

Political Role Models for Realists

One of the axioms we hold to be an important truth is that one person can change the world. The {In:Tree of Knowledge} is full of examples of people who are remembered for changing the world, for better or for worse. Adolf Hitler obviously is not a role model that we want to emulate. We are inspired by leaders like Mohandas Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and Nelson Mandela. These are people who embraced reality through using reason, wisdom, and courage and transformed society in a {In:Sacred Direction 'positive direction'}, making the world a better place to live in. These are people whom we, as Realists, look up to as role models. These people have achieved what Realists consider as close to eternal life as you can get in the real world. They are remembered for their accomplishments and their vision is integrated into the very fabric of humanity.

The following articles were written by children. The pictures link to the original articles at {In:nw:<http://www.myhero.com> 'My Hero'} where you can find essays written by children about other heros.

- Mohandas K. Gandhi - In the early 1600s, sailors from Great Britain made their way to India. At that time, India was a country rich in traditions and culture thousands of years old. The British Empire took control of the government of India and forever changed the face of that country. Ancient traditions and religions were thrown out, made illegal by ruthless British generals eager to make India another England. As you can well imagine, the native people of India suffered greatly, seeing their way of life trampled under the British desire to "civilize" their country.

For the longest time, nobody in India successfully fought back against the British and the oppression they brought with them. This all changed when a small man, born in the ancient city of Porbandar in 1869, stood up and said "Enough!" This man became known the world over as Gandhi, the mahatma or "Great Soul" of India.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi's early years showed little sign of the great life he would go on to live. He went to school, was married and later became a rather unsuccessful, terribly shy lawyer. All of this changed, however, one fateful day when Gandhi was denied a seat on a stagecoach in South Africa. The racist driver had made him sit outside in the hot sun on a long trip to Pretoria, simply because he wasn't white. Gandhi, until now too shy to even speak in front of a judge, sued the railroad company and won. From that point on, Gandhi became the number-one spokesman for all powerless non-whites the world over.

After 20 years of aiding his fellow Indians in South Africa, Gandhi returned to India and picked up the fight against British oppression. Instead of encouraging native born Indians to take up arms and force the British colonists out of their country, Gandhi created a policy of non-violent protest. "Non-violence, " he said, "is a weapon for the brave."

For 20 years, non-violent protests, marches and strikes by the Indians wore down British resistance. Confronted by a slight man wearing only a plain cloth and accompanied by millions of followers armed not with weapons but love and truth, the British government in 1946 finally gave India its long-held dream of independence. The fight for India's freedom had been won without a battle having ever been fought.

Sadly, two years after his great victory, Gandhi was shot and killed by an assassin's bullet. But Gandhi's legacy lived on after his death, showing the world that one can be a hero and accomplish great things without guns or swords or hatred. As Gandhi once said, "It is non-violence only when we love those that hate us. I know how difficult it is to follow this grand law of love, but are not all great and good things difficult to do? Love of the hater is the most difficult of all. But by the grace of God even this most difficult thing becomes easy to accomplish if we want to."

- Martin Luther King Jr. - Martin Luther King Jr. was born in Atlanta on Sunset Adams Street in 1929. If he was still alive today, he would be 67 years old. He changed his name from Michael L. King. As a kid, he liked to fly kites, ride his bike and play baseball and football. He was also a paper boy. His mom taught him to read before he went to school. He read books about black people who were heroes, like George Washington Carver.

Jim Crow Laws were laws that separated blacks from whites. Martin's parents did not like segregation, which means keeping blacks and whites apart. They did not like that black people had to sit in the uncomfortable chairs and the white people had all the comfortable chairs. They did not like that there were lots of restaurants open for whites and hardly any open for blacks. They did not like that blacks had to use different drinking fountains from whites. They did not like that they had to pray without whites in church. They just wanted to be their friends. Blacks were cursed, chased, lynched and killed, just because of the color of their skin.

A white mom wouldn't let her son play with Martin Luther King Jr. because he was a different color. When blacks came into the stores, white people wouldn't answer their questions. Another person said to get out of the bus seat and Martin said it was not fair. Martin was having a hard time liking whites.

White people treated him well at Crozer College, but he was still angry. He wanted to be a minister, but before that, he wanted to be a professor. Martin thought he could do the same in America as Gandhi did with the Indians.

He married Coretta Scott in 1953. She thought the same way as he did.

On Dec. 1, 1955, Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a bus to a white person. It started a boycott of the buses by the black people. They didn't know if it would work, because no one else had tried it before. But the bus boycott worked. It took one year to change the rules.

Martin and Coretta had a baby girl in 1956. Martin Luther King Jr. was the president of the Montgomery Improvement Association. He believed that love, not violence, was the most powerful weapon, just like Gandhi believed. People were arrested when white people wouldn't serve them in 1960 and they wouldn't leave the restaurant. Martin and his friends were arrested when they weren't doing anything wrong. John F. Kennedy and Robert Kennedy helped get Martin out of jail when he was arrested. Martin told people not to obey unjust laws. Children marched in the Children's March in 1963. The police were too surprised to do anything. Police squirted people with hoses and they were bitten by dogs. People watched on TV and started thinking about black people's rights. White people came to hear Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech in Washington, DC. Two girls were killed while changing into their choir robes when a church bomb exploded. People were beat up and killed over voting rights for black people. Martin was against the Vietnam War. He did not like violence. People were tired of marching. In 1968, people started to get violent and break windows. Martin was 39 when he was killed. He was bleeding a lot and people ran out. His wife wanted to stop the violence, just like Martin Luther King Jr. did.

- Nelson Mandela - Imagine growing up in a country where drinking out of the wrong water fountain might get you thrown into jail; where a man might have the very same job as his neighbor, but because of the color of his skin, get paid less in a year than the other man made in a week; where the government told you that your ancestors and their ways of living were wrong and savage and not even human.

Growing up in South Africa under the Apartheid system of government meant these things, and worse, were part of daily life.

But Nelson Mandela was a fighter. Instead of bowing down to this unjust system of government, he became a lifelong warrior in the battle to free South Africa.

Starting out as a leader of an underground political movement called the African National Congress (ANC), Mr. Mandela played a part in many dramatic demonstrations against the white-ruled government.

Nelson Mandela's career in the ANC was cut short in 1964 when he was sentenced to life in prison. The notorious Rivonia Trial, as his sentencing was called, is now seen as nothing more than a cruel ploy used by the white South African government to silence Nelson Mandela once and for all. But even while in prison, Mandela continued to be a beacon of hope for his people who carried on the struggle against Apartheid in his absence. In 1990, after 27 years of imprisonment, Mandela was freed. His release marked the beginning of the end for apartheid. In less than five years after his release, Mandela was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize and elected president of South Africa.

Today, thanks to the self-sacrifice of Nelson Mandela, apartheid has been outlawed. Everyone in South Africa now has an equal opportunity at home and at work to live comfortable, productive lives. Nelson Mandela is one of the world's true freedom fighters, and his life and personal triumphs will be remembered long after the world has forgotten the evils of Apartheid.

Nelson Mandela's book, Long Walk to Freedom tells the extraordinary story of his life, an epic of struggle, setback, renewed hope, and ultimate triumph.

"I have walked that long road to freedom. I have tried not to falter; I have made missteps along the way. But I have discovered the secret that after climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb. I have taken a moment here to rest, to steal a view of the glorious vista that surrounds me, to look back on the distance I have come. But I can rest only for a moment, for with freedom comes responsibilities, and I dare not linger, for my long walk is not yet ended."

These are just a few of thousands of people whose vision laid the foundation for modern day wisdom. Their contributions to society live inside us today. When we think of overthrowing oppressors through non-violent protest, those thoughts in our minds started in the minds of these great heroes. We, as Realists, aspire to accomplish something so great that after we die, the best of our thoughts will be preserved in the minds of future generations. These people were chosen as examples of ordinary people who rose up out of nowhere and accomplished great things. Any one of us can be like these people if we choose to do so. We start by deciding to make it happen. Maybe the children of the future will write essays about you.