

# [How significant was martin luther king assignment](https://assignbuster.com/how-significant-was-martin-luther-king-assignment/)

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How significant was Martin Luther Kings (Milk’s) contribution to the civil rights movement in the years 1956-68? In the following essay I will discuss some of Milks contributions and limitations (where developments were made in his absence, or where his presence contributed very little), to advances in the civil rights movement, and will conclude if he was as significant as he is usually credited. King’s contributions to the movement between 1956- 61 were non-existent, it seemed as though he couldn’t think of any new tactics, but other contributions were made during this time.

The Montgomery Bus Boycotts (1955-56) were sparked by the arrest Of Rosa parks (part Of the NAACP since 1943), on 1 December 1955 where she refused to give up her seat for a white man. This started a 13 month mass boycott and ending with the Supreme Court ruling that segregation on public busses is unconstitutional. NAACP lawyers took on her court case, optimistic that they could ride the issue to the Supreme Court, in light of their recent victory in the case of Brown v. Board of Education.

The organizers of the boycott came from a variety of black groups, such as the NAACP and the Women’s Political Council, King was elected as president. Although king was president he really didn’t contribute much, he was more the face of the Boycott (but he did deliver good speeches and bring publicity). The boycott its self was started by an NAACP member (Rosa Parks), and the legal side was dealt with by NAACP lawyers; although king was involved his contributions were very limited.

King even said himself that “ l just happened to be here… Elf M. L King had never been born this movement would have still taken place… ‘ had nothing to do with it”. King was also somewhat art of the sit-ins in 1960; they started when four black college students decided they wouldn’t give up their seats at a lunch counter in a Woolworth store in Greensboro North Carolina. The NAACP was reluctant to get involved and the students were warned against Milks involvement and taking over.

In the sit-ins MI\_K was led rather than leading, the sit-ins themselves were very significant; eroding the Jim Crow laws and helping the Civil Rights Act of 1 964 but Milk’s involvement was limited to say the least. The Freedom rides of 1961 were another event in advancement of civil rights, in my opinion this as a huge ‘ strike’ against ML, fuelling existing tensions between student activists and him, who publicly supported the riders, but did not participate in the campaign.

During the freedom rides student activists from CORE revealed on buses from Washington to Mississippi to challenge racism on interstate buses. On the 29th of May 1 961, the Kennedy administration announced that it had directed the Interstate Commerce Commission to ban segregation in all facilities under its jurisdiction: With this ruling we can see that this event did have a large impact on the breaking down of Jim crow laws and the advancement of civil rights, but see it as just another example of where an advancement was made in the absence of ML where he supported ‘ from a distance’ but didn’t contribute.

The CLC had been criticized by some student activists for its failure to participate more fully in the freedom rides, this seemed to prompt King (and the CLC), to get involved in the Albany movement of 1961-62. King led one protest march and got arrested – the Movement its self was a failure for this reason Milk’s contribution, although bigger than in the Freedom Rides was still small.

In my opinion the Birmingham movement of April 1 963 was the first real success made by ML and the CLC, using their methods of peaceful protest they managed to have most of their demands met by white business leaders (desegregation of Birmingham downtown stores, fair hiring practices in shops and city employment, the reopening of public parks, and the creation of a bi-racial committee to oversee the desegregation of Birmingham public schools).

Although the Movement did not make the largest advancement, it was advancement none the less, It was limited in the sense not a huge preference was made, but Milk’s contribution was large as he was the only one involved (except for the ACM). The Birmingham movement lead up to, perhaps, Kings most famous contribution to the Civil Rights Movement – the March on Washington.

Between 200, 000 and 300, 000 participated in the march focusing on 6 main points: Meaningful civil rights laws, a massive federal works program, full and fair employment, decent housing, the right to vote, and adequate integrated education -?? basically the passage of the passage of a civil rights bill. The march was a huge success, and I think much f the credit for that can be given to King the march was very well publicized helping get international support for the struggle of blacks.

The largest contribution King made to the March, and arguable the largest contribution to the civil rights movement full stop, was he speech famous ‘ l have a dream’ speech, known by almost everyone, It not only appealed to the international audience though, but also to white America with much emphasis on the bible in a country that is very Christian.

However King was not the only contributed to the March on Washington, this was the first time major civil rights leaders elaborated on an international level, although this is the case I feel that without the contributions from King the effect the march had emotionally on people’s attitude toward ‘ blacks’ and to the advancement of the act would not be nearly as large, and not as much difference would have been made.

The Mississippi freedom summer was another fairly large advancement in the civil rights movement (although only for the state), King showed support SYNC and Grassroots in their efforts but didn’t contribute himself (something we have seen happen on multiple occasions). It was confessed but Andrew Young that the CLC “ Knew better than to try and take on Mississippi”, showing that perhaps they were not as powerful as some other organizations limiting their contributions and, by extension, King’s also. Only ML and the CLC were involved in the Selma to Montgomery march of 1965 so only they were responsible for the advances made.

It is clear that the CLC and king had made a large contribution in Selma; it can be compared to the SYNC campaign in Selma where they tried to desegregate newspapers to no effect. The marches were very important as not only did they contribute to lack voting rights but they also, perhaps more importantly changed (or helped change), the attitudes many white people. The Chicago Freedom Movement (1965-67) led by ML covered a wide range of areas and was the most ambitious civil rights campaign in the North of the united States.

By the end of the campaign the Chicago Housing Authority promised to build public housing with limited height requirements, and the Mortgage Bankers Association agreed to make mortgages available regardless of race. Although King called the agreement ‘ the most significant aerogram ever conceived to make open housing a reality,” he recognized that it was only “ the first step in a 1, 000-mile journey” This was a huge contribution and advancement in civil rights and a great success, solely down to King and the CLC.

We can see a common theme that many of the advances in the civil rights movement were not begun by ML himself, but he merely ‘ tagged along ‘ where he didn’t really contribute, this helps support the opinion that some had that he was a ‘ glory seeker. However it is clear that ML did make some large contributions to the civil rights movement, the march on Washington Ewing the most prominent of these, there were circumstances where he is seen to have been a more prominent figure than perhaps he should have been, but his talents at speech giving and publicity would certainly have contributed.