

Lessons from History: The Leadership Challenge of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. ...Why It Matters Today [Part 1]

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LESSONS FROM HISTORY:

**THE LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE OF DR.
MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.**

.... WHY IT MATTERS TODAY

— EMILIO IODICE, ROME, ITALY



Courtesy, Amsterdam News, New York, NY

.... all life is interrelated, that somehow, we're caught in an inescapable network of mutuality tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly. For some strange reason, I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be. You can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be. This is the interrelated structure of reality.

— Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

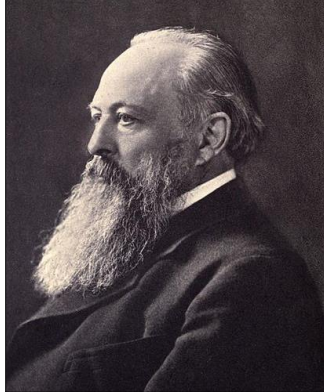
Dr. King is by far one of the most amazing leaders in American history.

His example, words, sacrifice, and ability to lead with courage and powerful emotional intelligence set the stage for a moral change in the character of the people of the United States. His struggle and that of millions of his followers ended segregation and led to the *1964 Civil Rights Act* that was the standard to protect minorities of all races, creeds, and genders, and gave us tools to address the rapidly changing social conditions of the 21st century.

One needs to be slow to form convictions, but once formed they must be defended against the heaviest odds. Whatever you do will be insignificant, but it is very important that you do it. When I despair, I remember that all through history the ways of truth and love have always won. There have been tyrants, and murderers, and for a time they can seem invincible, but in the end they always fall. Think of it — always.

I cannot teach you violence, as I do not myself believe in it. I can only teach you not to bow your head before any one even at the cost of your life. I object to violence because when it appears to do good, the good is only temporary; the evil it does is permanent.

— **Mahatma Gandhi**, Indian activist and politician



John Dalberg-Acton, 1st
Baron Acton. *Courtesy,*
Allen & Co.

Liberty is not the power of doing what we like, but the right to do what we ought. It is bad to be oppressed by a minority, but it is worse to be oppressed by a majority. Absolute power demoralizes.

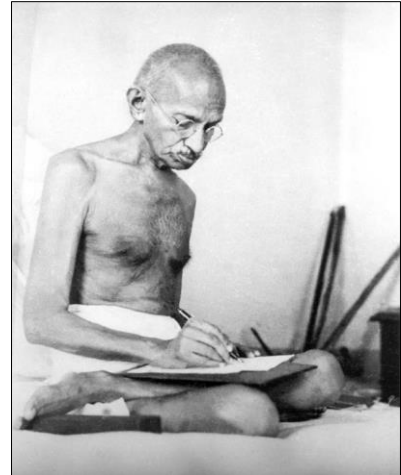
The object of civil society is justice, not truth, virtue, wealth, knowledge, glory or power. Justice is followed by equality and liberty. — **Lord Acton**

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, concerned citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has. — **Margaret Meade**

Leadership Secrets

The following purposeful and powerful lessons can be extracted from Dr. King's life and teachings:

- Learn to Communicate at all Levels
- Organize from the Grassroots
- Show Courage Every Day
- Fight Injustice with Non-Violence
- Love Your Enemies
- Tell Your Story, Even to Your Foes
- Enlist as Many Allies as Possible for Your Cause



Courtesy, ghandiserve.com

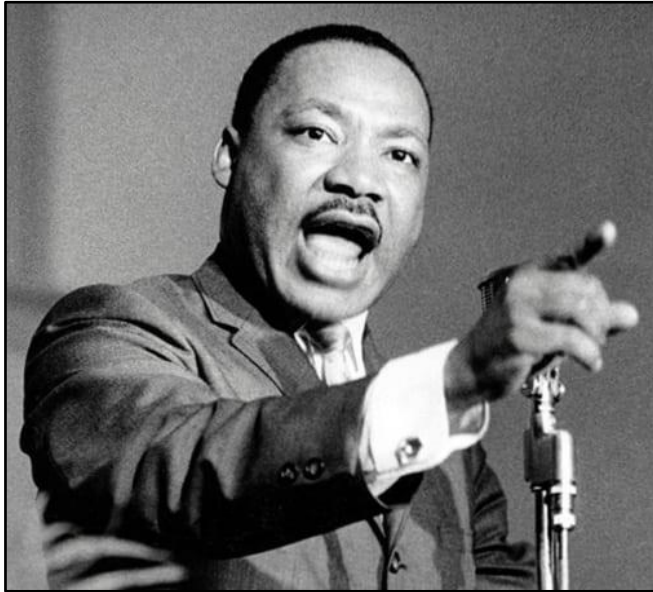


Margaret Meade, *Courtesy,*
American Museum of
Natural History



Courtesy, Colorado State University News

- Tie Your Goals to Higher Standards
- Show a Willingness to Sacrifice
- Be Humble
- Preserve Your Reputation
- Live Your Life as a Clear Expression of Your Beliefs



“THE TIME IS ALWAYS RIGHT TO DO WHAT IS RIGHT”

– Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

He was born in Atlanta, Georgia on January 15, 1929, from a line of pastors. His father and grandfather were Baptist ministers on his mother’s side. His paternal grandfather was a sharecropper. He received a fine education and proved to be a splendid student. He skipped the ninth and tenth grades and entered Morehouse College and received a B.A. in Sociology. King pursued the career of

Courtesy, Sporting Life, Kansas City University.
his father.

He went to Crozer Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania and graduated at the top of his class. He then went on for a doctorate at Boston

At the age of nineteen, he took up the role of minister of the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta. He continued his mission at the Dexter



Ebenezer Baptist Church,
Courtesy, Library of Congress



Martin Luther King and Coretta Scott King, *Courtesy, the New York World-Telegram and Sun Newspaper*

Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, where he began his fight for civil rights for African Americans. He engaged in one important battle after another and quickly rose to be one of the leaders of the civil rights movement in America.

In addition to winning the Noble Prize for

peace, he was awarded a score of honorary degrees. He worked courageously to help blacks attain the dignity they deserved through his nonviolent protests, speeches, and writings.

His achievements included new civil rights legislation including the *Voting Rights Act of 1965*.

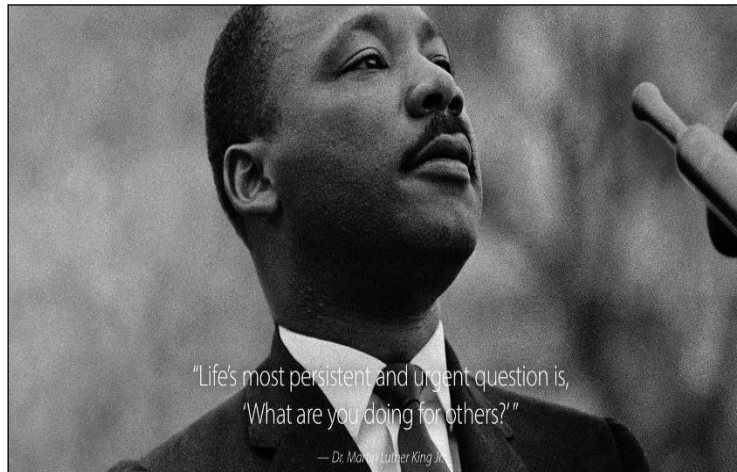
Dr. King knew that, to achieve freedom for African Americans, he and others would have to risk their lives. Like so many descendants of slaves in America, he paid the ultimate price. He was murdered by a sympathizer of white supremacy. Martin Luther King died from an assassin's bullet on April 4th, 1968, in Memphis, Tennessee.

Lynching in America

It may be true that the law cannot make a man love me, but it can stop him from lynching me.

— Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The reality is that racial lynchings were a frequent and normal feature of life in the South. This unique method of murder was a devastating form of terrorism that imposed a constant threat to all black people. The white authority structure did not only tolerate or encourage these killings but used the fear of lynchings to control and oppress black people. — Guy P. Harrison



Courtesy, 477Fighter Group

justice. — Oliver W. Harrington

He was accused of murder and rape. Without a trial, without a hearing, he was dragged to a tree, a noose put around his neck and he was strangled. He was murdered. Perhaps, he pleaded for his life. Perhaps, he was given a chance to pray. Perhaps, he was allowed to give his version of a story. Perhaps, he was permitted to tell the truth. Most probably, he was not.

George Meadows was taken away, like thousands of other blacks across the South from the end of the Civil War to 1981 and slaughtered. No justification was given, except for charges that were never proven in a court of law. It was murder; plain and simple murder committed in a holocaust against a defenseless people. It happened in America. It was one of the many injustices faced by black

Since V-J Day more than nine Negro veterans have been lynched and not one of the lynchers brought to justice...In every field of crime, though some escape, criminals are caught—every crime but one. For the crime of race hate and lynching there has never been a conviction in the history of the United States...To me, a layman, an agency committed to defending the lives of its citizens should spend less time finding legal reasons for not acting, and more time acting on behalf of human



Theodore Roosevelt, Courtesy, Library of Congress Collection

Americans since 1865.

Few leaders of the Executive Branch of the U.S. Government spoke out vigorously against lynching, but one did. It was August 1903. Theodore Roosevelt risked his life. White supremacists threatened to kill him, and southerners promised to punish him at the polls. Even so, he made public statements after a black man was murdered in Delaware. He spoke out against lynching in his State of the Union Address. He even published a letter to Governor Winfield T. Durbin of Indiana, after the Governor dispersed the lynchers with the National Guard:

My Dear Governor Durbin, ... permit me to thank you as an American citizen for the admirable way in which you have vindicated the majesty of the law by your recent action in reference to lynching... All thoughtful men... must feel the gravest alarm over the growth of lynching in this country, and especially over the peculiarly hideous forms so often taken by mob violence when colored men are the victims – on which occasions the mob seems to lay more weight, not on the crime but on the color of the criminal. There are certain hideous sights which when once seen can never be wholly erased from the mental retina. The mere fact of having seen them implies degradation. Whoever in any part of our country has ever taken part in lawlessly putting to death a criminal by the dreadful torture of fire must forever after have the awful spectacle of his own handiwork seared into his brain and soul. He can never again be the same man.

The President's efforts cost him support with Southern whites and forced the Secret Service to increase the number of agents to protect him.

Courageous members of the African American community fought for the rights of children of former slaves. Yet a century after the Emancipation Proclamation, the ultimate indignity against blacks continued. Four decades to the day, after the killing of George Meadows, a baby was born in Atlanta, Georgia. He would change the future of his people as no one before him. His father and grandfather were ministers. His name was Martin Luther King, Jr. Dr. King was thirty-four when another crime was evolving in an Alabama town only miles from where George Meadows was murdered. It was a Sunday morning. September 15, 1963 permanently blackened the name of Birmingham. The event illustrated the continued brutality against blacks.

The city was the largest in the state. African Americans worked in its steel mills and blast furnaces. *The Pittsburgh of the South* was the primary industrial center of the southern states up to the 1960s. Its factories launched the region's railroad industry. Black men and women worked alongside white workers in the town's mills, yet they could not enjoy simple rights, like sending their children to the same schools or going to the same restaurant. They could not fairly vote. They rode in the back of the bus.

On September 15, 1931, Mahatma Gandhi spoke at a conference in India, promoting a nonviolent way for Britain to extend the rights of the people of India. Four years later, on the same day, Adolf Hitler stripped German Jews of their citizenship, beginning what would be called, "The Holocaust." Now, three decades after Nazi Germany began its murderous campaign against millions of innocent men, women and children, a group of racists was continuing a similar crusade in the heart of the South of the United States of America.

Some called it "*Bombingham*." Terrorists set off dozens of explosions in Birmingham from 1950 to 1960. The targets were mainly the homes and businesses of African Americans. White

supremacists used murder to keep their position of privilege and power. Nothing was sacred to these killers, not even a church.

On that Sunday morning, September 15, 1963, in Birmingham, Alabama, a white man emerged from a white and turquoise Chevrolet.

He quietly approached a large brownish red brick building, in the center of town. It had two



Courtesy, top png

towers and a huge staircase leading to three arched entrances. It was fifty-two years old. It was designed and built by blacks. The place was a home of God. The Farmer's Almanac said it was 63 degrees and drizzling slightly, that day.

It was a good day to pray in a house of worship.

Lead by Example

The deeds you do may be the only sermon some people will hear today. — **Francis of Assisi**

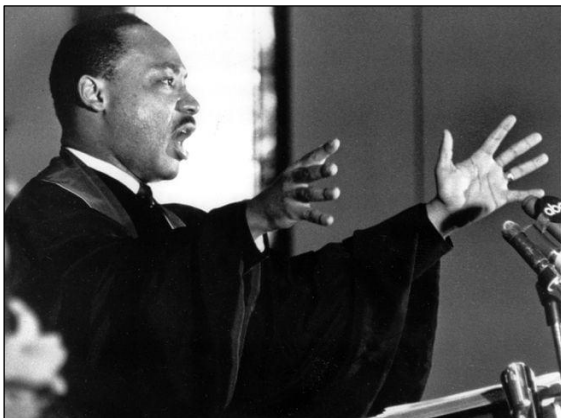
The reality is that the only way change comes is when you lead by example. — **Anne Wojcicki**

We Americans are world leaders, and we must lead by example – particularly in times that require careful deliberation before any precipitous action – lest we fail to walk in the shoes of those we might injure. — **Peter Yarrow**

What you are speaks so loudly, I can't hear what you are saying. — **Ralph Waldo Emerson**

The real power of a leader is in the number of minds he can reach, hearts he can touch, souls he can move, and lives he can change. — **Matshona Dhliwayo**

Nothing so conclusively proves a man's ability to lead others, as what he does from day to day to lead himself. — **Thomas J. Watson**



Courtesy, Atlanta Journal Constitution

Six months before, in Birmingham, a black minister took up the cause of his people. He demonstrated peacefully in the streets of the city against the injustices inflicted on blacks. A court order tried to stop him. He knew the outcome. He said he and his community would protest until "Pharaoh lets my people go."

Martin Luther King, Jr. was arrested on Good Friday morning on April 12, 1963. He was separated from the others. He was put in solitary confinement for eight days. During the marches that followed, thousands were incarcerated. They

were subjected to violence, vicious attacks by police dogs, beaten with clubs and tortured with

bursts of water from fire hoses.

Express Courage and Hope

It is not the strength of the body that counts, but the strength of the spirit.
— J.R.R. Tolkien

Courage is being scared to death but saddling up anyway. — John Wayne

Life shrinks or expands in proportion to one's courage. — Anais Nin

Courage is contagious. When a brave man takes a stand, the spines of others are often stiffened. — Billy Graham

The leader sees things through the eyes of his followers. He puts himself in their shoes and helps them make their dreams come true. The leader does not say, "Get going!" Instead, he says, "Let's go!" and leads the way. He does not walk behind with a whip; he is out in front with a banner.
— Wilfred Peterson

Donald T. Philips, in his splendid book, "Martin Luther King, Jr. on Leadership," wrote about the assault on demonstrators in Birmingham. Dr. King said the police did not understand that the high-pressure hoses used on his people to quench their determination could not succeed. The protesters, according to King, "had a certain kind of fire that no water could put out." They had courage, determination and hope in a better future despite their sacrifices. He and the protesters were not afraid of the dogs and the hoses and Billy clubs.



Courtesy, Hagen History Center
but no vision. — Helen Keller

Project a Broad Vision

Vision gets the dreams started. Dreaming employs your God-given imagination to reinforce the vision. Both are part of something I believe is necessary to build the life of a champion, a winner, a person of high character who is consistently at the top of whatever game he or she is in. — Emmitt Smith

Vision without action is merely a dream. Action without vision just passes the time. Vision with action can change the world. — Joel A. Barker

The only thing worse than being blind is having sight

Keep your dreams alive. Understanding that to achieve anything requires faith and belief in yourself, vision, hard work, determination, and dedication. Remember all things are possible for those who believe.— Gail Devers

Vision is the art of seeing what is invisible to others. — Jonathan Swift

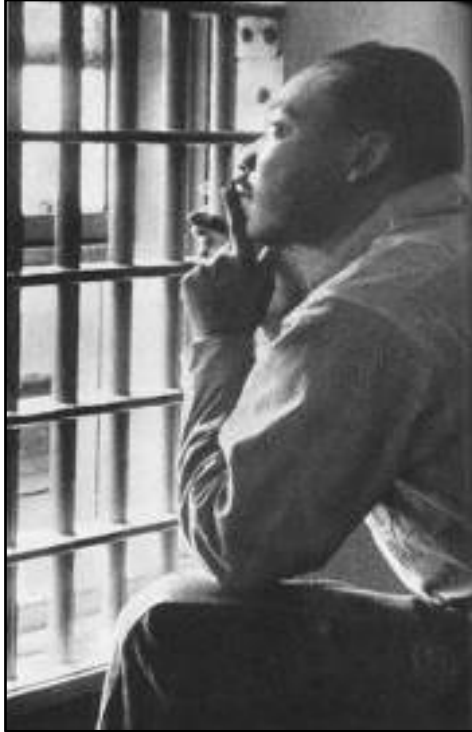
Life is one big road with lots of signs. So when you riding through the ruts, don't complicate your mind. Flee from hate, mischief and jealousy. Don't bury your thoughts, put your vision to reality. Wake Up and Live! — Bob Marley

Your vision will become clear only when you can look into your own heart. Who looks outside, dreams; who looks inside, awakes. — Carl Jung

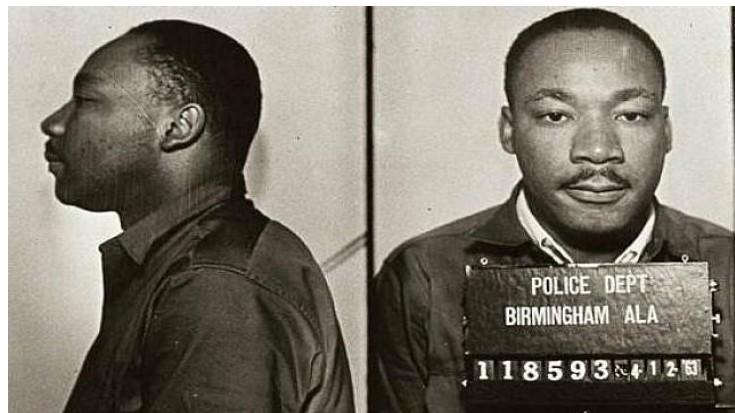
In order to carry a positive action we must develop here a positive vision. — Dalai Lama

Where there is no vision there is no hope. — George Washington Carver

He would not give up. Behind bars, he reflected on his cause, his dream, and the plight of his people. A letter from religious leaders admonished him and his people from protesting. It was published in a newspaper. On the margins of that tabloid, he wrote a response. It was smuggled out of the prison. His “Letter” defined the essence of his mission and described the centuries of indignities suffered by the children and grandchildren of former slaves. His words depicted his leadership of courage, compassion, nonviolence, determination, risk taking and action. He projected a dream of a Promised Land of freedom for the millions of African Americans who would follow him.



Civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. in a jail cell at the Jefferson County Courthouse in Birmingham, Alabama, where he wrote his “Letter from a Birmingham Jail.” April 12, 1963. Courtesy, of Library of Congress.



Courtesy, the Times of Israel

It would take the President of the United States to help release him. He continued his struggle in “*The Pittsburgh of the South*.” He and his colleagues would meet in black churches to organize their marches. One of the churches was in the heart of the city. It was near the place where Martin Luther King wrote his famous “Letter from a Birmingham Jail.” It was the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church. In that letter to clergymen, he said:

I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly. Never again can we afford to live with the narrow, provincial “outside agitator” idea. Anyone who lives inside the United States can never be considered an outsider anywhere within its bounds.

Act

Don’t let what you cannot do interfere with what you can do. — John Wooden

There is no greater harm than that of time wasted. — Michelangelo

I've failed over and over and over again in my life, and that is why I succeed. — Michael Jordan

Never put off until tomorrow what you can do today.

— Thomas Jefferson

Iron rusts from disuse; water loses its purity from stagnation... even so does inaction sap the vigor of the mind. — Leonardo da Vinci

It is never too late to be who you might have been. — George Elliott

The greatest hazard in life is to risk nothing. — Steve Jobs

Do what you can, with what you have, where you are. — Teddy Roosevelt

Thinking will not overcome fear, but action will. — W. Clement Stone

With these words, Martin Luther King was defining the spirit, heart and soul of the nonviolent American Civil Rights movement. The time for action had come:



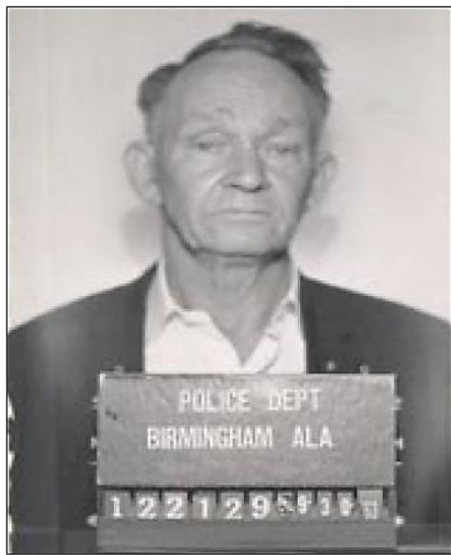
Courtesy, New York State Museum, New York Department of Education

We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed. Frankly, I have yet to engage in a direct-action campaign that was 'well timed' in the view of those who have not suffered unduly from the disease of segregation. For years now, I have heard the word 'Wait!' It rings in the ear of every Negro with piercing familiarity. This 'Wait' has almost always meant 'Never.' We must come to see, with one of our distinguished jurists, that "justice too long delayed is justice denied. ...

We have waited for more than 340 years for our constitutional and God-given rights. The nations of Asia and Africa are moving with jet-like speed toward gaining political independence, but we still creep at horse and buggy pace toward gaining a cup of coffee at a lunch counter. Perhaps it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation to say, 'Wait.' But, when you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will and drown your sisters and brothers at whim; when you have seen hate filled policemen curse, kick and even kill your black brothers and sisters; when you see the vast majority of your twenty million Negro brothers smothering in an airtight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society; when you suddenly find your tongue twisted and your speech stammering as you seek to explain to your six year old daughter why she can't go to the public amusement park that has just been advertised on television, and see tears welling up in her eyes when she is told that Funtown is closed to colored children, and see

ominous clouds of inferiority beginning to form in her little mental sky, and see her beginning to distort her personality by developing an unconscious bitterness toward white people; when you have to concoct an answer for a five year old son who is asking: 'Daddy, why do white people treat colored people so mean?'; when you take a cross country drive and find it necessary to sleep night after night in the uncomfortable corners of your automobile because no motel will accept you; when you are humiliated day in and day out by nagging signs reading "white" and "colored"; when your first name becomes 'nigger,' your middle name becomes 'boy' (however old you are) and your last name becomes 'John,' and your wife and mother are never given the respected title 'Mrs.'; when you are harried by day and haunted by night by the fact that you are a Negro, living constantly at tip-toe stance, never quite knowing what to expect next, and are plagued with inner fears and outer resentments; when you are forever fighting a degenerating sense of 'nobodiness'— then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait. There comes a time when the cup of endurance runs over, and men are no longer willing to be plunged into the abyss of despair. I hope, sirs, you can understand our legitimate and unavoidable impatience.

Now, six months after Martin Luther King wrote his message from prison, a member of the



Robert Edward Chambliss mug shot after being arrested for murder in the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing. Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery Alabama

United Klans of America placed a box with wires behind cinderblocks on a side staircase of the building in Birmingham Dr. King knew so well, the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church. It faced a restroom in the basement. In the parcel, there were nineteen sticks of dynamite, enough to bring down a building several times its size. Twenty-six children were gathering to listen to the sermon of that day. It was entitled: "The Love that Forgives." The member of the Klan drove away in his white and turquoise Chevrolet.

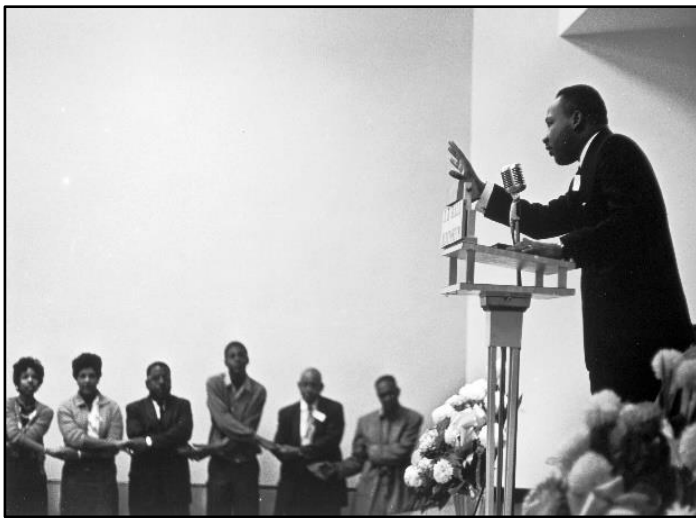
Shortly after 10 AM, the explosives ignited. A roar, far greater than thunder, engulfed the sanctuary. The bottom floor exploded. The church was filled with children attending Sunday school and adults preparing for religious services. Four young people disappeared as the edifice seemed to be lifted into the sky and the dynamite released its deadly force. The blast blew out all the stained-glass windows in the sanctuary — except for one depicting Jesus leading a flock of children.

Twenty-two people were seriously injured. When some of the rubble was cleared, four small, charred bodies were discovered. Addie Mae Collins, age 14, Denise McNair, age 11, Carol Robertson, age 14, and Cynthia Wesley, age 14 joined thousands of African Americans who gave up their lives so that their people could enjoy their American birthright.

The incident was added to the more than forty bombings in Birmingham since the First World War. A man was identified. It was alleged that he placed the bomb that destroyed

the house of worship and killed four innocent children. Robert Chambliss, a member of the Ku Klux Klan, was arrested, charged with homicide, and having one hundred twenty-two sticks of dynamite without a permit.

Less than a month after the bombing, Chambliss was exonerated. He received a six-month sentence and a hundred dollar fine. It was for possessing explosives. More than a dozen years after the trial, Chambliss was tried again. He was found guilty of murder. He died in prison eight years later. Three accomplices were discovered. One was dead. The other two were tried and convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment. The final conviction happened in 2002, thirty-nine years after the bombing of the Sixteenth Street Baptist church. This was justice for African Americans, a century after the Emancipation Proclamation. It was slow and required enormous effort for fairness and evenhandedness to be applied to millions of children and grandchildren of former slaves.



Courtesy, National Museum of African American History

Exhibit Courage to Fight Injustice

If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality. — **Desmond Tutu**

If you tremble with indignation at every injustice, then you are a comrade of mine. — **Che Guevara**

There may be times when we are powerless to prevent injustice, but there must never be a time when we fail to

protest. — **Elie Wiesel**

If the machine of government is of such a nature that it requires you to be the agent of injustice to another, then, I say, break the law. — **Henry David Thoreau**

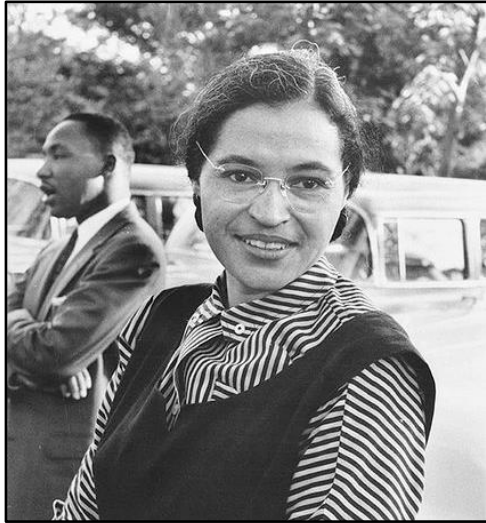
I seek truth over a lie; I seek justice over injustice; I seek righteousness over the rewards of evildoers, and I love Allah more than I love the state. — **H. Rap Brown**

Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those ripples build a current that can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance. — **Robert Kennedy**

One event happened in the long timeline of the fight for equality that led to a turning point in the movement. It was December 1, 1955. A small, gentle black woman got on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama. She was exhausted. She was a seamstress in a department store. Her body ached. She had spent the day sewing and ironing. Her shoulders, neck, and feet hurt. The buses were crowded. She let the first one go by. She hoped for a seat on the next one. White people were entitled to the front rows. African Americans were required to sit in the rear. As the bus filled up, blacks were forced to give up their seats to whites and stand. At times, they paid at the front, got off the bus and

re-entered through the rear door. Drivers often drove off before black passengers were able to get on. The vast majority of those who rode the Montgomery buses were African Americans.

Rosa Parks got on the bus, paid her fare and sat down. She sat in the middle. The first ten rows were reserved for whites. The bus became crowded. A white man approached her. He told her to give up her seat to him. She was to move to the back of the bus. She was tired. She was tired of being mistreated. She refused. She said the image of her staying up all night as a little girl came to her on that bus in Montgomery.



Rosa Parks and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., December 1955. *Courtesy, USIA/National Archives and Records Administration Records of the U.S. Information Agency Record Group 306*



Courtesy, NAACP

She recalled the sound of the hoof beats of horses of the Ku Klux Klan as they galloped through her neighborhood. People were beaten, raped and murdered and no one protected them. Justice did not exist for African Americans.

During the Second World War, a black US Army officer mounted a military bus in Fort Hood, Texas. It was July 6, 1944. The driver told him to move to the back. He refused. Second Lieutenant Jack Roosevelt Robinson was arrested and court-martialed. He was charged with several offenses including drunkenness. Robinson did not drink. He was acquitted of all charges by a nine-man panel of white officers. Jackie Robinson went on to become one of the greatest stars of American baseball and a champion of his race. He broke the color barrier in his sport. He fought like Rosa Parks so that no one would face discrimination, no matter what their creed or color.



Courtesy, NAACP History

“Back then,” said Parks, “we didn’t have any civil rights. It was just a matter of survival, of existing from one day to the next. I remember going to sleep as a girl hearing the Klan ride at night and hearing a lynching and being afraid the house would burn down.”

She managed to go to college and married a barber, Raymond Parks. They helped the NAACP assist African Americans in the South. “I worked on numerous cases with the NAACP,” she recalled, “but we did not get the publicity. There were cases of flogging, peonage, murder, and rape. We didn’t seem to have too many successes. It was more a matter of trying to challenge the powers that be, and to let it be known that we did not wish to continue being second-class citizens. “Rosa Parks now challenged “the powers that be.” She would not give up her liberties guaranteed in the *Declaration of Independence*, the *Bill of Rights*, and the *Constitution*. Like Jackie Robinson, she would not sit in the back of the bus.

She was arrested for not obeying the bus driver of the Montgomery Bus Line. She was tried five days later, convicted of violating segregation laws and fined \$10 plus \$4 court fees. Her refusal lit a powder keg. The Montgomery Bus Boycott began. It happened the same year



Courtesy, AP and Library of Congress

seven black men were lynched in the south. More would continue to die in the shadow of this peaceful woman’s protest.

Accept the Call to Lead

A leader is best when people barely know he exists, when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say: we did it ourselves.

— Lao Tzu

Where there is no vision, the people perish.

— Proverbs 29:18

I must follow the people. Am I not their leader? — Benjamin Disraeli

You manage things; you lead people. — Rear Admiral Grace Murray Hopper

The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality. The last is to say thank you. In between, the leader is a servant. — Max DePree

Leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality. — Warren Bennis

You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You must do the thing you think you cannot do. — Eleanor Roosevelt



Montgomery Bus Boycott, Courtesy, NPR and NAACP History

The Montgomery Improvement Association was formed to spearhead the boycott. A twenty-six-year-old minister was asked to head up the movement. His name is Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. He was called to the role. He did not seek it. Yet, it was clear that this eloquent young man had qualities that could lead his people to freedom.

He was a reluctant leader for this crusade. King had doubts. They were not about the cause. They were about his abilities to lead. He was convinced and encouraged by the community and other leaders that he was the

one to take up the banner. He began to act. King organized the black community and laid out a plan to boycott the bus system.

It began the night Rosa Parks was arrested.

The Women's Political Council, affiliated with the local chapter of the NAACP, circulated a flier throughout the African American neighborhoods and churches. It read:

Another woman has been arrested and thrown in jail because she refused to get up out of her seat on the bus for a white person to sit down. It is the second time since the Claudette Colvin case that a Negro woman has been arrested for the same thing. This must be stopped. Negroes have rights too, for if Negroes did not ride the buses, they could not operate. Three-fourths of the riders are Negro, yet we are arrested, or must stand over empty seats. If we do not do something to stop these arrests, they will continue. The next time it maybe you, or your daughter, or mother. This woman's case will come up on Monday. We are, therefore, asking every Negro to stay off the buses Monday in protest of the arrest and trial. Don't ride the buses to work, to town, to school, or anywhere on Monday. You can afford to stay out of school for one day if you have no other way to go except by bus. You can also afford to stay out of town for one day. If you work, take a cab, or walk. But please, children and grown-ups don't ride the bus at all on Monday. Please stay off all buses Monday.



Courtesy, Smithsonian Institution National Portrait Gallery

Tie Your Goals to Larger Objectives

Without goals, and plans to reach them, you are like a ship that has set sail with no destination.

— **Fitzhugh Dodson**

I have a motto on my bedroom wall: 'Obstacles are what you see when you take your eye off the goal. Giving up is not my style. I just want to do something that's worthwhile.

— **Chris Burke**

People with goals succeed because they know where they're going.

Earl Nightingale
A year from now you may wish you had started today.

— **Karen Lamb**

If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them.

— **Henry David Thoreau**

When defeat comes, accept it as a signal that your plans are not sound, rebuild those plans, and set sail once more toward your coveted goal.

— **Napoleon Hill**

You must do the things you think you cannot do.

— **Eleanor Roosevelt**

Goals are dreams with deadlines.

— **Diana Scharf**

Our goals can only be reached through a vehicle of a plan, in which we must fervently believe, and upon which we must vigorously act. There is no other route to success.

— **Stephen A. Brennan**

I can't change the direction of the wind, but I can adjust my sails to always reach my destination. — Jimmy Dean



Montgomery Bus Boycott, Courtesy, NAACP History



Montgomery Bus Boycott, Courtesy, NAACP

Dr. King gathered his people together, in Montgomery. He needed to explain to them that their cause was far larger than just a boycott of buses. It was part of an historic effort that went back to the origins of America. “We are here,” he said, “because of our deep-seated belief that democracy transformed from a

thin sheet of paper to thick action is the greatest form of government on earth.” He went on to say how serious the consequences were, “If we are wrong, the Supreme Court of this nation is wrong. If we are wrong, the Constitution of the United States is wrong. If we are wrong, God Almighty is wrong.” Dr. King was steadfast in promoting the view that the plight of black men and women was inextricably tied to the past and future of America and all it stood for. He would not move from this belief, despite setbacks and mistreatment.

Organize a Plan of Action and Carry It Forward

Once you decide, the universe conspires to make it happen. — Ralph Waldo Emerson

Now is no time to think of what you do not have. Think of what you can do with what there is. — Ernest Hemingway

Inaction breeds doubt and fear. Action breeds confidence and courage. If you want to conquer fear, do not sit at home and think about it. Go out and get busy. — Dale Carnegie

Build your own dreams, or someone else will hire you to build theirs. — Farrah Gray

The most difficult thing is the decision to act, the rest is merely tenacity. The fears are paper tigers. You can do anything you decide to do. You can act to change and control your life, and the procedure, the process is its own reward. — Amelia Earhart

Stop worrying about what can go wrong and get excited about what can go right. (Unknown)

It is in the compelling zest of high adventure and of victory, and in creative action, that man finds his supreme joys. — Antoine de Saint-Exupery

If no one ever took risks, Michelangelo would have painted the Sistine Floor. — Neil Simon

The boycott had begun.

Dr. King and the community laid out a plan to implement the goals of the boycott. They sought to put pressure on the political establishment and the private sector. White owned businesses were shunned. Dr. King and 156 of the protesters were jailed. He said, “I was proud of my crime. It was the crime of joining my people in a nonviolent protest against injustice.”

Grassroots groups helped raise funds, promote morale, and sustain the boycott. Protests and marches started. Few blacks rode the buses. The community organized carpools. Black taxi drivers charged the same cost as a bus ride; ten cents, for service. The city of Montgomery pressured local insurance companies to not give coverage to cars involved in carpools. The community engaged another firm who helped. Some white housewives picked up their black employees.



Courtesy, Leadership Geeks

At first, Dr. King sought a compromise. He proposed that a fixed line be set up on buses dividing it between whites and blacks, seating on a first come, first served basis and that operators treat blacks with the same courtesy afforded other passengers. The city and the white community refused to negotiate in good faith.

Show No Fear

Avoiding danger is no safer in the long run than outright exposure. The fearful are caught as often as the bold. — Helen Keller

Cowards die many times before their deaths; the valiant never taste of death but once. — William Shakespeare

Develop success from failures. Discouragement and failure are two of the surest steppingstones to success. — Dale Carnegie

Do not be afraid to give up the good to go for the great. — John Rockefeller

Do not fear mistakes. You will know failure. Continue to reach out. — Benjamin Franklin

Do one thing every day that scares you. — Eleanor Roosevelt

Everything you want is on the other side of fear. — Jack Canfield

Extreme fear can neither fight nor fly. — William Shakespeare

Fear is only as deep as the mind allows. — Japanese Proverb

Fear is the main source of superstition, and one of the main sources of cruelty. To conquer fear is the beginning of wisdom. — Bertrand Russell

A militant white organization, the White Citizens' Council, resorted to violence. Dr. King's home, that of his friend and fellow activist, Ralph Abernathy, and four black churches were firebombed.

It was not the first nor would it be the last time Dr. King would face violence at the hands of bigots.

In September 1962, while delivering his presidential address at a Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in Birmingham, a powerfully built man of twenty-four ran up to the podium and punched him in the face several times. Dr. King did not flinch. He did not strike back. He did not recoil under the blows. With blood streaming down his face, he tried to reason with the young man. He was a member of the Nazi Party. The police subdued him.

Dr. King asked that his assailant be allowed to take his seat. After the conference, he said, “The system we live under creates people such as this youth. I’m not interested in pressing charges. I’m interested in changing the kind of system that produces this kind of man.” Time and again, Martin Luther King Jr. would turn the other cheek. He practiced nonviolence as forcefully as he preached it.



Courtesy, Jackson Free Press

The Montgomery Bus Boycott was successful. It attracted national attention. On June 4, 1956, the Federal District Court ruled that the racial segregation laws of the state of Alabama were unconstitutional. The decision was upheld by the Supreme Court on November 13, 1956. Black bus passengers could sit anywhere they chose. The Montgomery Bus Boycott ended on December 20, 1956, and the American Civil Rights Movement commenced. It catapulted Dr. King into a national leadership role.

Convey Facts

Everything we hear is an opinion, not a fact. Everything we see is a perspective, not the truth. — Marcus Aurelius

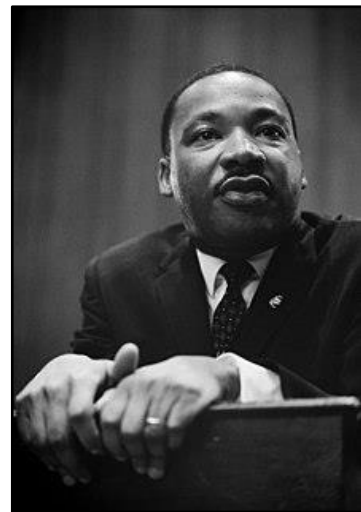
Facts do not cease to exist because they are ignored. — Aldous Huxley

There's a world of difference between truth and facts. Facts can obscure the truth — **Maya Angelou.**

Believe that life is worth living and your belief will help create the fact. — William James

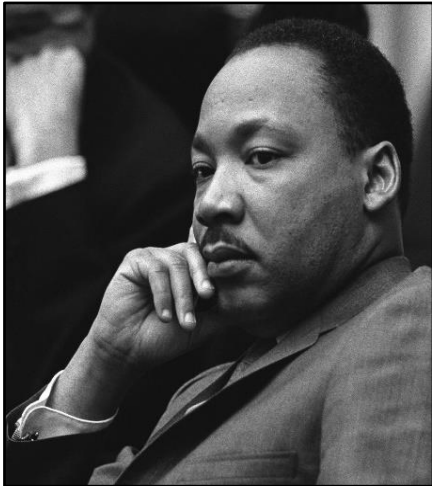
Most of the greatest evils that man has inflicted upon man have come through people feeling quite certain about something which, in fact, was false. — Bertrand Russell

Knowledge is a process of piling up facts; wisdom lies in their simplification. — Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.



Courtesy, Wikipedia and NDS

Dr. King used information to energize his followers and the public at large concerning the plight of African Americans and their families. In 1967, he wrote a book, *Where Do We Go from Here,* about the direction of the movement and the situation that blacks faced in America:



Courtesy, Wikipedia.com

When the Constitution was written, a strange formula to determine taxes and representation declared that the Negro was sixty percent of a person. Today another curious formula seems to declare that he is fifty percent of a person. Of the good things in life, the Negro has approximately one half those of whites. Of the bad things of life, he has twice those of whites. Thus, half of all Negroes live in substandard housing. And Negroes have half the income of whites. When we view the negative experiences of life, the Negro has a double share. There are twice as many unemployed. The rate of infant mortality among Negroes is double that of whites and there are twice as many Negroes dying in Vietnam as whites in proportion to their size in the population.

Listen to Gain Understanding and Trust

Listening is being able to be changed by the other person. — Alan Alda

People unconsciously know when you are not listening to them. Then they say 'No' to you. — James Altucher

Most of the successful people I've known are the ones who do more listening than talking. — Bernard Baruch

And so, I had him thinking of me as a good conversationalist when I had been merely a good listener and had encouraged him to talk. — Dale Carnegie

Those who are quick in talking are not always quick in listening. Sometimes even their brilliancy produces a sort of stupidity. — G.K. Chesterton

Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply. — Stephen Covey

The most important thing in communication is hearing what isn't said. — Peter Drucker

Change happens by listening and then starting a dialogue with the people who are doing something you don't believe is right. — Jane Goodall

As he wrote and spoke about the plight of African Americans, he made it a point to also listen carefully to individuals, groups, families, and his adversaries. He wanted to hear all sides of an issue. He talked to his enemies. He tried to convince them of the righteousness of his cause. Even if he did not change their mind, he did reveal the principles behind his actions. He expressed the good faith at the heart of his movement and the goal to make blacks first class citizens. By explaining the rationale behind his nonviolent action, Martin Luther



Courtesy, Library of Congress

King enforced the loyalty of his supporters and gained the respect of his foes, even if they never would agree with him and would continue to fight him vigorously.

Dr. King wanted to create hope and confidence, develop understanding, enhance personal relationships and promote learning. He consulted with fellow ministers and influential members of the black community. This was one of the qualities that catapulted him into a major leadership role. He was trusted. He did not seek power, yet his qualities of compassion, comprehension and patience naturally thrust him into a position to lead his people forward. Dr. King's ability to listen and analyze also helped make wise decisions.

[End of Part 1: Part II to be published in the JVBL, Winter/Spring 2025 issue]

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About the Author

Emilio Iodice

Emilio Iodice is an Educator, Diplomat, Senior Executive, Best-Selling Author, and Presidential Historian. He was the son of immigrants. Iodice received his BS from Fordham University, his MBA from the City University of New York, and was named to Beta Gamma Sigma – the honorary society of top business graduates. He conducted doctoral work at George Washington University in Washington, D.C.



Iodice spent over four decades as a senior executive, an educator, and a university administrator including serving as a key official for several U.S. Administrations, reaching the top ranks of the civil service and the US diplomatic corps.

He was among the most decorated officers in history with a Gold Medal for Heroism, a Gold Medal and Silver Medal, nominations for the Bronze Medal, and commendations and citations. He was Minister in key missions abroad and was named to the list of future Ambassadors. He was knighted by the King of Italy and received Medals of Honor from Spain and Italy. At age 33, he was named by the President to the Senior Executive Service as the youngest career public official to reach this distinction.

Before joining Loyola University Chicago, as its Director and Vice President of the University, he was Vice President of Lucent Technologies in charge of global operations. He taught at Trinity College and, after nearly a decade at Loyola, was awarded the title of Director Emeritus and Professor of Leadership. Among his best-selling books are: *A Kid from Philadelphia*, *Mario Lanza: The Voice of the Poets*; *Profiles in Leadership from Caesar to Modern Times*; *Sisters*; *Future Shock 2.0*, *The Dragon Brief 2020*, and *Reflections, Stories of Love, Leadership, Courage and Passion*. In 2017, his book: *When Courage was the Essence of Leadership, Lessons from History* was published and in 2019, the new edition was launched. Three new bestselling books were published in 2020 and 2021: *The Commander in Chief*; *The Return of Mussolini, the Rise of Modern-Day Tyranny*; and *Liberation*, which reached the number one bestselling status after one week and became a USA TODAY bestseller. Royalties from the sale of his books go to support charitable causes.

Iodice was recently named a Senator of the Royal Family of Italy. He is Director of the Scientific Committee of the Italy USA Foundation, a member of the Editorial Board of the *Journal of Values-Based Leadership*, and sits on the Board of Trustees of several educational institutions. He resides in Rome, Italy.

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