

Martin Luther King

“I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: We had these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal.”

Martin Luther King was born on January 15, 1929 in Georgia, US. King spent his life defending equal civil rights for black people and was sadly assassinated on April 4, 1968. Coming from a black family with a pastor father, King experienced many inequalities throughout his life. For instance, at the time in the US, black people were forced to sit at the back seats at public transportation vehicles, their children were not allowed to attend the same schools with their white peers, most white-owned businesses wouldn't sell food, clothing etc. to black people. Having seen this unjust discrimination since his childhood, King thought that he had to act. Against his pastor father's opinion to leave the inequalities to disappear in time with no active effort, King decided to become a minister himself like his father with the goal to create change. He then started his work by adopting the principle 'if you love your enemies, you can beat them' by Gandhi. King was determined to help black people have equal rights with white people and expressed his vision in his famous speech titled 'I have a dream' in 1963.

There had been some milestone incidents which in many ways helped the civil rights movement to grow stronger until 1963.

In December 1955, a black named Rosa Parks refused to give her seat to a white man in a bus. The driver called the police and got Rosa arrested. Consequently, the arrest of Rosa created anger among many black people and they approached to the church where King worked. To take a stand, King proposed them to boycott all buses. He said, 'if we refuse to ride on the buses, the company is going to lose a lot of money'. On November 13, 1956, judges decided that the segregation on the buses was against the law and it needed to be removed. This decision made the Montgomery Bus Boycott a remarkable success in the civil rights movement and also helped Martin Luther King's name to be heard widely among all population.

King had also worked on improving the education conditions for black children. Although in 1954 the US education law had changed and enacted the inclusion of all children to receive education in the same schools regardless of their skin colour, in September 2, 1957 Arkansas government still refused to implement the law. In addition, many white people also felt the same way and opposed to the new law. A crowd of more than a thousand white people protested against the equal education rights. The very next day the US President ordered the army to protect black students in schools. King created awareness among black parents during these times.

In 1960 in Greensboro four black students went to a diner called Woolworth which has nearly a thousand branches across the country. They politely asked to have lunch, however the waitress refused to take their orders. The students refused to leave the diner and as the

days passed, it turned to a sit-in alluring more people in the protest. King was one of the protesters. As Woolworth finally agreed to let both black and whites use their restaurants once again a non-violent protest had been successful.

On November 22, 1963, US President John F. Kennedy was assassinated and died in Dallas, Texas. King had known Kennedy well and worked with him. As King thought the country was getting sicker, he decided to make his famous speech 'I have a dream'. The speech has a lot of repercussions across the country and sparked hope for blacks. Unfortunately King was killed by gun shortly after his speech. After his death many people wanted to honour King's memory. Martin Luther King Jr. Day is a federal holiday in the US marking the birthday of Martin Luther King Jr. It is celebrated on the third Monday of January every year.