“The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.”

- MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

**Martin Luther King, Jr.**
Civil-Rights Leader, 1929 - 1968

**Martin Luther King, Jr.** was born on January 15, 1929 at his family home in Atlanta, Georgia. King was an eloquent Baptist minister and leader of the civil-rights movement in America from the Mid-1950s until his death by assassination in 1968. King promoted non-violent means to achieve civil-rights reform and was awarded the 1964 [**Nobel**](http://www.lucidcafe.com/library/95oct/alfnobel.html) Peace Prize for his efforts.

King's grandfather was a Baptist preacher. His father was pastor of Atlanta's Ebenezer Baptist Church. King earned his own Bachelor of Divinity degree from Crozier Theological Seminary in 1951 and earned his Doctor of Philosophy from Boston University in 1955.

While at seminary King became acquainted with [**Mohandas Gandhi**](http://www.lucidcafe.com/library/95oct/mkgandhi.html)'s philosophy of nonviolent social protest. On a trip to India in 1959 King met with followers of Gandhi. During these discussions he became more convinced than ever that nonviolent resistance was the most potent weapon available to oppressed people in their struggle for freedom.

As a pastor of a Baptist church in Montgomery, Alabama, King lead a Black bus boycott. He and ninety others were arrested and indicted under the provisions of a law making it illegal to conspire to obstruct the operation of a business. King and several others were found guilty, but appealed their case. As the bus boycott dragged on, King was gaining a national reputation. The ultimate success of the Montgomery bus boycott made King a national hero.

Dr. King's 1963 [*Letter from Birmingham Jail*](http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles_Gen/Letter_Birmingham.html) inspired a growing national civil rights movement. In Birmingham, the goal was to completely end the system of segregation in every aspect of public life (stores, no separate bathrooms and drinking fountains, etc.) and in job discrimination. Also in 1963, King led a massive march on Washington DC where he delivered his now famous, *I Have A Dream* speech. King's tactics of active nonviolence (sit-ins, protest marches) had put civil-rights squarely on the national agenda.

On April 4, 1968, King was shot by James Earl Ray while standing on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee. He was only 39 at the time of his death. Dr. King was turning his attention to a nationwide campaign to help the poor at the time of his assassination. He had never wavered in his insistence that nonviolence must remain the central tactic of the civil-rights movement, nor in his faith that everyone in America would some day attain equal justice.

\*http://www.lucidcafe.com/library/96jan/king.html