



“I HAVE A DREAM”

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

The 1960s were the heart of this country’s Civil Rights Movement. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., delivered perhaps his most famous speech—“I Have a Dream”—in August of 1963.

In his speech, King reminded us that the American dream is one of freedom for all by referring to the Declaration of Independence and the Emancipation Proclamation. He asked that we move forward and work together to make sure that all Americans have the freedoms that our Founding Fathers dreamed about when they signed the Declaration of Independence and when they wrote the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

“... when we allow freedom to ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God’s children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing the words of the Old Negro spiritual: ‘FREE AT LAST! FREE AT LAST! GREAT GOD A-MIGHTY, WE ARE FREE AT LAST.’”

That speech moved millions of Americans to support the Civil Rights Movement, especially King’s ending words, which summed up his dream for the American people.

King used his First Amendment freedoms to advocate for change and for

getting rid of prejudices. In other words, he lived by the rule of law. We know he used his Freedom of Speech. He also used his Freedom of Press to write about making changes. His most famous writing is “Notes from Birmingham Jail.” He used his Freedom of Assembly to bring people together to peacefully march and to do sit-ins. As a minister, he used his Freedom of Religion to base the Civil Rights Movement on the Bible.

TIMELINE OF THE AMERICAN CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

1863	Emancipation Proclamation (freed slaves)
1865	Passage of the 13th Amendment (abolished slavery)
1868	Passage of the 14th Amendment (equal rights for all)
1870	Passage of the 15th Amendment (granted black men the right to vote)
1896	<i>Plessy v. Ferguson</i> (U.S. Supreme Court holds that separate but equal is constitutional)
1909	The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) founded
1948	President Harry S. Truman orders integration of the military
1954	<i>Brown v. Board of Education</i> overturns <i>Plessy v. Ferguson</i>
1955	Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a bus
1957	Integration of Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas
1960	Sit-in at Woolworth’s lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina
1962	James Meredith became the first black student to enroll at the University of Mississippi
1963	Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s <i>I Have a Dream</i> speech
1964	Civil Rights Act passed and the 24th Amendment abolished the poll tax
1965	Voting Rights Act passed
1967	Thurgood Marshall becomes the first African-American U.S. Supreme Court Justice

LEARN MORE

Use the internet to learn more about the following.

- 1 Why was Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in the Birmingham, Ala., jail?
- 2 What is a sit-in? Research the sit-in at a lunch counter in a Woolworth’s store in Greensboro, N.C.
- 3 Research some of the famous Civil Rights marches. One of the most famous took place in Selma, Ala.
- 4 What were the important parts of the Civil Rights Act of 1964?

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