

## 7 Black Americans

Today about 30 million of the 252 million people in the USA are black. They used to live mostly in the South, working in the cotton and tobacco fields. After the Civil War, white Southerners were angry that they had lost the war and angry that slaves were now free. They showed a lot of prejudice against black people. Some whites joined the Ku Klux Klan, groups of men who dressed in white, covered their heads so that no one knew them, and went out to beat and murder black people. Black men could not vote until 1870, and even when they got the right to vote, they often did not use it because they were frightened.

In the twentieth century, black people began to travel to the cities of the North and later, to California, to look for work,

*A Civil Rights march*

so there are now more black people in the North than in the South. But even in the North, they lived separately, and in the South they had to sit separately on buses and eat in separate parts of restaurants. Until 1954, they also had to go to separate schools.

Then in the 1950s, a churchman called Dr Martin Luther King began to fight for the civil rights of black people. Groups of black people started to break the law, but not in a violent way; they refused to use buses, so that the bus companies lost money. They also went into 'whites only' restaurants. In August 1963, 200,000 people met in Washington and heard Dr King speak about the



need for black people to be equal. He began with these words, which have become famous: 'I have a dream . . .'

In 1964, a law was passed giving black people their civil rights and Dr King was given the Nobel Peace Prize. But in 1968, Dr King was murdered in Memphis, and fighting broke out in more than a hundred cities.

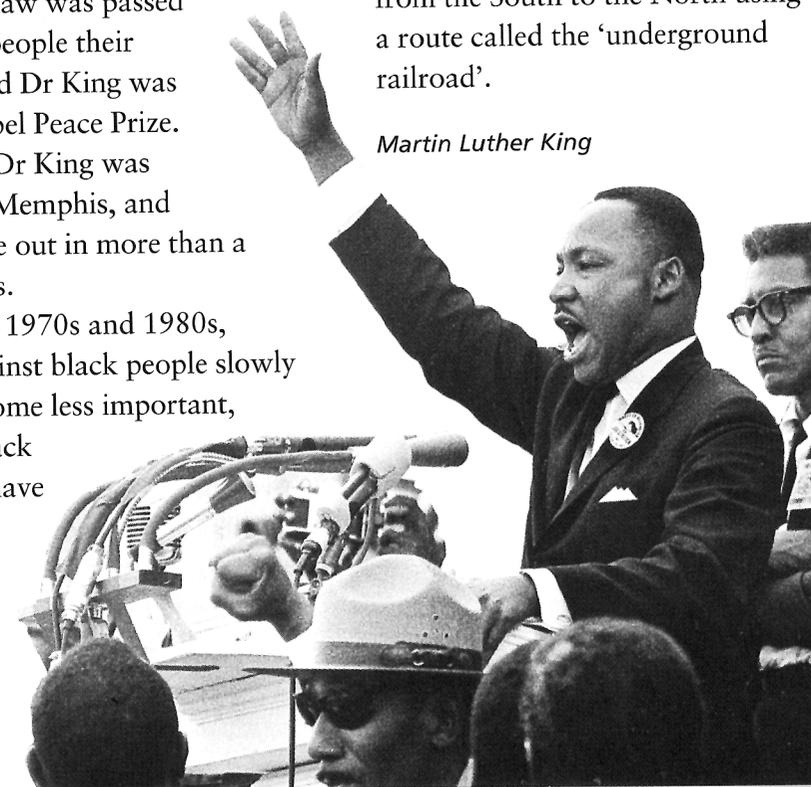
During the 1970s and 1980s, prejudice against black people slowly began to become less important, and many black people now have good jobs in business and government.

However, there are still problems, as was shown by the fighting in Los Angeles in 1992, after a black car driver was beaten by white policemen.

### USA facts

- A story about the hard life of slaves called *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, by Harriet Beecher Stowe, was one of the most popular books of the mid-nineteenth century and made a lot of people see that it was wrong to keep slaves.
- Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass were famous slaves who helped many other slaves escape from the South to the North using a route called the 'underground railroad'.

*Martin Luther King*



AMERICA  
IS  
Black and White

