

Martin Luther King Jr., and the Ethics of Love, Equality, and Nonconformity

1929 – B. Jan. 15 as Michael King, in Atlanta, GA.
1944 – Enrolls at Morehouse College at age 15.
1947 – Licensed to preach at Ebenezer Baptist Church, Atlanta, GA, his father’s church.
1948 – King ordained and becomes assistant pastor at Ebenezer Baptist Church.
1948 – BA from Morehouse College, enters Crozer Theological Seminary in Chester, Pa.
1951 – B.D. from Crozer Seminary, valedictorian; Enrolls at Boston U. School of Theology.
1954 – Pastor of Dexter Ave. Baptist Church in Montgomery, Ala.
1955 – PhD from Boston U.; Named president of the Montgomery Improvement Association
1955 – Montgomery Bus Boycott
1957 – Named chairman of Southern Christian Leadership Conference.
1957 – King’s home is bombed while he is speaking at a meeting (1/30). Family unharmed.
1957 – Appears *Time* magazine cover. Delivers first national address¹ at Lincoln Memorial.
1958 – King and other civil rights leaders meet with President Eisenhower in Washington.
1958 – Stabbed at a book signing in Harlem. Doctors removed the blade from his chest.
1960 – Moves from Montgomery to Atlanta to focus on the civil rights struggle.
1963 – Arrested in Alabama, writes famous *Letter from Birmingham Jail*.
1963 – Delivers “I Have a Dream” speech, Lincoln Memorial at March on Washington.
1964 – Receives Nobel Peace Prize. (1965) Begins to speak out against the Vietnam War.
1966 – King and family move into Chicago slums to demand better housing and education.
1967 – King unveils plans for a Poor People’s Campaign.
1968 – King leads 6,000 protesters in support of striking sanitation workers in Memphis, TN.
1968 – April 4, King is shot and killed on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, TN.

Issues

Racism – King consistently criticized the tripartite evils of racism, militarism, and poverty. Racial discrimination was the key moral issue that framed King’s early work in community improvement and civil rights work. King lived through the final years of Jim Crow segregation, which was predicated on the ‘separate but equal’ doctrine.

“A spiritual myopia limits our vision to external accidents. We see men as Jews or Gentiles, Catholics or Protestants, Chinese or American, Negroes or whites. We fail to think of them as fellow human beings...molded in the same divine image.”²

War – King warned of the dangers of the proliferation of weapons and technologies of war. He spoke out against communism, but also criticized the Vietnam War later in his career. He also criticized war in his Nobel Lecture.³

¹ See “Give Us the Ballot- We Will Transform the South” by Martin Luther King Jr. in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.* ed. by James Melvin Washington (HarperOne: New York, 1986).

² *Strength to Love* by Martin Luther King Jr., (Fortress Press: Minneapolis, MN, 2010), pp. 40.

³ “The Quest for Peace and Justice” by Martin Luther King Jr., *The Nobel Prize*, [Martin Luther King Jr. – Nobel Lecture - NobelPrize.org](https://www.nobelprize.org/martin-luther-king-jr.-nobel-lecture) 1964, Accessed 6/8/2024.