

## **Emma Buroughs**

### **Washington Middle School**

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr's main political teaching was, "Non-violent civil disobedience is the primary and necessary means of effecting social and political change." He fought for equality and human rights for African Americans, victims of injustice, and the economically disadvantaged citizens through peaceful protests. His goal was to end racial discrimination and segregation in the United States. He did this by leading peaceful protests, acting in civil rights movements, and promoting non-violence. What Martin Luther King Jr. did for all citizens of America changed our country forever. His work is still very meaningful and effective to us today.

One of the many different ways Martin Luther King Jr. has changed America, was through the Montgomery Bus Boycott Protest. The Montgomery Bus Boycott was a civil rights protest in which African Americans refused to ride city buses in Montgomery, Alabama, to protest segregated seating. After 381 days of protesting, the Supreme Court made a decision declaring that Montgomery's segregation laws on buses were now, and forever, unconstitutional. This was a big step towards ending segregation all throughout the country and helped eliminate early barriers to transportation access. This boycott is still meaningful to us today because it set the tone for the entire civil rights movement. This also gave Martin Luther King a position of leadership and showed that the nonviolent method of protest is effective. Citizens of America are still using his powerful protest methods today. For example, citizens peacefully protest for equality between different races in the Black Lives Matter Movement. Other citizens peacefully protest for better healthcare within our country. Individuals may not know how to peacefully protest, if Martin Luther King did not set an appropriate example.

Another act that Martin Luther King led was the African American civil rights movement. The civil rights movement was a decade long struggle for the lives of African Americans in the U.S. This movement lasted from 1954 - 1968. The purpose of the movement was to end racial segregation and discrimination all throughout the country. On April 11, 1968, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights Bills which banned racial discrimination in public facilities, interstate commerce, the workplace, and housing. The Civil Rights Movement racked up many notable victories, from the dismantling of Jim Crow segregation in the South, to the passage of federal legislation outlawing racial discrimination, to the widespread awareness of the African American cultural heritage and its unique contributions to the history of the United States of America. Today, students are able to go to school with other students of different ethnicities and cultures. Students are able to be friends with whoever they choose to be friends with . They do not have to worry about not being friends with another student due to the color of their skin. Students of all different races and cultures are able to have lunch together, play on sports teams, participate in clubs, and other activities within school.

In every protest Martin Luther King Jr. acted in, he always promoted nonviolence. MLK did not experience the power of nonviolent direct action first-hand until the start of the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955. During the boycott, MLK created the 6 principles of nonviolence. King eventually decided not to use armed bodyguards despite threats on his life, as well as facing other violent experiences, such as the bombing of his home. Even when this happened he still had compassion for others. Through the practical experience of leading nonviolent protests, King came to understand how nonviolence could become a way of life, thus the first principle being “nonviolence is a way of life for courageous people.” Martin Luther King Jr’s nonviolent methods of protesting are still effective and useful today. For example, peaceful protests against police brutality have been seen throughout the country. The Black Lives Matter Movement stood behind these peaceful protests. When the incident with George Floyd happened, people of all different races took a stand to end police brutality. Individuals around the country, marched to end the unneeded force used by police. Some police officers even joined in the march to end the unneeded force. Even during MLK’s protest, citizens of different races joined in his protests. Martin Luther King would be happy to see different races come together to show support for one another.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was an inspiration to many and an important part of U.S. history. He was later assassinated on April 4, 1968 in Memphis Tennessee. Even until the day he died, King never allowed fear to triumph. He unified people together under a common goal. Today, you won't find black and white people forced to sit in separate sections on a bus or drink from separate water fountains in a public space. Today we are united as one and are trying to work together to make the world a better place. Not only are different races united as one, but we are making history with our first ever black president, Barack Obama and first black women vice president elect, Kamala Harris. If we keep following the work and actions of Martin Luther King, the first will continue for a lifetime.