

# Early years of martin luther king, jr.

[Literature](#), [Biography](#)



Martin Luther King, Jr., (January 15, 1929-April 4, 1968) was born Michael Luther King, Jr., but later had his name changed to Martin. His grandfather began the family's long tenure as pastors of the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, serving from 1914 to 1931; his father has served from then until the present, and from 1960 until his death Martin Luther acted as co-pastor. Martin Luther attended segregated public schools in Georgia, graduating from high school at the age of fifteen; he received the B. A. degree in 1948 from Morehouse College, a distinguished Negro institution of Atlanta from which both his father and grandfather had graduated. After three years of theological study at Crozer Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania where he was elected president of a predominantly white senior class, he was awarded the B. D. in 1951. With a fellowship won at Crozer, he enrolled in graduate studies at Boston University, completing his residence for the doctorate in 1953 and receiving the degree in 1955. In Boston he met and married Coretta Scott, a young woman of uncommon intellectual and artistic attainments. Two sons and two daughters were born into the family.

Born as Michael King Jr. on January 15, 1929, Martin Luther King Jr. was the middle child of Michael King Sr. and Alberta Williams King. The King and Williams families were rooted in rural Georgia. Martin Jr.'s grandfather, A. D. Williams, was a rural minister for years and then moved to Atlanta in 1893. He took over the small, struggling Ebenezer Baptist church with around 13 members and made it into a forceful congregation. He married Jennie Celeste Parks and they had one child that survived, Alberta. Michael King Sr. came from a sharecropper family in a poor farming community. He married

Alberta in 1926 after an eight-year courtship. The newlyweds moved to A. D. Williams' home in Atlanta.

Michael King Sr. stepped in as pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church upon the death of his father-in-law in 1931. He too became a successful minister, and adopted the name Martin Luther King Sr. in honor of the German Protestant religious leader Martin Luther. In due time, Michael Jr. would follow his father's lead and adopt the name himself.

Young Martin had an older sister, Willie Christine, and a younger brother, Alfred Daniel Williams King. The King children grew up in a secure and loving environment. Martin Sr. was more the disciplinarian, while his wife's gentleness easily balanced out the father's more strict hand. Though they undoubtedly tried, Martin Jr.'s parents couldn't shield him completely from racism. Martin Luther King Sr. fought against racial prejudice, not just because his race suffered, but because he considered racism and segregation to be an affront to God's will. He strongly discouraged any sense of class superiority in his children which left a lasting impression on Martin Jr.