

New Year's Resolutions

Resolution: a promise to yourself to do something

New Year resolution (n): a decision to do something better or to stop doing something bad in the new year.

The start of a new year is a time for new beginnings. It is a time to think about the past year and more importantly, our hopes and dreams for the future. Many Americans make New Year's Resolutions about changes they want to make in the coming year. Some common resolutions include: spending more time with friends and family, getting fit, losing weight, quit smoking or drinking, get out of debt, learn something new, help others or simply get more organized.

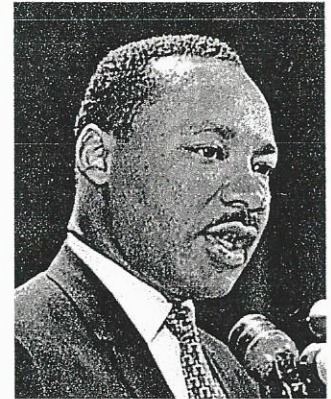
Discussion starters:

- how is the new year celebrated in your country?
- What hopes, dreams or resolutions do you have for 2010?

Martin Luther King Jr. Day

January 18, 2010

Martin Luther King Jr. Day is a national holiday honoring the late civil rights leader. King dedicated his life to bringing about his dream "that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: 'We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal.'" Four decades after his death, King's vision continues to bring hope and inspiration to many.



Early Years Martin Luther King Jr. was born on January 15, 1929 in Atlanta, Georgia. In 1944, at the age of 15, King started attending college in Atlanta. He graduated in 1948 with a B.A. in Sociology. That fall, he attended seminary in Pennsylvania. After graduating with a Bachelor of Divinity degree in 1951, he began his doctoral studies in Theology at Boston University. He married Coretta Scott on June 18, 1953. Two years later, in June of 1955, he received his PhD.

Civil Rights Leader King returned to the South to become the pastor of a Baptist church in Montgomery, Alabama. It was there, in 1955, that he started what became the national civil rights movement by mobilizing the black community in a 13-month boycott of the city's buses. The non-violent demonstration was ignited by a seamstress named Rosa Parks, who refused to give up her seat on a bus to a white passenger. Courts later ruled that bus segregation was unconstitutional. By the late 1950s, King had become a national figure. In 1957, he helped found the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, which encouraged the use of non-violent civil disobedience to win rights for African-Americans. The movement began to see results between the years of 1960 and 1965, when laws were passed to improve voting rights and end separation based on skin color in public places. In August 1963, an interracial crowd of more than 250,000 people attended the March on Washington, during which Dr. King made his famous "I Have a Dream" speech. Just one year after the March on Washington, King, at the age of 35, became the youngest person to receive the Nobel Peace Prize.

King's Death In April 1968, King traveled to Memphis, Tennessee to support the city's striking garbage workers, who were demanding a raise and better working conditions. King was shot as he stood on the balcony of a hotel in Memphis on April 4, 1968. He died later that day. In March 1969, James Earl Ray pleaded guilty to King's murder and was sentenced to ninety-nine years in prison. He died in 1998.

Martin Luther King Jr. Federal Holiday On August 2, 1983, the U.S. House of Representatives approved a law to make Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday a national legal holiday on the third Monday in January, beginning in 1986. The U.S. Senate approved the bill, and on November 2, 1983, President Ronald Reagan signed it into law. The first observance of Dr. King's birthday as a legal national holiday was on January 20, 1986.