

# The Life and Legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

“I have a dream...”

UAW-FORD DIVERSITY DIGEST JANUARY 2021

This month we remember the legacy of a civil rights activist and champion for Labor as we celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday. Dr. King was born January 15<sup>th</sup>, 1929 in Atlanta, Ga. His childhood was marked by legal segregation in schools, on buses and in restaurants. The prejudice he experienced led him to dedicate his life to equality and justice for all people. He believed that peaceful refusal to obey unjust laws and nonviolent activism was the way to bring about social change.

He married his wife Coretta Scott while in Boston after Seminary school, and received his doctorate in 1955. King led the Montgomery Bus Boycott, following the arrest of Rosa Parks, for 381 days. His home was bombed multiple times during the boycott, yet he prevailed. “The strong man is the man who will not hit back, who can stand up for his rights and yet not hit back,” King told his supporters.



King rose to national prominence to lead the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). The SCLC promoted nonviolent tactics, such as the massive March on Washington (1963). Here he delivered his “I Have a Dream” speech (written at Solidarity House) in front of 250,000 supporters. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964 at age 35.



Throughout his life, King stood up for union rights. “All labor has dignity.” King spoke these words to a mass meeting of over 10,000 people in Memphis on March 18, 1968 in the midst of a strike of 1300 black sanitation workers. Dr. King was a close friend of Walter Reuther and opposed Right to Work laws.

Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., the most prominent leader of the American civil rights movement was assassinated on April 4, 1968, at age 39, as he stood on the second floor balcony of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee where he had come to lead a march by striking sanitation workers.

King's death shocked the country and in 1983 the U.S. Congress established a national holiday, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, to be celebrated annually on the third Monday in January. King is the only non-president to have such an honor. A national memorial celebrating his life and legacy opened in Washington, D.C in 2011.



Despite being stabbed and jailed as many as 29 times, King held steadfast to the principles of nonviolent activism. To learn more, visit [www.thekingcenter.org](http://www.thekingcenter.org)



“I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.” To view or hear the actual speech, click on the following link <http://bit.ly/3nnpje9>

<https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/explore/history/martin-luther-king-jr/>  
<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Martin-Luther-King-Jr>

