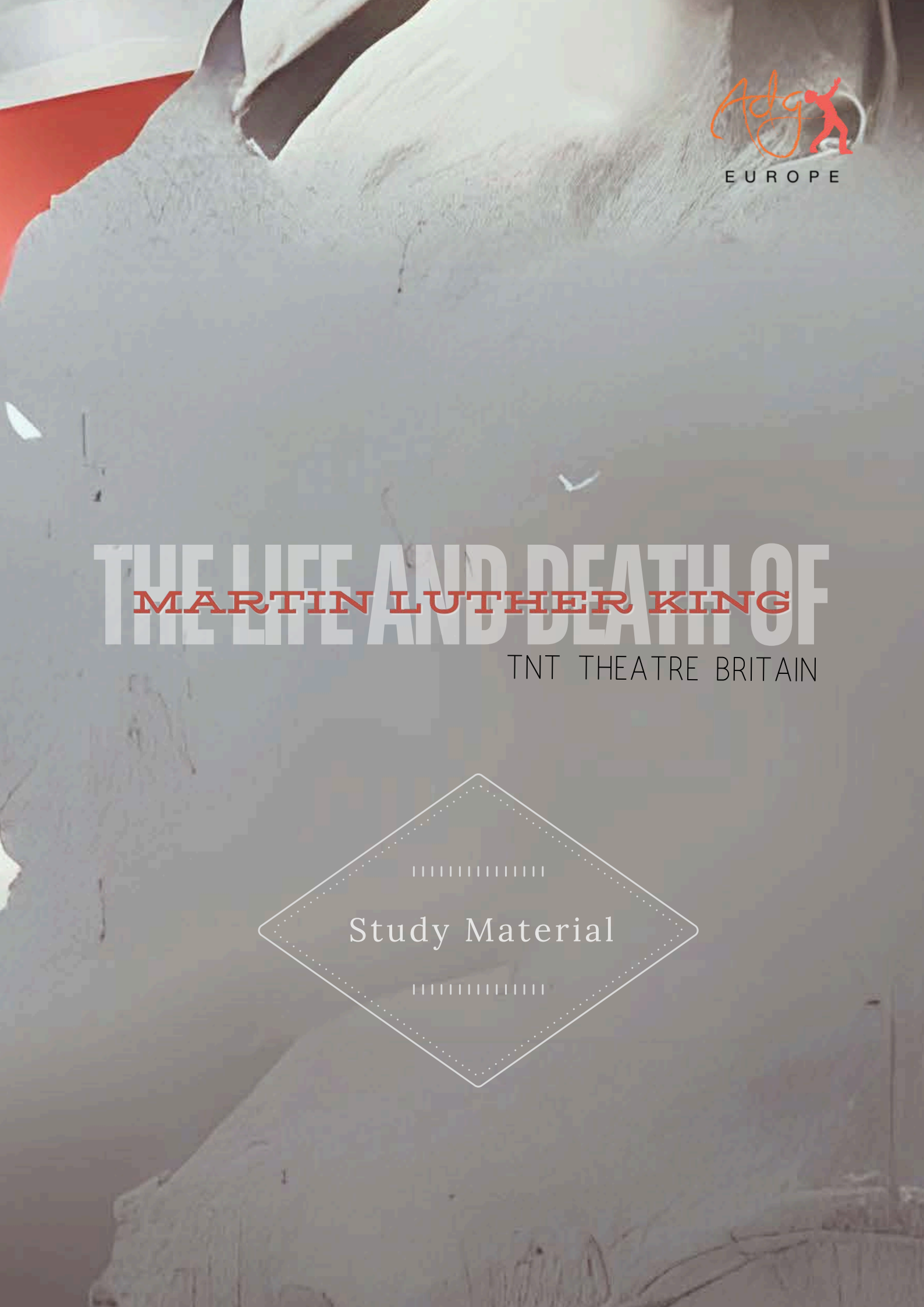

EUROPE
THE LIFE AND DEATH OF
MARTIN LUTHER KING
TNT THEATRE BRITAIN
Study Material

AMERICA: DREAMS AND NIGHTMARES

Act 1

A black teenager is playing among the audience. The black teenager chooses a white female audience member in the front row and cheekily asks her for a date. Two white men in hoods and armed shoot the black teenager dead.

Martin Luther King (MLK), Baptist minister, preaches love. His wife, Coretta asks him to engage with the injustice in Alabama. He says he wishes to but fears the hate that comes from the struggle against injustice.

Work song. Black share croppers at work. A Newsman, Jack, addresses TV cameras about tensions between blacks and their white neighbors.

He interviews a cotton farmer who claims there are no such tensions. After the interview Jack is approached by activist Rosa Parks, but Jack refuses to interview her. On her bus home, Rosa Parks refuses to give up her seat for a white man and is arrested. MLK witnesses the results and begins to waver.

A phone rings in the home of Martin Luther King. Organizers of the bus boycott wish to use MLK's church for a meeting. Ralph Abernathy, another local minister, arrives at the house to persuade MLK to lead the boycott.

MLK speaks at his church. Marchers in the streets are beaten. MLK declares that such violence will be met with love. At the end of the speech people rush to touch MLK, as if his body were magical. Jack reports on the bus boycott. He interviews the Sheriff who tries to portray MLK as a college-educated outsider. Jack interviews MLK who explains his belief in racial equality for all. In the middle of the interview, MLK is arrested. MLK in jail, at prayer. Sounds of wood banged on metal. Voices shouting for MLK to be lynched. MLK is set free by the Sheriff. His bail has been paid. After he addresses supporters, MLK's home is bombed. MLK dissuades two black rioters from killing the Sheriff. Abernathy arrives to say that the Supreme Court has ruled in their favour; they have won. Jack describes the rise of MLK. Off screen Jack tells MLK that he admires his integrity. Jack is impressed, but when left alone, suddenly he is kidnapped by the FBI apprehended, and pressurized to spy on MLK. An Agent shows Jack papers that claim MLK has Communists around him.

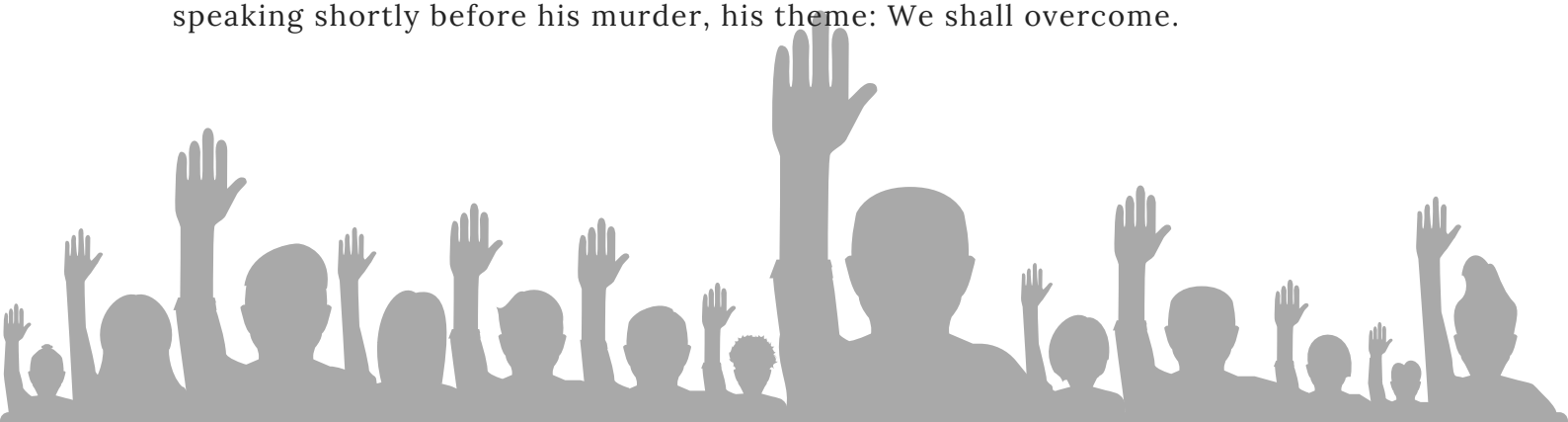
Birmingham, Alabama. Abernathy is hit with a stone while addressing a crowd. Sonny, an aide, criticizes MLK for eating steak while others risk their lives. He expresses support for a violent response to attacks. MLK quietly reasserts non-violence. Sonny reports that more radical blacks are accusing MLK of avoiding the struggle. Abernathy and Sonny fight and have to be restrained. Jack arrives and confronts MLK with the accusation of communist infiltration, which MLK powerfully rebuts. MLK tells Jack that he is going to allow himself to be arrested. Birmingham Jail. MLK is kneeling and chained, writing a letter on toilet paper. In a stylized sequence, the letter is spoken as MLK moves from a chained man to a triumphant man. A white businessman, losing trade, offers to end the racial segregation in the city's shops. Jack is with an FBI Agent who complains that Jack is giving too much coverage to MLK. When Jack attacks the Agent he is beaten up in turn. The death of President John F. Kennedy is announced by Jack. MLK discusses pressure coming from black radicals like Malcolm X. Sonny persuades them all that organizing black voters is the way forward. Selma County. Work song. A white farmer patrolling. Mrs. Hamer enters, a sharecropper. The Farmer is furious she has been to register to vote. He dismisses her and her family from the plantation.

Stylized scene of Mrs. Hamer's registration to vote.
Jack commentates on the famous "I have a dream" speech

Act 2

An urban northern landscape: street hustle, drugs, busts, urban poverty and urban energy. Malcolm X appears, insulting whites as an inferior race. He denounces MLK's policy of non-violence. Malcolm X is gunned down in a hail of bullets. Hotel room. On TV: riots in Detroit. Abernathy despairs. Despite Sonny's criticisms MLK sticks to his beliefs, though hints that he is becoming more radical. Abernathy reports that a "white chick" has arrived and MLK tidies his appearance in readiness for meeting her. Sonny is disgusted. Abernathy is tolerant. THE FBI plays tapes to jack of MLK having sex with a woman who is clearly not his wife, but Jack refuses to expose MLK. MLK's hotel. Jack arrives, but is challenged by Sonny. Jack confesses to spying on MLK and shows Sonny some of the FBI's evidence. Sonny calls for MLK, but it is the woman who emerges, giving Jack her room key. MLK enters yelling obscenities at the woman. Jack is worried about what MLK's behavior might do to the Civil Rights struggle. A Memphis bar. Jack is seated; he is drunk and letting slip damaging information about MLK. He is approached by a white thug, trying to get information on which room MLK is staying in, Jack yells at the thug who knocks him out. The thug takes a room key from Jack's pockets. The cast carry I AM A MAN banners, they are beaten down as racist abuse rings out. When MLK tries to pacify the crowd of garbage workers, he is abused and laughed at. In the bar Jack regains consciousness. He tries and fails to ring a warning to the FBI that is an assassination attempt on MLK is imminent.

Memphis hotel. MLK and Abernathy having a pillow fight. MLK turns serious; unable to fathom the appeal of violence. Meanwhile Jack is racing to warn MLK. MLK goes out on to his room's balcony for a cigarette, and is shot dead by an unseen gunman. Sonny and Abernathy point to where they think the shots came from. Abernathy checks that MLK is dead, then removes the cigarette packet from MLK's hand and throws it away. Sonny dips his hands in MLK's blood and rubs it on his body. He sees Jack and allows him to come forward and do the same – they all raise their hands towards the audience – black and white with Luther King's blood on their hands. As this image is held there comes the recorded voice of MLK speaking shortly before his murder, his theme: We shall overcome.



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

It has been a privilege and an education to research, write and rehearse this play. This is story more than history, it is surely one of the few examples of how we humans might overcome the demons of race hate, intolerance and almost tribal violence that bedevil our age. The main events and personalities of the Civil Rights movement must speak for themselves. Nothing in this play or production is invented except where fiction represents the truth more eloquently than the mere documentary. That must be the purpose of fiction: to allow us not just to know but to understand and indeed feel the profounder truths.

Paul Stebbings, 2014

Rosa Parks rode at the front of a Montgomery, Alabama, bus on the day the Supreme Court's ban on segregation of the city's buses took effect. A year earlier, she had been arrested for refusing to give up her seat on a bus. On a cold December evening in 1955, Rosa Parks quietly incited a revolution — by just sitting down. She was tired after spending the day at work as a department store seamstress. She stepped onto the bus for the ride home and sat in the fifth row — the first row of the so called: colored section. In Montgomery, Alabama, when a bus became full, the seats nearer the front were given to white passengers. Montgomery bus driver James Blake ordered Parks and three other African Americans seated nearby to move ("Move y'all, I want those two seats,") to the back of the bus. Three riders complied; Parks did not.

"ARE YOU GOING TO STAND UP?" THE DRIVER DEMANDED. ROSA PARKS LOOKED STRAIGHT AT HIM AND SAID: "NO." FLUSTERED, AND NOT QUITE SURE WHAT TO DO, BLAKE RETORTED, "WELL, I'M GOING TO HAVE YOU ARRESTED." AND PARKS, STILL SITTING NEXT TO THE WINDOW, REPLIED SOFTLY, "YOU MAY DO THAT."

After Parks refused to move, she was arrested and fined $10. The chain of events triggered by her arrest changed the United States. In 1955, a little-known minister named Martin Luther King Jr. from the Dexter Road Baptist Church in Montgomery organized a campaign against segregation and racial discrimination on city buses. Their demands they made were simple: Black passengers should be treated with courtesy. Seating should be allotted on a first-come-first- serve basis, with white passengers sitting from front to back and black passengers sitting from back to front. And African American drivers should drive routes that primarily serviced African Americans. On Monday, December 5, 1955 the boycott went into effect. This began a chain reaction of similar boycotts throughout the South. In 1956, the Supreme Court voted to end segregated busing.

Birmingham Campaign, 1963

Birmingham Alabama had both the largest African-American population and the most segregation of any city in the American South. In 1963 the SCLC, undertook the Birmingham campaign. The carefully planned strategy focused on one goal: The desegregation of Birmingham's downtown merchants. The movement's efforts were helped by the brutal response of local authorities, in particular Eugene "Bull" Connor, the Commissioner of Public Safety. He had long held much political power, but had lost a recent election for mayor to a less rabidly segregationist candidate. Refusing to accept the new mayor's authority, Connor intended to stay in office. The campaign used a variety of nonviolent methods of confrontation, including sit-ins, kneel-ins at local churches, and a march to the county building to mark the beginning of a drive to register voters. The city, however, obtained an injunction barring all such protests. Convinced that the order was unconstitutional, the campaign defied it and prepared for mass arrests of its supporters. King elected to be among those arrested on April 12, 1963.

Martin Luther King addresses the boycott leaders including Rosa Parks and the Rev. Ralph Abernathy.

While in jail, King wrote his famous "Letter from Birmingham Jail" on the margins of a newspaper, since he had not been allowed any writing paper while held in solitary confinement. Supporters appealed to the Kennedy administration, which intervened to obtain King's release. King was allowed to call his wife, who was recuperating at home after the birth of their fourth child, and was released early on April 19. The campaign, however, faltered as it ran out of demonstrators willing to risk arrest. James Bevel, SCLC's Director of Direct Action and Director of Nonviolent Education, then came up with a bold and controversial alternative: To train high school students to take part in the demonstrations. As a result, in what would be called the Children's Crusade, more than one thousand students skipped school on May 2 to meet at the 16th Street Baptist Church to join the demonstrations. More than six hundred marched out of the church fifty at a time in an attempt to walk to City Hall to speak to Birmingham's mayor about segregation. They were arrested and put into jail. In this first encounter the police acted with restraint. On the next day, however, another one thousand students gathered at the church. When Bevel started them marching fifty at a time, Bull Connor finally unleashed police dogs on them and then turned the city's fire hoses water streams on the children. National television networks broadcast the scenes of the dogs attacking demonstrators and the water from the fire hoses knocking down the schoolchildren. Widespread public outrage led the Kennedy administration to intervene more forcefully in negotiations between the white business community and the SCLC. On May 10, the parties announced an agreement to desegregate the lunch counters and other public accommodations downtown, to create a committee to eliminate discriminatory hiring practices, to arrange for the release of jailed protesters, and to establish regular means of communication between black and white leaders.

Not everyone in the black community approved of the agreement — the Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth was particularly critical, since he was skeptical about the good faith of Birmingham's power structure from his experience in dealing with them. Parts of the white community reacted violently. They bombed the Gaston Motel, which housed the SCLC's unofficial headquarters, and the home of King's brother, the Reverend A. D. King. In response, thousands of blacks rioted, burning numerous buildings and stabbing a police officer.Kennedy prepared to federalize the Alabama National Guard if the need arose. Four months later, on September 15, a conspiracy of The Klu Klux Klan.

Selma Voting Rights Movement and the Voting Rights Act, 1965

The SNCC had undertaken an ambitious voter registration program in Selma, Alabama, in 1963, but by 1965 had made little headway in the face of opposition from Selma's sheriff, Jim Clark. After local residents asked the SCLC for assistance, King came to Selma to lead several marches, at which he was arrested along with 250 other demonstrators. The marchers continued to meet violent resistance from police. Jimmie Lee Jackson, a resident of nearby Marion, was killed by police at a later march in February 17, 1965. Jackson's death prompted James Bevel, director of the Selma Movement, to initiate a plan to march from Selma to Montgomery, the state capital.

On March 7, 1965, acting on Bevel's plan, Hosea Williams of the SCLC and John Lewis of SNCC led a march of 600 people to walk the 54 miles (87 km) from Selma to the state capital in Montgomery. Only six blocks into the march, at the Edmund Pettus Bridge, state troopers and local law enforcement, some mounted on horseback, attacked the peaceful demonstrators with billy clubs, tear gas, rubber tubes wrapped in barbed wire, and bull whips. They drove the marchers back into Selma. John Lewis was knocked unconscious and dragged to safety. At least 16 other marchers were hospitalized. Among those gassed and beaten was Amelia Boynton Robinson, who was at the center of civil rights activity at the time. The national broadcast of the news footage of lawmen attacking unresisting marchers' seeking to exercise their constitutional right to vote provoked a national response, as had scenes from Birmingham two years earlier. The marchers were able to obtain a court order permitting them to make the march without incident two weeks later.

After a second march on March 9 to the site of Bloody Sunday, local whites attacked Rev. James Reeb, another voting rights supporter. He died of his injuries in a Birmingham hospital March 11. On March 25, four Klansmen shot and killed Detroit homemaker Viola Liuzzo as she drove marchers back to Selma at night after the successfully completed march to Montgomery. Eight days after the first march, President Johnson delivered a televised address to support the voting rights bill he had sent to Congress. In it he stated: But even if we pass this bill, the battle will not be over. What happened in Selma is part of a far larger movement which reaches into every section and state of America. It is the effort of American Negroes to secure for themselves the full blessings of American life. Their cause must be our cause too. Because it is not just Negroes, but really it is all of us, who must overcome the crippling legacy of bigotry and injustice. And we shall overcome.

Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act of 1965 on August 6. The 1965 act suspended poll taxes, literacy tests, and other subjective voter registration tests. It authorized Federal supervision of voter registration in states and individual voting districts where such tests were being used. African Americans who had been barred from registering to vote finally had an alternative to taking suits to local or state courts, which had seldom prosecuted their cases to success. If discrimination in voter registration occurred, the 1965 act authorized the Attorney General of the United States to send federal examiners to replace local registrars. Johnson reportedly told associates of his concern that signing the bill had lost the white South as voters for the Democratic Party for the foreseeable future. The act had an immediate and positive effect for African Americans. Within months of its passage, 250,000 new black voters had been registered, one third of them by federal examiners. Within four years, voter registration in the South had more than doubled. In 1965, Mississippi had the highest black voter turnout at 74% and led the nation in the number of black public officials elected. In 1969, Tennessee had a 92.1% turnout among black voters; Arkansas, 77.9%; and Texas, 73.1%.

Several whites who had opposed the Voting Rights Act paid a quick price. In 1966 Sheriff Jim Clark of Alabama, infamous for using cattle prods against civil rights marchers, was up for reelection. Although he took off the notorious "Never" pin on his uniform, he was defeated. At the election, Clark lost as blacks voted to get him out of office. Clark later served a prison term for drug dealing. Blacks' regaining the power to vote changed the political landscape of the South. When Congress passed the Voting Rights Act, only about 100 African Americans held elective office, all in northern states. By 1989, there were more than 7,200 African Americans in office, including more than 4,800 in the South. Nearly every Black Belt county (where populations were majority black) in Alabama had a black sheriff. Southern blacks held top positions in city, county, and state governments. Atlanta elected a black mayor, Andrew Young, as did Jackson, Mississippi, with Harvey Johnson, Jr., and New Orleans, with Ernest Morial. Black politicians on the national level included Barbara Jordan, elected as a representative from Texas in Congress, and President Jimmy Carter appointed Andrew Young as United States Ambassador to the United Nations.

Riot, fragmentation and the struggles of Martin Luther King to enact his wider vision – 1965- 1968

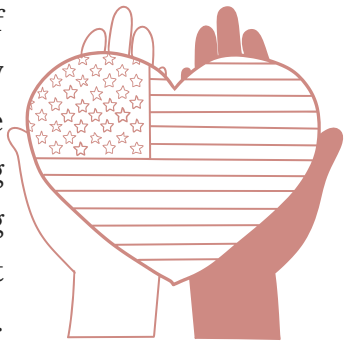
King reached the height of popular acclaim during his life in 1964, when he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. His career after that point was filled with frustrating challenges. The liberal coalition that had gained passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964[and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 began to fray. King was becoming more estranged from the Johnson administration. In 1965 he broke with it by calling for peace negotiations and a halt to the bombing of Vietnam. He moved further left in the following years, speaking of the need for economic justice and thoroughgoing changes in American society. He believed change was needed beyond the civil rights gained by the movement. King's attempts to broaden the scope of the Civil Rights Movement were halting and largely unsuccessful, however. King made several efforts in 1965 to take the Movement north to address issues of employment and housing discrimination. SCLC's campaign in Chicago publicly failed, as Chicago Mayor Richard J. Daley marginalized SCLC's campaign by promising to "study" the city's problems. In 1966, white demonstrators holding "white power" signs in notoriously racist Cicero, a suburb of Chicago, threw stones at marchers demonstrating against housing segregation.

RACE RIOTS

By the end of World War II, more than half of the country's black population lived in Northern and Western industrial cities rather than Southern rural areas. Migrating to those cities for better job opportunities, education and to escape legal segregation, African Americans often found segregation that existed in fact rather than in law. While after the 1920s, the Ku Klux Klan was not prevalent; by the 1960s other problems prevailed in northern cities. Beginning in the 1950s, deindustrialization and restructuring of major industries: Railroads and meatpacking, steel industry and car industry, markedly reduced working- class jobs, which had earlier provided middle-class incomes. As the last population to enter the industrial job market, blacks were disadvantaged by its collapse. At the same time, many ethnic whites moved out of the inner cities to newer housing in expanding suburbs. Urban blacks who did not follow the middle class out of the cities became concentrated in the older housing of inner city neighborhoods – effectively black ghettoes.

Because jobs in new service areas and parts of the economy were being created in suburbs, unemployment was much higher in many black than in white neighborhoods, and crime was frequent. African Americans rarely owned the stores or businesses where they lived. Many were limited to menial or blue-collar jobs. African Americans often made only enough money to live in dilapidated tenements that were privately owned, or poorly maintained public housing. They also attended schools that were often the worst academically in the city and that had fewer white students than in the decades before WWII.

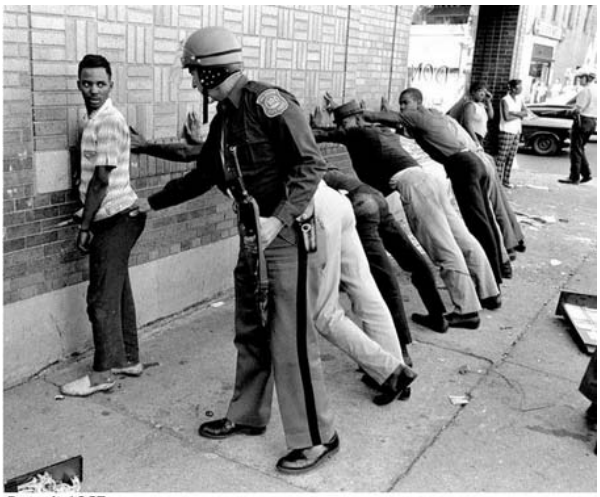
The racial makeup of most major city police departments, largely ethnic white (especially Irish), was a major factor in adding to racial tensions. Even a black neighborhood such as Harlem had a ratio of one black officer for every six white officers. The majority-black city of Newark, New Jersey had only 145 blacks among its 1322 police officers. In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act, but the new law had no immediate effect on living conditions for blacks. A few days after the act became law, a riot broke out in the South Central Los Angeles neighborhood of Watts. Like Harlem, Watts was an impoverished neighborhood with very high unemployment. Its residents were supervised by a largely white police department that had a history of abuse against blacks.



While arresting a young man for drunk driving, police officers argued with the suspect's mother before onlookers. The conflict triggered a massive destruction of property through six days of rioting. Thirty-four people were killed and property valued at about $30 million was destroyed, making the Watts Riots among the most expensive in American history. With black militancy on the rise, ghetto residents directed acts of anger at the police. Black residents growing tired of police brutality continued to riot. Some young people joined groups such as the Black Panthers, whose popularity was based in part on their reputation for confronting police officers. Riots among blacks occurred in 1966 and 1967 in cities such as Atlanta, San Francisco, Oakland, Baltimore, Seattle, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Columbus, Newark, Chicago, New York City (specifically in Brooklyn, Harlem and the Bronx), and worst of all in Detroit.

In Detroit, a comfortable black middle class had begun to develop among families of blacks who worked at good-paying jobs in the automotive industry. Blacks who had not moved upward were living in much worse conditions, subject to the same problems as blacks in Watts and Harlem. When white police officers shut down an illegal bar on a liquor raid and arrested a large group of patrons during the hot summer, furious residents rioted. Migrants and immigrants had the older housing in the city. Demonstrating the economic basis of the suburban migration, Detroit lost some of its black middle class as well, as did cities such as Washington, DC and Chicago during the next decades. As a result of the riots, and migration of jobs and the middle class to the suburbs, formerly prosperous industrial cities, such as Detroit, Newark, and Baltimore, now have less than 40% white population. Changes in industry caused continued job losses, depopulation of middle classes, and concentrated poverty in such cities in the late 20th century.

President Johnson created the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders in 1967. The commission's final report called for major reforms in employment and public assistance for black communities. It warned that the United States was moving toward separate white and black societies.



Detroit 1967

The FBI, J Edgar Hoover and Martin Luther King

> "In the light of King's powerful demagogic speech... We must mark him now, if we have not done so before, as the most dangerous Negro of the future in this Nation from the standpoint of communism, the Negro and national security."
>
> *FBI memo after King's "I have a dream" speech.*

In response to King's address, J. Edgar Hoover, the all-powerful FBI director, intensified the bureau's secret war against the civil rights leader.

For years, Hoover had been obsessed by King, viewing him as a profound threat to national security. He was fixated on Stanley Levison, an adviser to King who years earlier had been involved with the Communist Party, and in 1962 the FBI director convinced Attorney General Robert Kennedy to authorize tapping the business phone and office of Levison, who often spoke to King. Then Hoover, as Tim Weiner puts it in his masterful history of the FBI, Enemies, began to "bombard" President John Kennedy, Vice President Lyndon Johnson, Bobby Kennedy, and leading members of Congress with "raw intelligence reports about King, Levison, the civil rights movement, and Communist subversion." Hoover's main aim was to discredit King among the highest officials of the US government. Hoover kept firing off memos, accusing King of a leading role in the Communist conspiracy against America.

In 1963, six weeks after the Washington march, pressured by Hoover, Bobby Kennedy authorized full electronic surveillance of King. FBI agents placed bugs in King's hotel rooms; they tapped his phones; they bugged his private apartment in Atlanta. The surveillance collected conversations about the civil rights movement's strategies and tactics—and also the sounds of sexual activity. Hoover was enraged by the intelligence about King's private life, and while discussing the matter with an aide, an irate Hoover banged a glass-topped desk with his fist and shattered it.

When Martin Luther King was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, Hoover told a group of reporters that King was "the most notorious liar in the country". But the FBI's war on King was uglier than name-calling. Weiner writes: "A package of the King sex tapes was prepared by the FBI's lab technicians, with an accompanying poison-pen letter and sent both to King's home. His wife opened the package."

"King, look into your heart," the letter read. The American people soon would "know you for what you are—an evil, abnormal beast...There is only one way out for you. You better take it before your filthy, abnormal fraudulent self is bared to the nation." FBI boss Hoover poses with machine gun.

The President [Lyndon Johnson] knew Hoover had taped King's sexual assignations. Hoover was using the information in an attempt to disgrace King at the White House, in Congress, and in his own home. Worse, it seems the FBI was trying to encourage King to kill himself. The FBI refused to pass evidence or rumor of plots to murder King to him or to Civil Rights organizations. The following year, King was assassinated by James Earl Ray, who subsequently evaded an FBI manhunt, to be captured months later by Scotland Yard in England.

As the March on Washington is remembered five decades later, it should be noted that King's successes occurred in the face of direct and underhanded opposition from forces within the US government, most of all FBI chief Hoover, who did not hesitate to abuse his power and use sleazy and illegal means to mount his vendetta against King.

MALCOLM X (NON-)VIOLENCE

Malcolm X was a disadvantaged northern youth Malcolm X in 1964 who became a petty criminal and turned to Islam and political radicalism whilst in jail. He became a spokesman for the Nation of Islam, a black separatist cult which equated the white man with Satan. In March 1964, Malcolm X (Malik El-Shabazz), national representative of the Nation of Islam, formally broke with that organization, and made a public offer to collaborate with any civil rights organization that accepted the right to self-defense and the philosophy of Black nationalism (which Malcolm said no longer required Black separatism).

Gloria Richardson - head of the Cambridge, Maryland chapter of SNCC, leader of the Cambridge rebellion, and an honored guest at The March on Washington - immediately embraced Malcolm's offer. Mrs. Richardson, "the nation's most prominent woman [civil rights] leader," told Baltimore Afro-American that "Malcolm is being very practical...The federal government has moved into conflict situations only when matters approach the level of insurrection. Self-defense may force Washington to intervene sooner." Earlier, in May 1963, James Baldwin had stated publicly that "the Black Muslim movement is the only one in the country we can call grassroots, I hate to say it... Malcolm articulates for Negroes, their suffering...he corroborates their reality..."

On March 26, 1964, as the Civil Rights Act was facing stiff opposition in Congress, Malcolm had a public meeting with Martin Luther King Jr. at the Capitol building. Malcolm had attempted to begin a dialog with Dr. King as early as 1957, but King had rebuffed him. Malcolm had responded by calling King an "Uncle Tom" who turned his back on black militancy in order to appease the white power structure.

However, the two men were on good terms at their face-to-face meeting.[There is evidence that King was preparing to support Malcolm's plan to formally bring the US government before the United Nations on charges of human rights violations against African- Americans. Malcolm now encouraged Black Nationalists to get involved in voter registration drives and other forms of community organizing to redefine and expand the movement. Civil rights activists became increasingly combative in the 1963 to 1964 period, owing to events such as the thwarting of the Albany campaign, police repression and Ku Klux Klan terrorism in Birmingham, and the assassination of Medgar Evers. Mississippi NAACP Field Director Charles Evers–Medgar Evers' brother spoke out on February 15, 1964:

"NON-VIOLENCE WON'T WORK IN MISSISSIPPI... WE MADE UP OUR MINDS... THAT IF A WHITE MAN SHOOTS AT A NEGRO IN MISSISSIPPI, WE WILL SHOOT BACK."

The repression of sit-ins in Jacksonville, Florida provoked a riot that saw black youth throwing Molotov cocktails at police on March 24, 1964. Malcolm X gave extensive speeches in this period warning that such militant activity would escalate further if African-Americans' rights were not fully recognized.

In his landmark April 1964 speech "The Ballot or the Bullet", Malcolm presented an ultimatum to white America: "There's new strategy coming in. It'll be Molotov cocktails this month, hand grenades next month, and something else next month. It'll be ballots, or it'll be bullets." On February 21, 1965, Malcolm X was preparing to address the Organization of Afro-Ameri Unity in Manhattan's Audubon Ballroom when someone in the 400-person audience start shouting abuse. As Malcolm X and his bodyguards tried to quell the disturbance, a man rus forward and shot him once in the chest with a sawed-off shotgun; two other men charged stage firing semi-automatic handguns. Malcolm X was dead.

The assassins were caught convicted, all were members of the Nation of Islam. Martin Luther King reacted: While we did not always see eye to eye on methods to solve problem, I always had a deep affection for Malcolm and felt that he had a great ability finger on the root of the problem. He was an eloquent spokesman for his point of view a can honestly doubt that Malcolm had a great concern for the problems that we face as a race.

THE LYNCHING OF...

The horrific death of a Chicago teenager helped spark the civil rights movement In the summer of 1955, Mamie Till gave in to her son's plea to visit relatives in the South. But before putting her only son Emmett on bus in Chicago, she gave him a stern warning: "Be careful. If you have to get down on your knees and bow when a white person goes past, do it willingly."

MAMIE TILL MOBLEY

Emmett, all of 14, didn't heed his mother's warning. On Aug. 27, 1955, Emmett was beaten and shot to death by two white men who threw the boy's mutilated body into the Tallahatchie River near Money, Mississippi. Emmett's crime: talking and maybe even whistling to a white woman at a local grocery store. Emmett's death came a year after the Supreme Court's Brown v. Board of Education decision outlawed segregation. For the first time, blacks had the law on their side in the struggle for equality. Emmett's killing struck a chord across a nation. White people in the North were as shocked as blacks at the cruelty of the killing. The national media picked up on the story, and the case mobilized the NAACP, which provided a safe house for witnesses in the trial of the killers. Emmett became a martyr for the fledgling civil rights movement that would engross the country in a few years.

Mamie Till spoke out about her son's death. She held an open-casket funeral for her son, so that the world could see "what they did to my boy." Emmett's face was battered beyond recognition and he had a bullet hole in his head. The body had decomposed after spending several days underwater. Roy Bryant, whose wife Carolyn was the white woman at the store, and his half-brother, J.W. Milam, were tried for Emmett's murder and acquitted by a jury of 12 white men.

Fannie Lou Hamer: grassroots activist.
Fannie Lou Hamer, born in Mississippi, was working in the fields when she was six, and was only educated through the sixth grade. She married in 1942, and adopted two children. She went to work on the plantation where her husband drove a tractor, first as a field worker and then as the plantation's timekeeper. She also attended meetings of the Regional Council of Negro Leadership, where speakers addressed self-help civil rights, and voting rights.

In 1962, Fannie Lou Hamer volunteered to work with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) registering black voters in the South. She and the rest of her family lost their jobs for her involvement, and SNCC hired her as a field secretary. She was able to register to vote for the first time in her life in 1963, and then taught others what they'd need to know to pass the then-required literacy test. In her organizing work, she often led the activists in singing Christian hymns about freedom: "This Little Light of Mine" and others. She helped organize the 1964 "Freedom Summer" in Mississippi, a campaign sponsored by SNCC, Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), and the NAACP.

In 1963, after being charged with disorderly conduct for refusing to go along with a restaurant's "whites only" policy, Hamer was beaten so badly in jail, and refused medical treatment, that she was permanently disabled. Because African Americans were excluded from the Mississippi Democratic Party, the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) was formed, with Fannie Lou Hamer as a founding member and vice president. The MFDP sent an alternate delegation to the 1964 Democratic National Convention, with 64 black and 4 white delegates. Fannie Lou Hamer testified to the convention's Credentials Committee about violence and discrimination faced by black voters trying to register to vote, and her testimony was televised nationally.

The MFDP refused a compromise offered to seat two of their delegates, and returned to further political organizing in Mississippi, and in 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act. From 1968 to 1971, Fannie Lou Hamer was a member of the Democratic National Committee for Mississippi. Her 1970 lawsuit, Hamer v. Sunflower County, demanded school desegregation. She ran unsuccessfully for the Mississippi state Senate in 1971, and successfully for delegate to the Democratic National Convention of 1972.

She also lectured extensively, and was known for a signature line she often used, "I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired." She was known as a powerful speaker, and her singing voice lent another power to civil rights meetings. Fannie Lou Hamer brought a Head Start program to her local community, to form a local Pig Bank cooperative (1968) with the help of the National Council of Negro Women, and later to found the Freedom Farm Cooperative (1969). She helped found the National Women's Political Caucus in 1971, speaking for inclusion of racial issues in the feminist agenda.

In 1972 the Mississippi House of Representatives passed a resolution honoring her national and state activism.

Four days before his murder Martin Luther King gave this speech: (with which we end the production):

Deep in my heart, I do believe, we shall overcome. You know, I've joined hands so often with students and others behind jail bars singing it, We shall overcome. Sometimes we've had tears in our eyes when we joined together to sing it, but we still decided to sing it, "We shall overcome."

Oh, before this victory's won, some will have to get thrown in jail some more, but we shall overcome. Don't worry about us. Before the victory's won, some of us will lose jobs, but we shall overcome. Before the victory's won, even some will have to face physical death. But if physical death is the price that some must pay to free their children from a permanent psychological death, then nothing shall be more redemptive.

We shall overcome because the arc of the moral universe is long but it bends toward justice.

We shall overcome because Carlyle is right, "No lie can live forever."

We shall overcome because William Cullen Bryant is right: "Truth crushed to earth will rise again".

We shall overcome because James Russell Lowell is right: Truth forever on the scaffold, wrong forever on the throne, yet that scaffold sways the future and behind the dim unknown standeth God within the shadows keeping watch above his own.

We shall overcome because the Bible is right, "You shall reap what you sow".

We shall overcome. Deep in my heart I do believe we shall overcome.

QUESTIONNAIRE

1) What was Martin Luther King Jr's given name at birth?

2) Why did his father change Martin Luther King Jr's name?

3) In what year was King assassinated?

4) What global prize did King win in 1964?

5) When was 'Martin Luther King, Jr Day' first instituted as a US federal holiday?

6) Where was King born?

7) Where did he marry his wife Coretta?

8) What Indian activist served as an inspiration for King's advocacy of non-violent action?

9) And who introduced King to Ghandi's ideas?

10) Although King never openly advocated support for any political party he did reveal how he personally voted. Was that for the Republicans or the Democrats?

11) King thought it would be impossible to financially recompense by payment of unpaid wages those who, and whose families, had been exploited as slaves. However, in 1965 he did suggest a compensation sum to help close the wealth gap between black and white Americans. What was that sum (to be paid over 10 years)?

12) In what context did King make this suggestion?

13) 10 months before Rosa Parks' arrest, sparking the Montgomery Bus Boycott, a 15 year old Claudette Colvin was similarly arrested for refusing to give up her seat to a white passenger. Why did community leaders fail to lead a campaign in Colvin's case?

14) What was the organization formed in 1957 to harness the influence of black churches in non-violent protest?

15) Who authorized the tapping of King's phone in 1963?

16) Who was in charge of the assaults in Birmingham (Alabama) on civil rights demonstrators w dogs and high-pressure water jets, TV footage of which so shocked many US viewers a helped to turn public opinion against white segregationists?

17) Who said: "Be peaceful, be courteous, obey the law, respect everyone; but if someone puts hand on you, send him to the cemetery"?

18) Who was the younger man, King or Malcolm X?

19) What was Malcolm X's original birth name?

20) What organization did Malcolm X join while in prison in the 1940s?

21) How did Malcolm X later describe his behavior as a black separatist while in the Nation Islam?

22) Who said "A man who won't die for something isn't fit to live"?

23) Who did King describe as "the greatest purveyor of violence in the world"?

24) What was the full title of the 'March on Washington' of 1965?

25) How long (in duration) was King's famous 'I Have A Dream' speech?

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2**6)** How did the typewritten copy of the 'I Have A Dream' speech end up in the possession of the first African-American coach of the University of Iowa's basketball team, George Raveling.

27) In what year did King write to his wife Coretta that "today capitalism has out-lived usefulness"?

28) In front of what famous monument did King give his 'I Have a Dream' speech?

29) Who said "Any people anywhere, being inclined, and having the power, have the right to rise up and shake off the existing government and form a new one that suits them better"?

30) What was it that King thought was "long, but it bends towards justice"?

31) In prison in the 1940s, Malcolm X expressed admiration for a prisoner, John Bembry, who could command "total respect" by use of what weapon?

32) What was Malcolm X's early nickname in jail?

33) Why did Malcolm use the "X" in his name?

34) What boxing world champion was inspired to join the Nation of Islam by Malcolm X?

35) Who was the leader of the Nation of Islam during Malcolm X's membership?

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36) What did Malcolm X describe as "chickens coming home to roost"?

37) What action did the Nation of Islam take after Malcolm X made these comments?

38) What was the title of a speech that Malcolm X gave in which he advised that African-Americans use their votes wisely, but said that if the US authorities failed to grant African-Americans full equality then they should be ready to take up arms?

39) King and Malcolm X only met once and only for a few moments. In what year?

40) After successes in the American South, King's campaign for integrated and equal housing in the Northern states met with less success. Protest marches through all-white working class areas sometimes met with violent and riotous responses. What was thrown and hit King in the face during one march for housing equalities in Chicago?

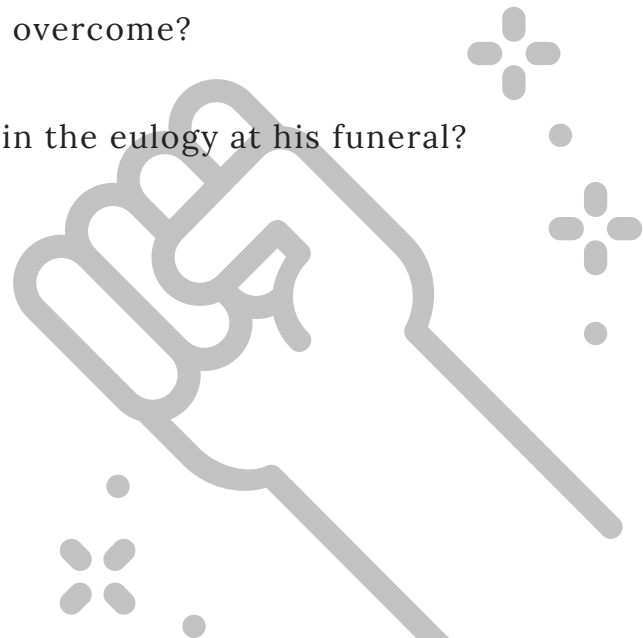
41) What campaign did King and the SCLC set up in 1968 to combat issues of social injustice?

42) What was the dominant criticism levelled at this campaign by other civil rights leaders?

43) In 1964 Malcolm X went to Mecca for the hadj. What is a hadj?

44) What experience while on his hadj did Malcolm X describe as bringing him to believe that rather than the separate development of blacks, Islam could be a means by which racial inequalities could be overcome?

45) In what words was Malcolm X characterised in the eulogy at his funeral?



ANSWERS

1) Michael King.

2) To honour the sixteenth century German Protestant reformer Martin Luther.

3) 1968.

4) The Nobel Peace Prize.

5) 1984.

6) Atlanta, Georgia.

7) On the lawn of her parents' house.

8) Mahatma Ghandi.

9) King's main advisor in the 1950s: Bayard Rustin.

10) Democrats.

11) $50 billion.

12) In an interview for 'Playboy' magazine.

13) She was unmarried and pregnant and the leaders decided to wait for a case involving someone more 'respectable'.

14) Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC).

15) Attorney General, Robert F. Kennedy.

16) Eugene "Bull" Connor, chief of the Police Department in Birmingham.

17) Malcolm X.

18) King, who was born in 1929. Malcolm X was born in 1925.

19) Malcolm Little.

20) The Nation of Islam.

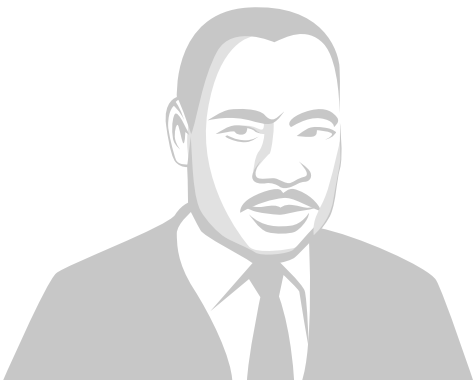
21) "I was a zombie... pointed in a certain direction and told to march."

22) Martin Luther King Jr.

23) "My own government..."

24) The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.

25) 17 minutes.



26) Raveling was stood near the podium and after the speech, on an impulse, asked if he co have the text. King gave it to him.

27) 1952. (In a letter of July 18th.)

28) The Lincoln Memorial.

29) Abraham Lincoln.

30) "...the moral arc of the universe".

31) Words.

32) 'Satan', because of his initial dislike for religion.

33) Because it represented the loss of his African family name that he would never know.

34) Muhammad Ali (who had previously been known as Cassius Clay). Ali subsequently left the Nation of Islam, like Malcolm X.

35) Elijah Muhammad.

36) The assassination of President John F. Kennedy in 1963.

37) They prohibited him from public speaking for 90 days.

38) "The Ballot or the Bullet".

39) 1964.

40) A brick.

41) The Poor People's Campaign.

42) That the campaign was too broad and all-encompassing and its demands were too ambitious to be realisable.

43) A pilgrimage to Mecca obligatory once in a lifetime for any Muslim male physically and financially able to go.

44) Seeing "all colors, from blue-eyed blonds to black-skinned Africans" gathering and meeting as equals.

45) ".... our shining black prince".

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