

THE WORLD'S GREATEST HEROES!

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

The man who changed America

The world-famous civil rights campaigner had a dream—that one day everyone would be treated as equals...



From 1654 to 1856, slavery was legal in the United States of America.

Aah! It's a hard life!

Millions of enslaved black Africans were forced to work and live in very brutal conditions by their white owners.

After the Civil War in 1865, President Lincoln signed the Thirteenth Amendment, abolishing slavery.

Ta-daa!

Hooray!

But, 100 years on, black people were still being treated badly and were often kept separate from whites. This was called segregation.

Booo!

WHITE

BLACK

From schools and water fountains to public transport, black people were being treated as a separate class.

WHITE

BLACK

It seems some people are more equal than others!

They were even stopped from voting, although it was their right!

Everything changed in 1955, when black seamstress, Rosa Parks, refused to give up her seat to a white man on a segregated bus.

WHITES

I won't stand for it any longer!

Rosa was arrested and local black leaders were in uproar!

One of the first people they turned to was local Pastor, Martin Luther King Junior.

He was an inspirational speaker and devoted to helping the civil rights of black Americans.

He first encountered segregation at only six years old, when he was told he wasn't allowed to play with his white friend anymore.

Was it something I said?

A visiting priest also made a big impression on the young Martin, who was transfixed by his eloquence and use of big words!

I'll get me some big words when I grow up!

Martin was a natural leader and speaker and quickly organised a boycott of segregated buses.

At last! Someone who talks sense!

Months of empty buses nearly ruined the bus companies. A court finally ruled the buses unlawful.

I don't make empty promises!

People power had won the day!

Martin was a great believer in peaceful protest, inspired by the Indian Mahatma Gandhi.

Complete collection of Gandhi teachings.

LIBRARY

ARR! My foot! ...Must remain calm. Don't get angry...

KLONK!

Flushed with success, Martin and the protestors focussed on segregation elsewhere.

You sure you don't want to get a little bit angry?

Nope!

They remained calm under intense provocation!

Martin's actions upset the costumed white extremists, the Ku Klux Klan, who attacked many black establishments.

They won't dare show their faces round here!

Not everyone was happy with peaceful protest and some communities rose up against these threats.

The police arrested Martin many times, making him more of a national hero!

Surely you must be slightly miffed?

No, not at all!

Martin's greatest moment came in 1963 at a rally in Washington, attended by 250,000 people.

Can you hear me at the back?

Designed to let all America know about black civil rights, Martin made one of the greatest speeches of the 20th Century.

He spoke of dreaming about the day that his children would "not be judged by the colour of their skin, but by the content of their character".

I have a dream!

Within a year, President Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act ending segregation and discrimination.

Martin won the Nobel Peace Prize in October 1964. He was told on the phone whilst in bed suffering from exhaustion!

222...

You've won the Nobel Prize! Congratulations! Hello? Are you there...?

Tragically, Martin Luther King was assassinated in 1968.

But, in his honour, since 1983, his birthday became a National Holiday!

In November 2008, Barack Obama was elected America's first black President.

Forty years ago, Barack would have had to give up his seat on a bus to a white person. Perhaps Martin Luther King's dream has finally come true...