

Essay on martin luther king jr

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Martin Luther King Jr.

Martin Luther King Jr. was born in 1929 to a middle class family and was the eldest son to Martin Luther king Sr. who was a Baptist church minister. He was born in Atlanta, Georgia and attended the local segregated public schools where he excelled in his studies. He graduated with a bachelor's degree in sociology at the Morehouse College and doctoral degree in theology from Boston University in 1955. He was married to Coretta Scott and they had two sons and two daughters. King started his public service by serving as a pastor at the Dexter Avenue Church in Montgomery. At that time, King had already become a strong worker for civil rights fighting for the rights of the blacks and started by serving as a member of the executive committee of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, NAACP, which was at that time the leading organization in the country fighting for the rights of the colored people. King was early influenced and mentored by Howard Thurman who was a civil rights leader, theologian and educator. 1

King was a compelling force in the civil rights movement and achieved a lot in his efforts to emancipate the black people. His major achievement was as a leader of the American Civil rights movement where he fought for the rights of African American. These achievements came through pursuing of a direct action nonviolent crusade against the challenges black people were going through and this included segregation, racial injustices and biasness that had permeated the American society in all the spheres life like education, employment and access to housing and public facilities. His non violent approach was motivated by the same as applied in India by Mahatma

Gandhi who used it successfully to fight for the rights of his countrymen. King believed that non violence was the most effective method to use to fight for justice and human dignity. His career as a public crusader began shortly after the ruling by the Supreme Court which overturned the “separate but equal” rule and put in place the legal foundation through which King and other likeminded people would use to pursue equal rights and fully participate in the “ American Dream.” King played a key role in the boycott of the Montgomery Alabama was the major first effort aimed at ending racial segregation in the public transit system².

The blacks were aggrieved by the mistreatment they underwent in the public transport system whereby there existed “ black codes” and white drivers were supposed to enforce them. Blacks were forced to sit in the back and give up their seats to white people. The Refusal by Rosa Parks to give up her seat to a white passenger led to her arrest and this served as the catalyst for a citywide boycott of the public transport. King was in the lead of this boycott through his role as the president of the Montgomery Improvement Association, MIA which was in charge of the boycott. The boycott lasted for more than a year. The success of this boycott was partly attributed to King who used his effective oratorical skills to lead the protest and unify the black people to pursue the goal of fighting for civil rights. The protests led to a court ruling that ordered the desegregation of the city buses.

Another major achievement of King was the role he played in establishing the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), which was an organization whose key aim was to challenge the presence of racial segregation in the American public life. He used the conference as a platform

to encourage the use of boycotts, marches and demonstrations to pursue justice. The conference created alliances with whites from the North and also radical groups, many who were Jewish to help bolster their cause. Despite the use of peaceful non-violent efforts to fight for the rights of blacks, King and other protestors still faced troubles from the authorities. Many of the protestors were jailed while others encountered fierce violence and overt resistance from the non-violent strategies they employed. King was among those who were arrested and while in jail he carried out writings supporting the right to disobey laws that were unjust. The violence, demonstrations and arrests prompted the whites to negotiate and support legislation that was aimed at ending segregation in the country. His fight for the rights bore fruits because it led to the enactment of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 and the Voting Rights Act in the following year.

Together with other prominent black leaders, King successfully organized the March to Washington in 1963 to press for an end to segregation schools and abolishment of racial discrimination in all forms of public life. The march attracted millions of participants from diverse backgrounds and it was a huge success. The march also turned out to be the largest gathering ever witnessed in the city of Washington and culminated in King giving his compelling speech, "I Have A Dream." The speech is one of the most powerful and enduring in American history³. In the speech, King prayed for a day when people would be judged by the content of their character and not the color of their skin. The speech expressed the hopes of those fighting for civil rights and it helped in building the momentum that led to the enactment of the Acts to promote civil rights.

King not only fought for the promotion of civil rights, he also fought to advance the economic rights of African Americans. He was concerned about the poverty faced by African Americans and called for redistribution of the country's economic wealth to provide more opportunities to blacks and reduce the poverty they were going through. He organized the Poor people's Campaign in 1967 to pressure the issues of poverty and economic justice in relation to black people.

Through the many accomplishments he made, King received numerous awards as recognition for his struggle for civil rights. He received not less than fifty honorary degrees across several universities in the US. Besides, he was the recipient of the greatest prize that can ever be awarded to someone, the Nobel Peace prize for the big role he played in ending discrimination based on race in the United States. Other awards that he received include the John F. Kennedy Award, Marcus Garvey Prize for Human rights and the American Liberties Medallion, just to name a few. King also published several books that highlighted the oppressive and brutal conditions the African Americans went through. King has also been honored with a national holiday which is held on the third Monday of January as remembrance of his great historical contribution to the American minorities. King died in Memphis in 1968 when he was assassinated after attending a strike by garbage workers.

In conclusion therefore, Dr Martin Luther King will be forever remembered for the contributions he made to promote equal rights in the United States. He struggled to achieve what the founding fathers of the nation wanted it to be. Even though he did not live to see his dream, I believe what he did greatly

shaped the current American society. Being humble enough to give up his life for people without a voice is his most important contribution to the nation.

Reference List:

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