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CHAPTER 1

A BLACK AND WHITE WORLD

Martin Luther King Jr., was born in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1929. At age 6, Martin was playing with a friend. That day was the last time the two boys would play together.

Johnny, you come home right now! I don't want you playing with that boy any more.

But, Dad, why?

You should be playing with kids your own color.

I don't see what skin color has to do with anything.

In the 1930s, U.S. states, segregation to drinking

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King was l Atlanta. H teacher. Ki

Robe going

In the 1930s, blacks and whites were separated in many U.S. states, especially in the South. This practice was called segregation. It happened in many places, from lunch counters to drinking fountains, rest rooms, buses, and schools.

Look at the big new school the white kids have.

They probably have new books and a fancy playground too.

King was luckier than many black children growing up in Atlanta. His father was a pastor, and his mother was a teacher. King's family had more money than most blacks.

Robert, aren't you going to school?

Nope. I have to work at the grocery store to help my folks pay the rent.

King's parents taught him important lessons about growing up in the South. While shopping for shoes one day, King's father taught him to always demand respect.



I'll be right with you if you'll move to the seats in the back.

We're quite comfortable here.

You'll have to move.



We'll buy shoes sitting here, or we won't buy shoes at all.


But on the bus contest, King's

Martin, if you speaking like did today, you change things


You don't have to let people treat you like that, son.



As King grew older, he became an excellent student with a gift for public speaking. In high school, he won a regional speech contest.




And I with my brother
of blackest hue may
stand—a Negro—and
yet a man!




First prize, Martin! I am
so proud to have such
a talented student.

But on the bus ride home from the
contest, King's joy turned to anger.



Martin, if you keep
speaking like you
did today, you could
change things—



You'll need
to move. The
white gentleman
needs a seat.

One day,
blacks will have
equal rights. Then I
will sit at the front
of the bus.

King graduated high school at age 15. He started college at Morehouse, an all-black school in Atlanta. To earn money for college, King worked on a tobacco farm in Connecticut one summer. It was his first time being away from segregation.



Wow! The Smiths actually came to meet me at the station.

King enjoyed his worked during th with the other w



From t bathed the sur

One Sunday, King a church service.



Keep up the good work, boys!

Do you think all white northerners are as kind as Mr. Smith?

I don't know. He sure is different than the white men back home.



Yes, sir

King enjoyed his time on the farm. He worked during the week and led prayers with the other workers on the weekends.

From the mountain top,
bathed in scattered rays of
the sun, the Lord appeared.

Man, he sounds just
like a real preacher.

One Sunday, King and his friends went into Hartford to attend a church service. Afterward, they ate at a local restaurant.

Did you enjoy
your meal?

Yes, sir. Thanks.

Do you believe how
friendly people
were today?

They treated us
like human beings.
It was like a dream.

WE SHALL OVERCOME

After his summer in Connecticut, King grew interested in bringing people of all races together. He met with students from white colleges in Atlanta to talk about integration.

So how can we get people thinking about integration in Atlanta?

We could hold a march downtown and carry signs.

I'm so glad there are white people who want the same things I do.

King became the assistant pastor at his father's church in 1948. There he spoke about integration to his congregation.

We should not accept how we are treated in Atlanta. Does the Lord say we are unequal?

No, sir!

Hallelujah!

King's father preaching in

After graduation in B Coretta Scott

It a Mo pea cha

After finishing married in 19 positions in th

We'll be tre fairly here

King's father didn't approve of him preaching integration in the church.



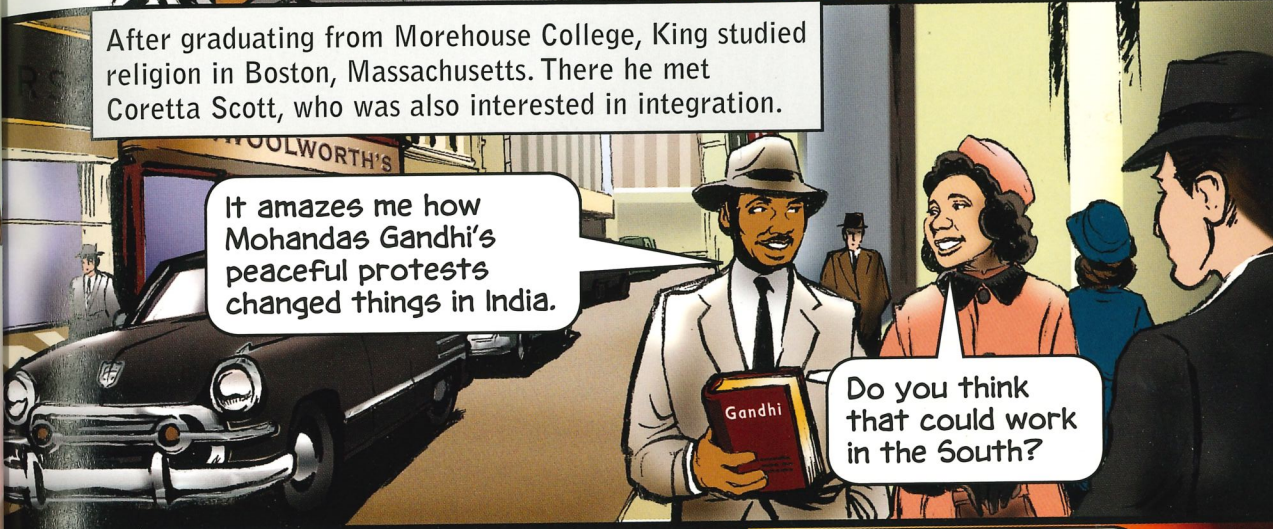
You've got to attend to people's spiritual needs first, Martin.



These are their spiritual needs. People need hope.

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re he spoke
gregation.

After graduating from Morehouse College, King studied religion in Boston, Massachusetts. There he met Coretta Scott, who was also interested in integration.



It amazes me how Mohandas Gandhi's peaceful protests changed things in India.

Do you think that could work in the South?

accept
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the Lord
equal?

After finishing school, Scott and King were married in 1953. King was offered pastor positions in the North as well as the South.



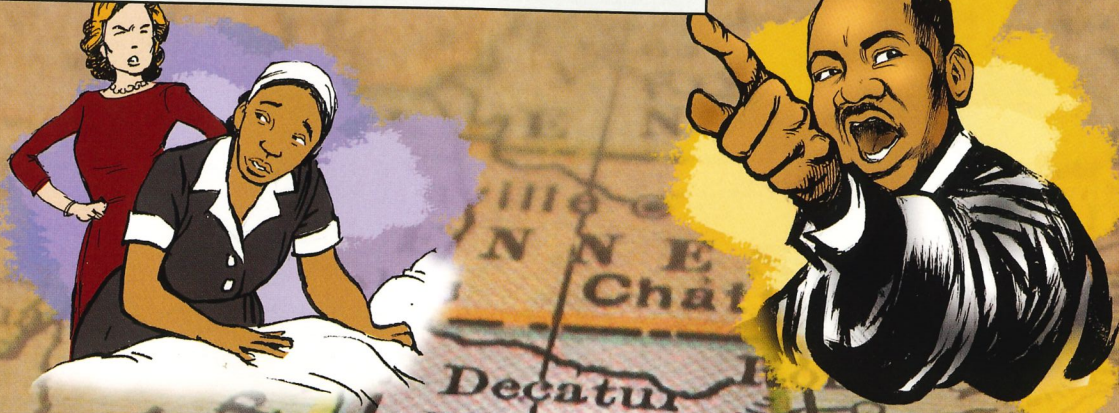
I want to, Coretta, but I think we can help more people in the South.

We'll be treated more fairly here in the North.

So, we'll stay here?



In 1954, King became the pastor at the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama. At that time, Alabama was known for its unfair treatment of blacks.



King believed that if things could change in Alabama, they could change in the entire South. He didn't have to wait long for a chance to prove it.



On December 1, 1955, a black woman named Rosa Parks was arrested. Parks had refused to give up her seat on a Montgomery city bus to a white man. King and members of the black community sprang into action.

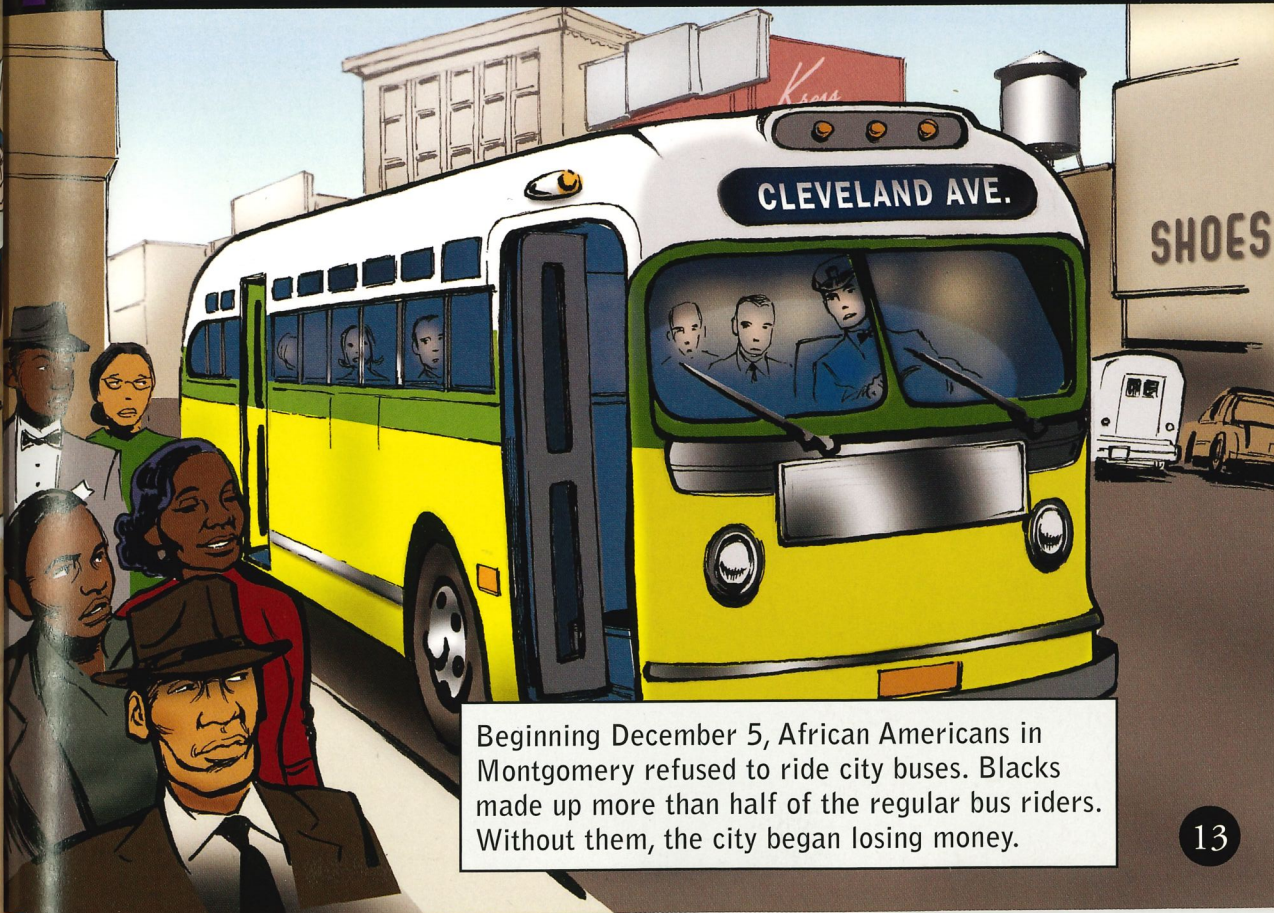
A boycott
buses st

We will
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our whi
are str



A boycott of Montgomery buses starts tomorrow!

We will walk, bicycle, and offer each other rides. We will show our white oppressors that we are strong and unified!



Beginning December 5, African Americans in Montgomery refused to ride city buses. Blacks made up more than half of the regular bus riders. Without them, the city began losing money.

Rosa
up her
. King
to action.

Montgomery's black community elected King president of the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA). He discussed the MIA's terms with city leaders.



We're just asking that the middle of the bus be "first come, first served."

White citizens will never agree to that.

Then the boycott will continue.

Some whites saw King's ideas as a threat to their way of life. Some even used violence to get their point across.



End the boycott!

You hear me, King? We're talking to you!

Martin, I'm scared. Let's move north.

We can't, Coretta. God is calling us here. He will give us strength.

Days later, a bomb exploded in the front of King's house. Some of King's supporters wanted to take action.



Dr. King, we'll find these men and teach them a lesson!

With our fists!

Calm down. Remember our mission. We must meet hate with love.

The bus boycott lasted 11 months. In November 1956, the U.S. Supreme Court declared that segregation on buses was against the law. King and his friend Ralph Abernathy were among the first blacks to ride the desegregated buses.



Quite a view up here, isn't it, Ralph?

Yes, it is! Looks like one step closer to equality to me.