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Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

by Cynthia Sherwood

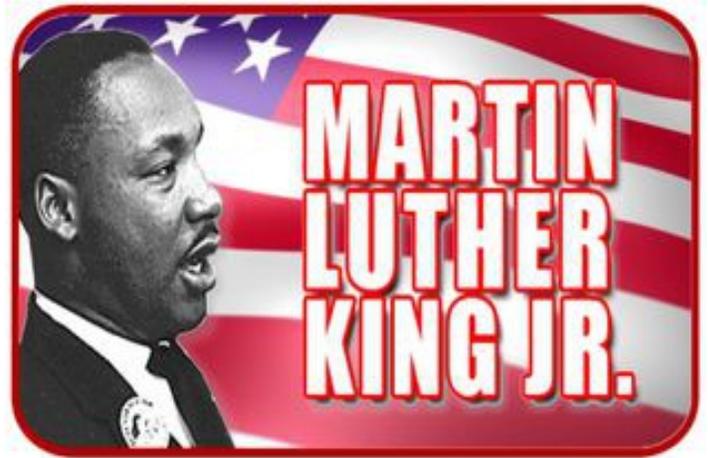
Every January, we honor the man who dreamed of equality for all Americans. Martin Luther King, Jr. fought for civil rights for people of every race. In his most famous speech given in 1963, Dr. King spoke these powerful words:

I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

His inspiring speeches and the non-violent protests he led touched the hearts of many Americans and pushed Congress into action. Lawmakers passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 banning racial segregation in schools, offices, and public places.

Dr. King was born in Georgia in 1929. He attended black-only schools, where he excelled and finished high school at age fifteen. Dr. King continued his education in college and graduate school, and later became pastor of a Baptist church in Atlanta.

He used his leadership to work for civil rights. In 1955, Dr. King helped organize the first large-scale protest by black Americans who were tired of being forced to sit in the back of public buses. The bus boycott lasted more than a year, until the U.S. Supreme Court declared segregation on buses illegal.



Dr. King traveled millions of miles to head up other massive protests against unequal treatment for black Americans. He directed the peaceful march of a quarter-million Americans on Washington, DC, where he delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech. At age thirty-five, Dr. King received the Nobel Peace Prize.

Dr. King was hated by some who opposed his message. He was arrested twenty times, attacked at least four times, and his home was fire-bombed. In 1968 at the age of thirty-nine, Dr. King was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee. It was a tragic, violent end to a man who preached the importance of peaceful protest.

In recognition of this great civil rights leader, Congress has named the third Monday in January as Martin Luther King Day, a national holiday.

"I Have A Dream"