

I Have a Dream

Life in the deep south of the USA, during the 1950s to early 1960s, was very different from how it is today. There was a great deal of prejudice against black people. We had the worst houses, schools and jobs. We were treated very differently from white people in many areas of life. As black people, we were told what we could or could not do by white people. Black and white children were not allowed to mix. Also, black people could not sit on seats saved for white people on public transport or use the same entrances to public buildings as white people. Resentment about this treatment was growing steadily among the black community.

In 1955, a friend of mine, Mrs Rosa Parks, made a stand against this treatment. She sat in the part of a bus reserved for white people and refused to move! Poor Rosa was arrested, and all the black people locally wanted to show how upset and angry we were. We wanted someone to be our leader and speak up for us. We decided to ask Martin Luther King because he supported our cause and was a very good speaker. A protest was organised, and black people refused to travel on the buses anymore. Our protest was successful! Eventually a court ruled that segregation on buses was illegal and we were able to sit where we liked!

However, this was just the start! Martin Luther King continued campaigning for our rights. He travelled the country making speeches. Martin organised a huge march in Birmingham, Alabama but was arrested and jailed. He was soon released and organised the biggest march of all in Washington. I was there in the massive crowd to hear his most famous speech! I heard afterwards that he had changed his speech at the last minute and just spoke from his heart.

I will remember what I heard for ever. Martin's speech was inspirational and beautiful. He said "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin, but by the content of their character. I have a dream today."

Martin gave us his vision of a society in the future that would be free from prejudice. He spoke with charisma of a day when all Americans would be truly equal. It was an amazing speech! I was totally wrapped up in his dream for all our futures. There was complete silence when he first finished speaking. Then, all at once, everyone began to cheer and clap. Martin Luther King's words gave all the black people in the USA the pride and courage they needed to continue their fight for equality.

In 1964, a year after that famous speech, the US government made a new law giving equal rights to all black people! This was an enormous step forward and Martin Luther King's work and his speech have always been regarded as key factors in the fight for equality. I, for one, will never forget hearing that speech which inspired so many people and changed the course of American history.

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Comprehension

Give two examples of ways in which black people were treated badly by white people in the south of the USA at this time.

Whose actions do you think acted as a trigger to many protests by the black community?

Was the bus protest successful? Why?

How could you describe Rosa Parks?

What did Martin Luther King do to make people in other parts of the USA aware of conditions in the South?

Do you think the writer of this text is black or white? How can you tell?

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Comprehension

How did the crowd react to Martin Luther King's famous speech in Washington?

What adjectives does the writer use to describe the speech?

What happened a year after the speech?

Why do you think that this was important?

Why will Martin Luther King always be remembered?

How do you think the writer felt about Martin Luther King?

Select some words which show this.

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Comprehension

Give two examples of ways in which black people were treated badly by white people in the south of the USA at this time. **Black and white children not able to mix, black people not allowed to use certain seats on transport or doors to public buildings.**

Whose actions do you think acted as a trigger to many protests by the black community? **Rosa Parks**

Was the bus protest successful? Why? **Yes. The court ruled segregation on buses was against the law.**

How could you describe Rosa Parks? **Brave, fearless, principled.**

What did Martin Luther King do to make people in other parts of the USA aware of conditions in the South? **Toured the country giving speeches.**

Do you think the writer of this text is black or white? How can you tell? **Black, refers to 'we' when describing suffering prejudice.**

How did the crowd react to Martin Luther King's famous speech in Washington? **Silence first then great applause.**

What adjectives does the writer use to describe the speech? **Inspirational, beautiful.**

What happened a year after the speech? **A new law was brought in giving equal rights to all.**

Why do you think that this was important? **Massive change to the lives of many people.**

Why will Martin Luther King always be remembered? **He was so important in the struggle to bring about change.**

How do you think the writer felt about Martin Luther King? **Admired him greatly.**

Select some words which show this. **Inspirational, charisma.**