 1870s. These laws allowed **segregation**. They stated that African Americans had to use separate schools, restaurants, buses, and hospitals.

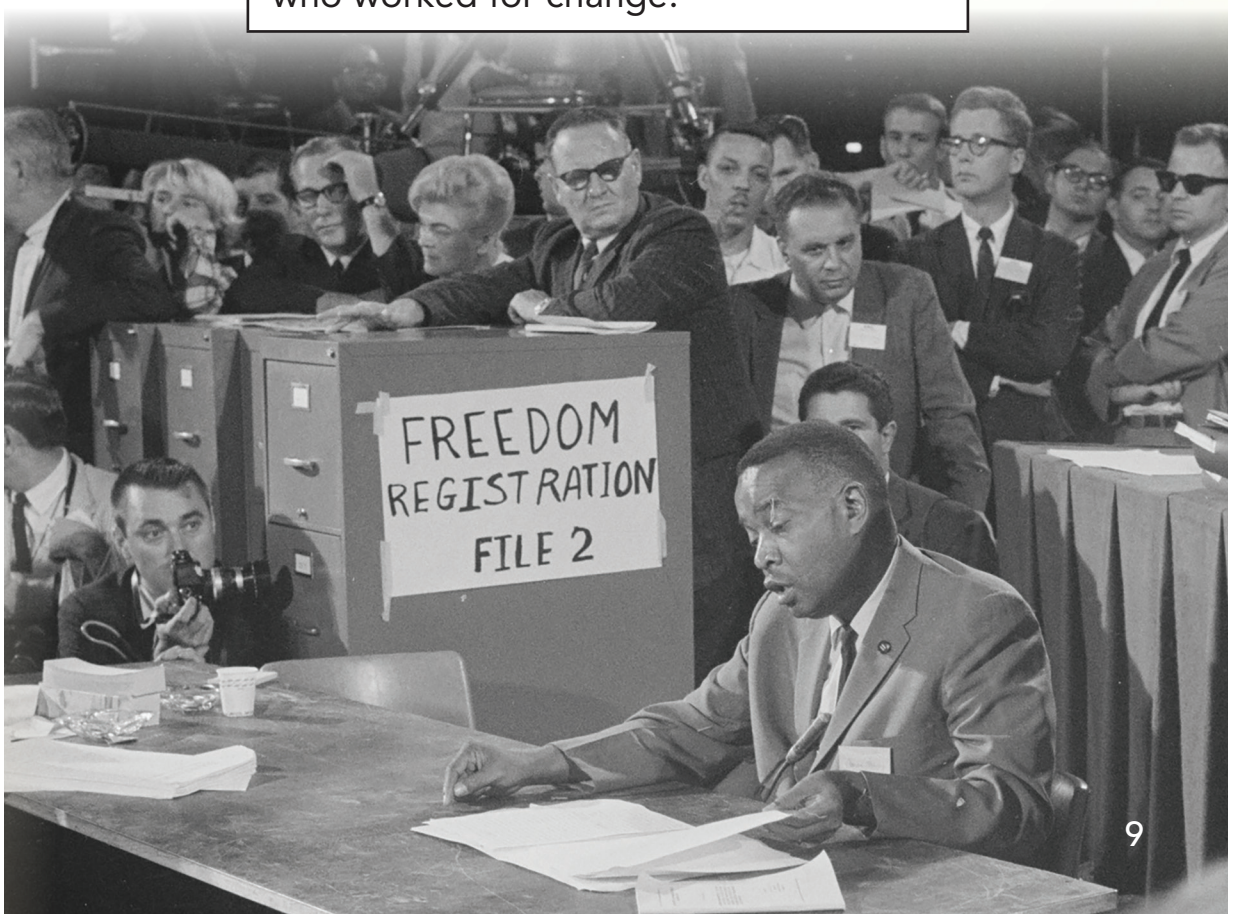


African Americans also had to use separate movie theaters.

In 1868, the Fourteenth Amendment gave African Americans citizenship. However, African Americans still had to fight for equal treatment. Dr. King played a key role in this fight.

### *For Your Information*

African Americans were given the right to vote in 1870. By 1970, several states were still ignoring this law. Aaron Henry (shown here) was a Civil Rights leader who worked for change.



# Dr. King's Dream

The **American Civil Rights movement** took place throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Many activists joined this movement. Led by Dr. King, the Civil Rights movement resulted in many breakthroughs in equality.

Dr. King led the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. This event took place on August 28, 1963.



Dr. King

The march was one of the largest human rights rallies in U.S. history. Many people marched in support of equal rights for African Americans.

Dr. King gave a speech at the end of the event. He said, “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 ...”

Dr. King and other leaders march in Washington, D.C., in August 1963.



The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was signed a year after Dr. King gave his speech. This act made segregation in public places illegal. According to writer Michiko Kakutani, “Dr. King’s speech was ... a **testament** to the transformative powers of one man and the magic of his words.”

President Lyndon B. Johnson  
signs the 1964 Civil Rights Act.



## The Inside Story

Dr. King's I Have a Dream speech has become famous all around the world. However, he had a different speech planned originally. As Dr. King was about halfway through that speech, gospel singer Mahalia Jackson shouted, "Tell 'em about the 'Dream,' Martin!"

At that moment, Dr. King pushed his prepared speech to the side. He began to **improvise**. The crowd was energized by the way Dr. King spoke. Social critic James Baldwin later wrote that he could feel "the passion of the people flowing up to [Dr. King]."



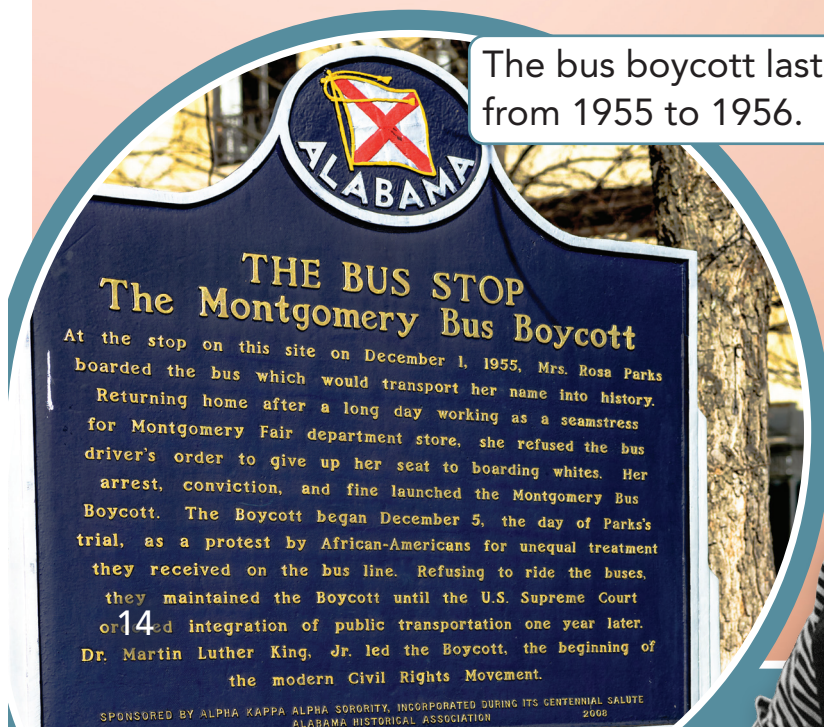
# Movement Milestones

The Civil Rights movement was not limited to only the March on Washington.

## The Montgomery Bus Boycott

Dr. King helped lead the Montgomery Bus **Boycott** in 1955. The boycott was started to protest the arrest of an African American woman named Rosa Parks. Local laws said that African Americans had to sit at the back of the bus. Also, African Americans had to give up their seats to white people if the bus was full. On December 1, 1955, Rosa Parks refused to give her seat to a white passenger. This led to her arrest.

The bus boycott lasted from 1955 to 1956.



Parks's arrest brought attention to segregation laws. Many African Americans refused to ride Montgomery buses. The Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) was formed to help support the boycott. Dr. King was elected president of the association. More than 40,000 people participated in the boycott. Many people tried to intimidate the boycott's participants. Dr. King's home was even bombed. The boycott ended when the U.S. Supreme Court declared segregation on buses illegal.



This sculpture of Rosa Parks is located at the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, Tennessee.

## The Little Rock Nine

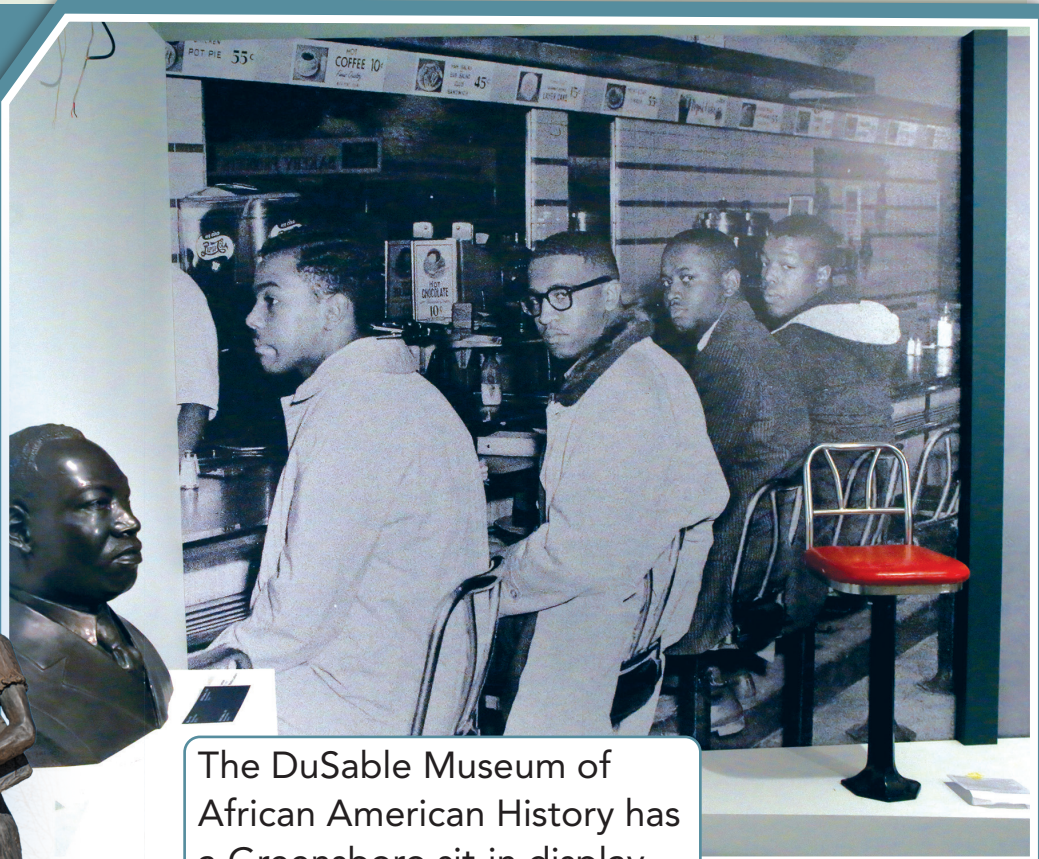
In 1957, a group of nine African American students enrolled in an all-white high school in Little Rock, Arkansas. On the first day of school, a mob of angry people stopped the students from entering the school. Dr. King asked for President Dwight Eisenhower's help. Eisenhower sent soldiers to Little Rock. These soldiers remained there for the rest of the school year to protect the students.

These statues of the Little Rock Nine are located at the Arkansas State Capitol.



## The Greensboro Sit-In

In 1960, four African American students in Greensboro, North Carolina, started their own protest. They went to a segregated restaurant and sat in the “whites only” section. The manager called the police. However, the students had not done anything wrong. A photo of the sit-in made it into the newspapers. This helped inspire sit-ins across the country. Many businesses were forced to change their policies.



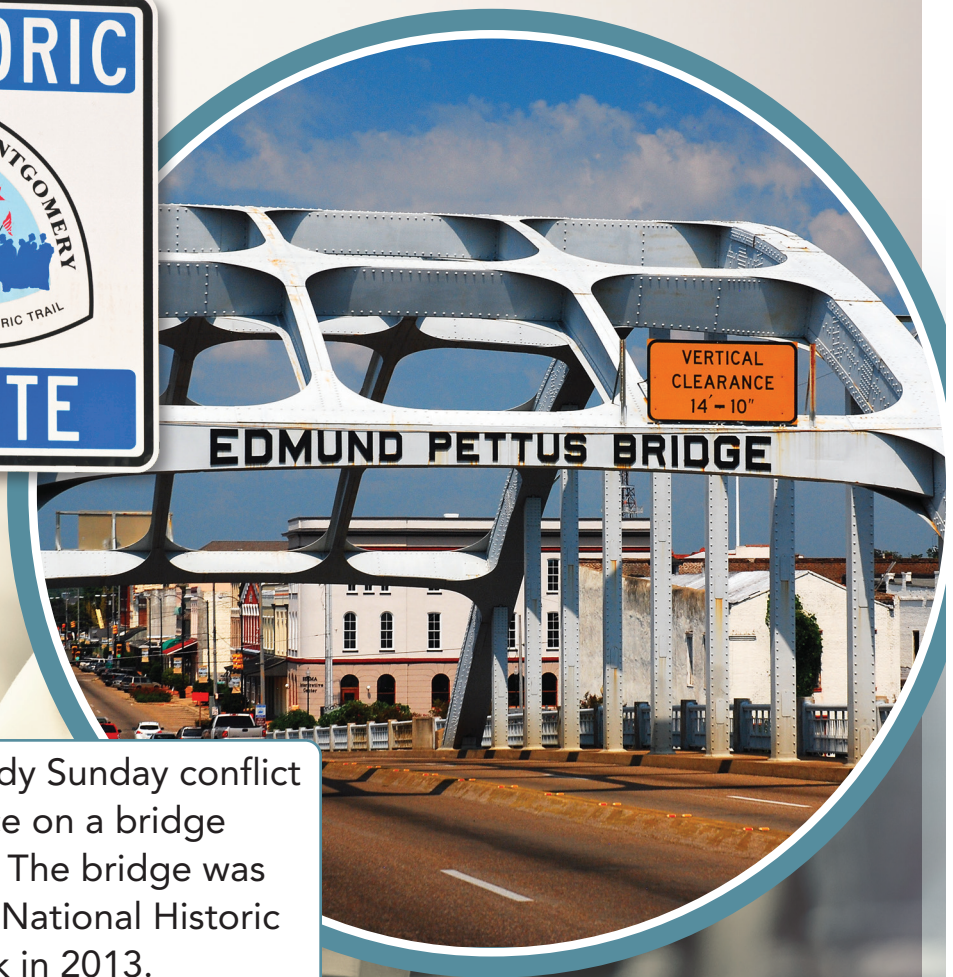
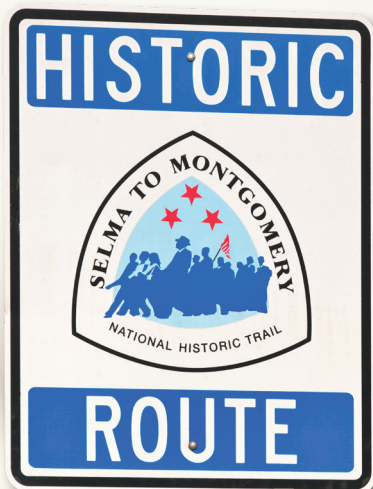
The DuSable Museum of African American History has a Greensboro sit-in display.

## The Selma March

The Selma March was organized to protest unfair voting practices. The Civil Rights Act had recently been passed. However, African Americans still experienced many difficulties when they tried to vote — especially in the South. Some received threats of violence. In addition, some were asked to take extremely unfair literacy tests.

African Americans who protested these unfair voting practices were arrested. Tensions became even worse when an activist named Jimmie Lee Jackson was killed by a police officer.

Three marches from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, were held to raise awareness about Jackson's death. The first march began on March 7, 1965. Local authorities attacked the marchers as they attempted to leave Selma. This event became known as Bloody Sunday.

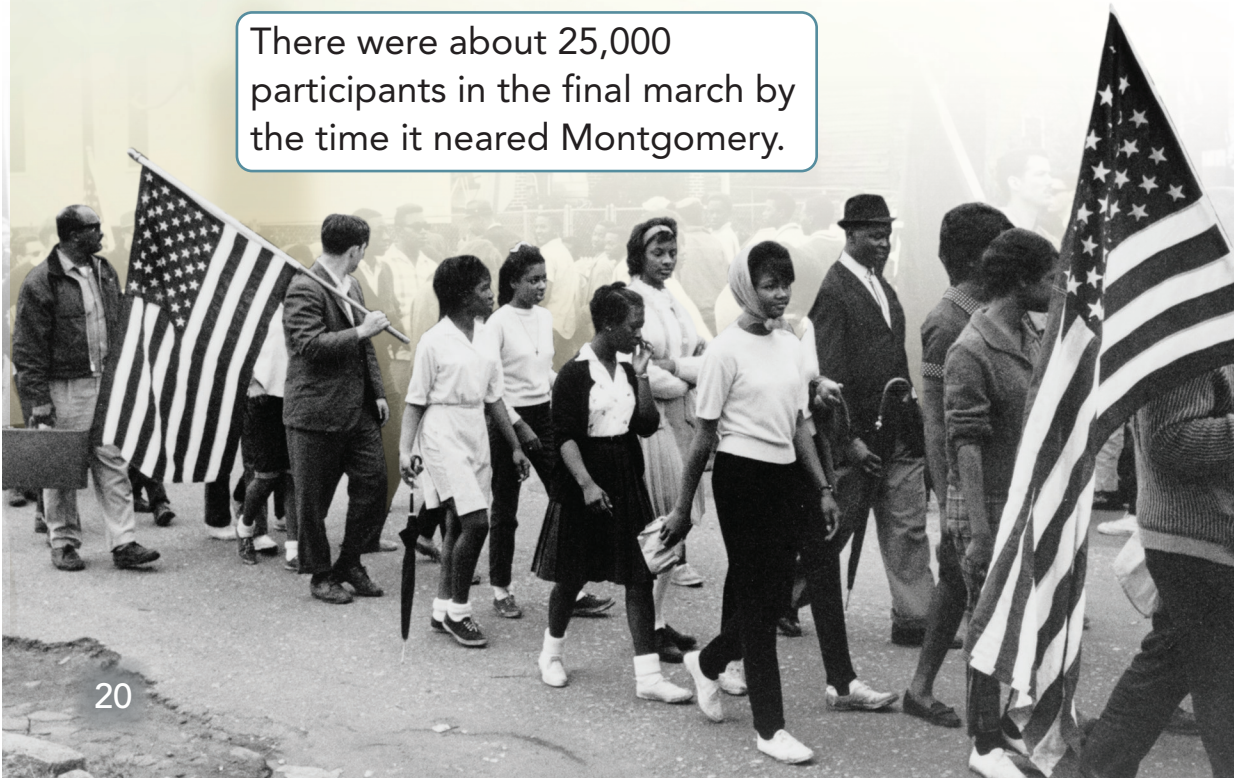


The Bloody Sunday conflict took place on a bridge in Selma. The bridge was named a National Historic Landmark in 2013.

Dr. King wanted the Selma March to continue. However, the next march did not get very far.

President Lyndon B. Johnson sent soldiers and members of the National Guard to protect the marchers. The third march started on March 21, 1965. When the marchers reached Montgomery, Dr. King delivered his “How Long, Not Long” speech. In the speech, Dr. King spoke hopefully about the end of racial prejudice. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 was passed a few months later. This act made literacy tests illegal. It also made it much easier for African Americans to vote.

There were about 25,000 participants in the final march by the time it neared Montgomery.

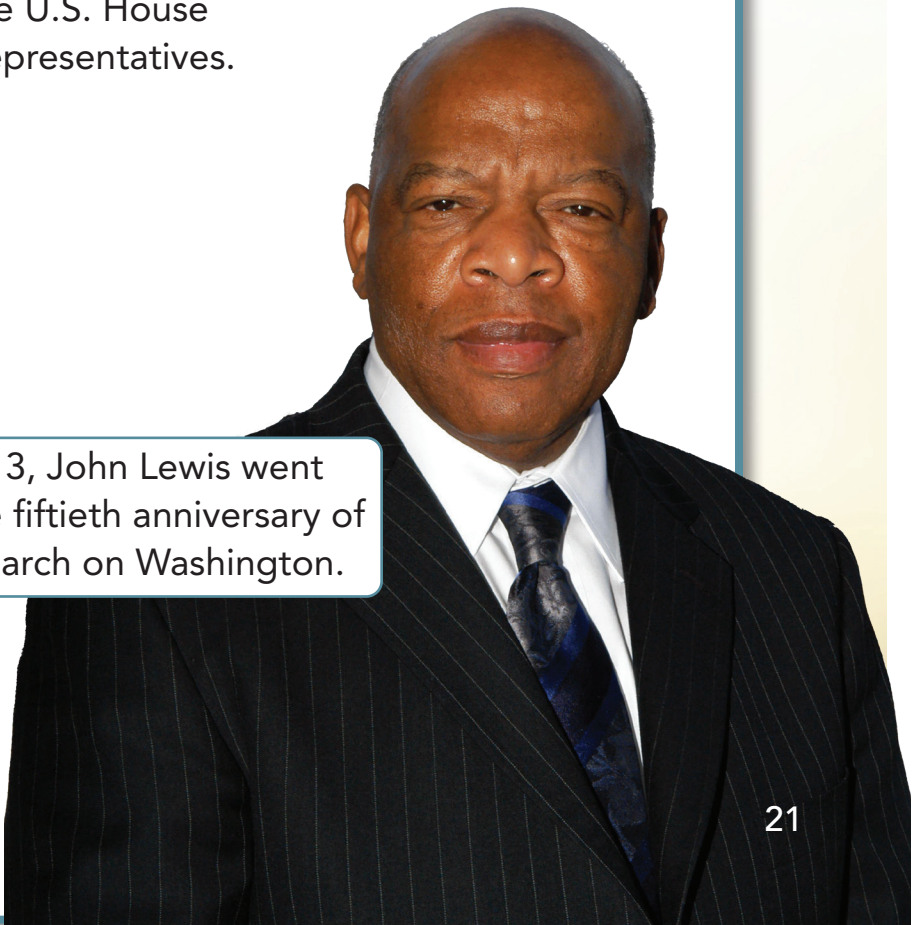


## John Lewis

John Lewis was an important Civil Rights activist. He wanted to raise awareness about the injustice of segregation. Lewis also took part in the Freedom Rides of 1961. By this time, segregation on buses was illegal. But many areas of the South ignored this ruling. Lewis and other activists rode buses all across Alabama and other southern states. Many of the riders were attacked and arrested.

Lewis participated in the Selma March and the March on Washington. Today, he is a member of the U.S. House of Representatives.

In 2013, John Lewis went to the fiftieth anniversary of the March on Washington.



# Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

Dr. King's leadership skills inspired many people. His legacy is still remembered today. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day is a holiday that celebrates this legacy. It takes place on the third Monday in January.

Several cities have special events on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. Many people choose to volunteer on this holiday.

## *For Your Information*

President Ronald Reagan made Martin Luther King, Jr. Day a federal holiday.

Dr. King's wife, Coretta Scott King, wanted people to remember Dr. King's message of love, forgiveness, and nonviolence. She said we should use Martin Luther King, Jr. Day to help people in need.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day reminds us to help others and stand up for what is right. What can you do to improve someone's life?

President Barack Obama helped paint a mural of Dr. King in Washington, D.C.



# More Than Words

The legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr. has inspired many people, including several presidents.

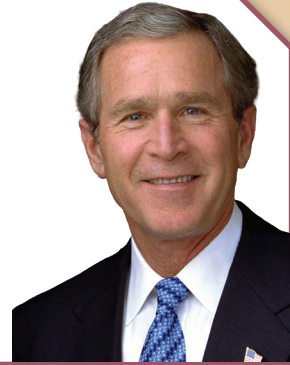
"Dr. King's dream is our dream. It is the American Dream. It's the promise stitched into the fabric of our Nation ... and written into the soul of humankind."  
— Donald Trump, 2018



"Dr. King lifted the quiet hopes of our Nation with the powers of his voice and pen."  
— Barack Obama, 2017

"The man from Atlanta, Georgia, only grows larger with the years. America is a better place because he was here, and we will honor his name forever."

— George W. Bush, 2002

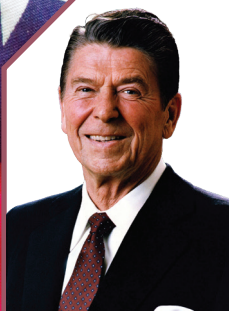
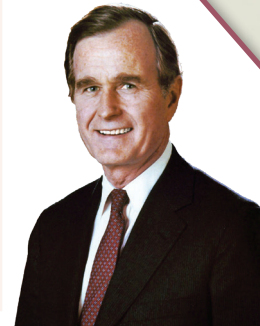


"We must have the faith and wisdom that Dr. King preached ... if we are to make this a time for healing and progress — and each of us must play a role."

— Bill Clinton, 1996

"He was a force against evil. His life was a metaphor for courage. His goal was an America where equality and opportunity could coexist and where goodness could prevail."

— George H. W. Bush, 1990



"America is a more democratic nation, a more just nation, a more peaceful nation because Martin Luther King, Jr. became [its] **preeminent** nonviolent commander."

— Ronald Reagan, 1983

# A Leader Lives On

On April 4, 1968, Dr. King was shot in Memphis, Tennessee. He died shortly afterward. The news of Dr. King's death shocked people around the world. Riots broke out in many cities.

The National Civil Rights Museum was built around the former Lorraine Motel, where Dr. King was shot.



People continue to be inspired by Dr. King's legacy today. Dr. King experienced racism firsthand. He saw how it was affecting communities across the United States. He worked tirelessly to make a difference.

Martin Luther King, Jr. preached nonviolence and love. In his book *Strength to Love*, Dr. King wrote, "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."

Much progress has been made in the struggle for equal rights. But there is still work to do. How can your actions help this struggle?

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial is located in Washington, D.C.



## Glossary

### **American Civil Rights**

**movement:** the organized efforts of a group of people in the United States who worked for equal rights during the 1950s and 1960s

**boycott:** a protest in which people refuse to do something, such as buying certain products or using certain services

**discrimination:** the unfair and unequal treatment of people based on things such as their race or skin color

**improvise:** to perform without preparation

**preeminent:** having the utmost importance

**segregation:** the act of keeping certain groups of people separate from one another based on race

**testament:** a statement or act that offers proof

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