

“Now I realize that there are those all over who are telling us that we must slow up. ... But we cannot afford to slow up. We have a moral obligation to press on. We have our self-respect to maintain. But even more we can't afford to slow up because of our love for America and our love for the democratic way of life. ... We must keep moving. We must keep going.”

From “The Montgomery Story,” an address to the 47th annual NAACP Convention  
San Francisco, June 27, 1956

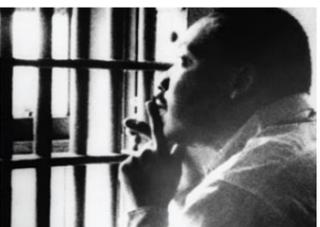
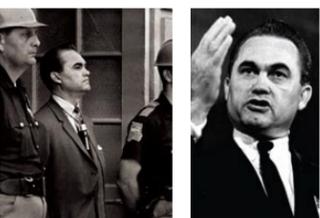
COMMEMORATING THE

40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
OF THE DEATH OF DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

JANUARY 15, 1929 • ATLANTA, GEORGIA — APRIL 4, 1968 • MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE

## AN AMERICAN TIMELINE

# DR. KING AND THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT



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**1954** Martin Luther King, Jr., educated at Morehouse College, Crozer Theological Seminary and Boston University, is **appointed pastor of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church** in Montgomery, Ala. He is recently married to his college sweetheart, Coretta Scott.

**1955** King receives a Ph.D. in Systematic Theology from Boston University. On Dec. 1, **Rosa Parks refuses to give up her seat** to a white man on a Montgomery city bus and is arrested. Four days later, Dr. King is elected president of the newly created Montgomery Improvement Association and helps lead the subsequent 381-day bus boycott that marks the beginning of the modern Civil Rights Movement.

**1956** Dr. King, with the Rev. Charles K. Steele and the Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth, establish the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), an organization of black clergy. **A bomb is thrown at the King home**, but no one is injured.

**1957** Dr. King meets with Vice President Richard Nixon to discuss the **Civil Rights Act** being debated by the House of Representatives.

**1958** Dr. King, along with Roy Wilkins of the NAACP, A. Philip Randolph of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and Lester Granger **meet with President Dwight D. Eisenhower**.

On a visit to Harlem, **King is stabbed** with a letter opener – barely missing his aorta – by Izola Ware Curry while signing his new book, *Stride Toward Freedom*.

**1959** Dr. and Mrs. King **spend a month in India** studying Gandhi's protest techniques of nonviolence as guests of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru.

**1960** The King family moves to Atlanta, Ga. Dr. King becomes co-pastor, with his father, of the Ebenezer Baptist Church. The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) is founded to coordinate student protests at Shaw University in Raleigh, N.C. Dr. King and James Lawson are the keynote speakers at the Shaw University founding. **A sit-in at the Woolworth lunch counter in Greensboro, N.C.** triggers similar actions across the South. In Atlanta, Dr. King is arrested for participating in one.

**1961** Freedom Riders press the desegregation of buses with a long trip into the South. On May 14, they are attacked at Anniston, Ala., and one of their buses is burned. Six days later, in Montgomery, the **Freedom Riders are savagely attacked** and beaten by a mob near the Greyhound station. The following day, Dr. King, in a rally in Montgomery, calls for a nonviolent campaign against segregation.

**1962** Despite violent riots and opposition by the governor, James Meredith becomes the **first black student** to attend the University of Mississippi.

**1963** Sit-in demonstrations in Birmingham, Ala., protest segregation of eating facilities and quickly grow in strength. School children join the protests, which authorities try to disrupt by using police dogs and firehoses. Dr. King is arrested during a demonstration, and while incarcerated writes "Letter from a Birmingham Jail." In nearby Tuscaloosa, **Gov. George C. Wallace tries to stop the court-ordered integration of the University of Alabama** by "standing in the schoolhouse door." President John F. Kennedy responds by federalizing the Alabama National Guard. After negotiations with federal authorities, Gov. Wallace steps aside and students enter the university. In

Jackson, Miss., Medgar Evers, field secretary of the NAACP in Mississippi, is murdered outside his home.

Dr. King delivers his famous **"I Have a Dream"** speech to 200,000 at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. Afterward, he and other Civil Rights leaders meet with President Kennedy in the White House. **A bomb kills four young girls** at the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham. President Kennedy is assassinated in Dallas.

**1964** Freedom Summer brings hundreds of students to **register black voters** in the South. Three Movement volunteers – James E. Cheney, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner – are murdered near Philadelphia, Miss. Dr. King attends the signing of the Public Accommodations Bill (part of the Civil Rights Act of 1964) by President Lyndon B. Johnson in the White House. Dr. King **receives the Nobel Peace Prize** in Oslo, Norway.

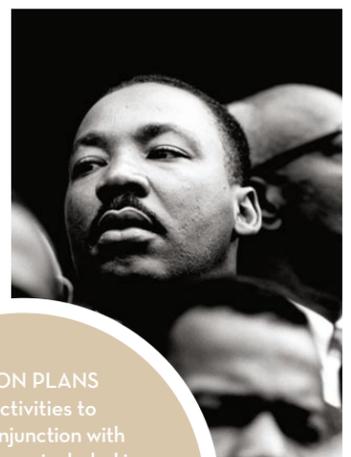
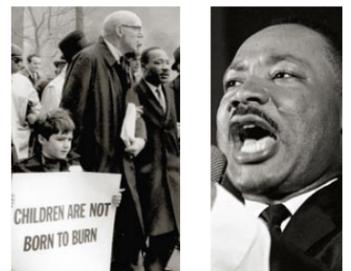
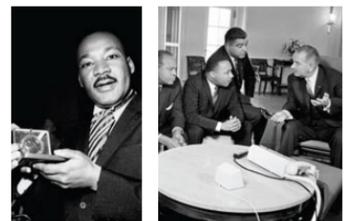
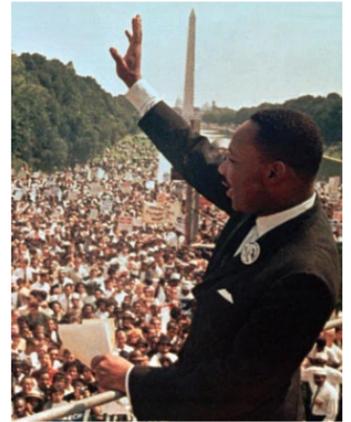
**1965** A group of marching demonstrators, led by SCLC's Hosea Williams and SNCC's John Lewis, are beaten on "Bloody Sunday" when crossing the Edmund Pettus Bridge on their planned **march from Selma, Ala., to Montgomery**. President Johnson addresses the nation and Congress. He describes the voting rights bill he will submit in two days and uses the slogan of the Civil Rights Movement, "We Shall Overcome." Over 3,000 protest marchers, protected by federal troops, leave Selma for a second attempt at the 50-mile march to Montgomery. They are joined along the way by an estimated 25,000 marchers from around the country. Upon reaching the Alabama state Capitol, they are addressed by Dr. King. The **1965 Voting Rights Act is signed** by President Johnson.

**1966** Dr. King rents an apartment in Chicago to bring attention to urban poverty through his **"Campaign to End Slums in Chicago."** Disputes over strategies and goals within the Civil Rights Movement intensify, principally among SNCC, the SCLC, and the Congress for Racial Equality (CORE). In Oakland, Calif., the **Black Panther Party is founded** by Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale. The panther icon is borrowed from a symbol used by the Lowndes County (Alabama) Freedom Organization, a voting rights group founded by Stokely Carmichael. Dr. King meets with Elijah Muhammad, leader of the Nation of Islam, in Chicago.

**1967** Dr. King's speech, **"Beyond Vietnam,"** at the Riverside Church in New York, advances his criticism of the war, and widens a rift with President Johnson. Dr. King further expands his social agenda with the announcement of the formation by SCLC of a Poor People's Campaign to represent the problems of poor blacks and whites. Thurgood Marshall, famous for arguing *Brown v. Board of Education* before the U.S. Supreme Court in 1954, becomes **the highest Court's first African-American justice**.

**1968** Dr. King leads 6,000 protesters on a march through downtown Memphis in support of striking sanitation workers on March 28. His last speech, "I've Been to the Mountain Top," is delivered at Mason Temple. The next day he is **murdered on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel**. He is 39. A week later, Congress passes the Civil Rights Act of 1968, extending the 1965 bill to include nondiscrimination in housing. In May, the SCLC goes ahead with its Poor People's March on Washington, D.C. In June, U.S. Sen. Bobby Kennedy is assassinated in Los Angeles. In August, Chicago is rocked by riots at the Democratic convention, and in November, Richard Nixon is elected president.

**1983** President Ronald Reagan signs a bill into law declaring the 3rd Monday in January a federal holiday in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr.



LESSON PLANS and activities to use in conjunction with this poster are included in the January 2008 issue of *Teaching Tolerance* and are also available free on our website, [teachingtolerance.org](http://teachingtolerance.org), under Classroom Activities.



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