

Martin Luther King, Jr.

After the 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. became the leading figure in the Civil Rights Movement. King's efforts led to the 1963 March on Washington, where he delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech in support of the Civil Rights Bill. In 1964, King became the youngest person to receive the Nobel Peace Prize for his work to end racial segregation and racial discrimination through civil disobedience and other nonviolent means.

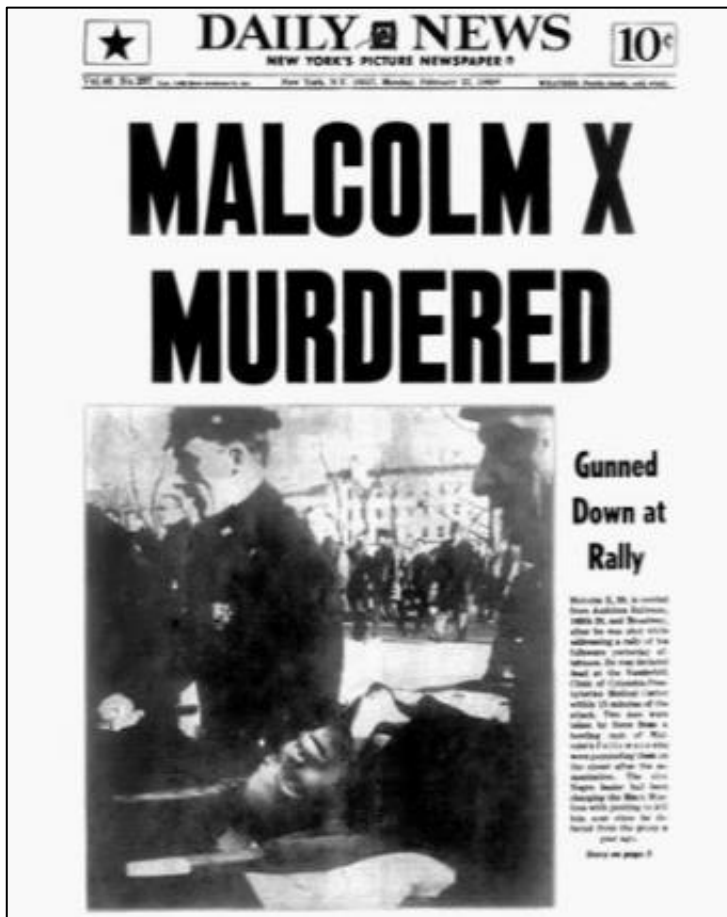
By the time of his death in 1968, he had refocused his efforts on ending poverty and stopping the Vietnam War. Dr. King was assassinated on April 4, 1968, in Memphis, Tennessee. He was posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1977 and Congressional Gold Medal in 2004; Martin Luther King, Jr. Day was established as a U.S. federal holiday in 1986.



Malcolm X

In the 1960's many African Americans were becoming frustrated with how slowly they were receiving equality. Many groups, such as the Nation of Islam, formed during this time and demanded reform. As one of the leaders of the Nation of Islam Malcolm X taught black supremacy and believed in the separation of black and white Americans. The Nation of Islam also taught that white people were a race of devils and that African Americans should use any means necessary to protect themselves and ensure their rights.

After an argument with the Nation's leaders he left the Nation of Islam in 1964. During this time he changed his beliefs to reject racism and violence. As a result of his changing beliefs, Malcolm X was assassinated by members of the Nation of Islam in February of 1965.



Greensboro Lunch Counter Sit-In (1960)

On February 1, 1960, four African American college students sat down at the lunch counter inside the Woolworth's store in Greensboro, North Carolina and ordered coffee. The lunch counter staff refused to serve the African American men at the "whites only" counter and the store's manager asked them to leave. The next day, more than twenty African American students who had been recruited from other campus groups came to the store to join the sit-in. White customers heckled the black students, who read books and studied to keep busy. The lunch counter staff continued to refuse service.

By the end of the week there were hundreds of protesters as various stores throughout the South. Despite sometimes violent reaction to the sit-ins, these demonstrations eventually led to positive results. The media picked up this issue and covered it nationwide, beginning with lunch counters and spreading to other public places, including transport facilities, art galleries, beaches, parks, swimming pools, libraries, and even museums around the South.



The Civil Rights Act of 1964

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was a landmark piece of legislation in the United States that outlawed major forms of discrimination against blacks and women, including racial segregation. It ended voter restrictions such as literacy tests and poll taxes along with racial segregation in schools, at the workplace and by facilities that served the general public. Although there was resistance in both the House of Representatives and Senate, the assassination of John F. Kennedy changed all that. The new President, Lyndon Johnson, used Kennedy's death by saying that the best memorial to him would be the passage of the civil rights bill that he has fought so long and hard for.



President Johnson signs Civil Rights Act of 1964 as Martin Luther King, Jr. looks on

The March on Washington (1963)

On August 28, 1963 more than 2,000 buses, 21 special trains, 10 chartered airliners, and uncounted cars brought close to 300,000 people to Washington DC. “The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom” as it was called was supposed to bring national attention to the problems of racial segregation and unequal job opportunities. The March was organized by a group of civil rights, labor, and religious organizations,



under the theme "Jobs and Freedom". It was during the March that Martin Luther King Jr. gave his famous “I Have a Dream” speech promoting racial harmony from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. The march is widely credited with helping to pass the Civil Rights Act (1964) and the Voting Rights Act (1965).



A shot of the crowd gathered to listen to Martin Luther King Jr's "I Have A Dream" speech

Riots

Throughout the 1960's waves of violence broke out in response to the struggle for Civil Rights. For example, in 1965, rioting broke out in the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles when a dispute between a police officer and an African American driver turned violent. Fights between African Americans and the police spread and homes and businesses were burlarized and looted. The 6 days of rioting resulted in \$40 million in damages, 1,000 buildings destroyed, 3,500 arrests and 34 people killed.

Unfortunately, in 1968 rioting broke out again with the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. in April. In at least 110 cities African Americans took the streets when they heard the news of King's death. Again buildings were burned and looted and clashes with police were common. Although impossible to tell for sure, tens of millions of dollars and dozens of deaths were blamed on these riots.



Selma, Alabama (1965)

On March 7, 1965, 600 civil rights marchers headed east out of Selma, Alabama on their way to Montgomery to protest the voting restrictions placed on African Americans in that area (fewer than 1% of blacks were registered to vote there). The protest went smoothly until the marchers crossed the Edmund Pettus Bridge and found a wall of state troopers waiting for them on the other side. Sheriff Jim Clark had issued an order for all white males in Dallas county over the age of twenty-one to report to the courthouse that morning to be deputized. The demonstrators were told to stop at once and go home. Seconds later, the troopers began shoving the demonstrators. Many were knocked to the ground and beaten with nightsticks.

Another detachment of troopers fired tear gas. Mounted troopers charged the crowd on horseback. Brutal televised images of the attack, which presented people with horrifying images of marchers left bloodied and severely injured, roused support for the U.S. civil rights movement. Amelia Boynton was beaten and gassed nearly to death; her photo appeared on the front page of newspapers and news magazines around the world. Seventeen marchers were hospitalized, leading to the naming of the day "Bloody Sunday".



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