

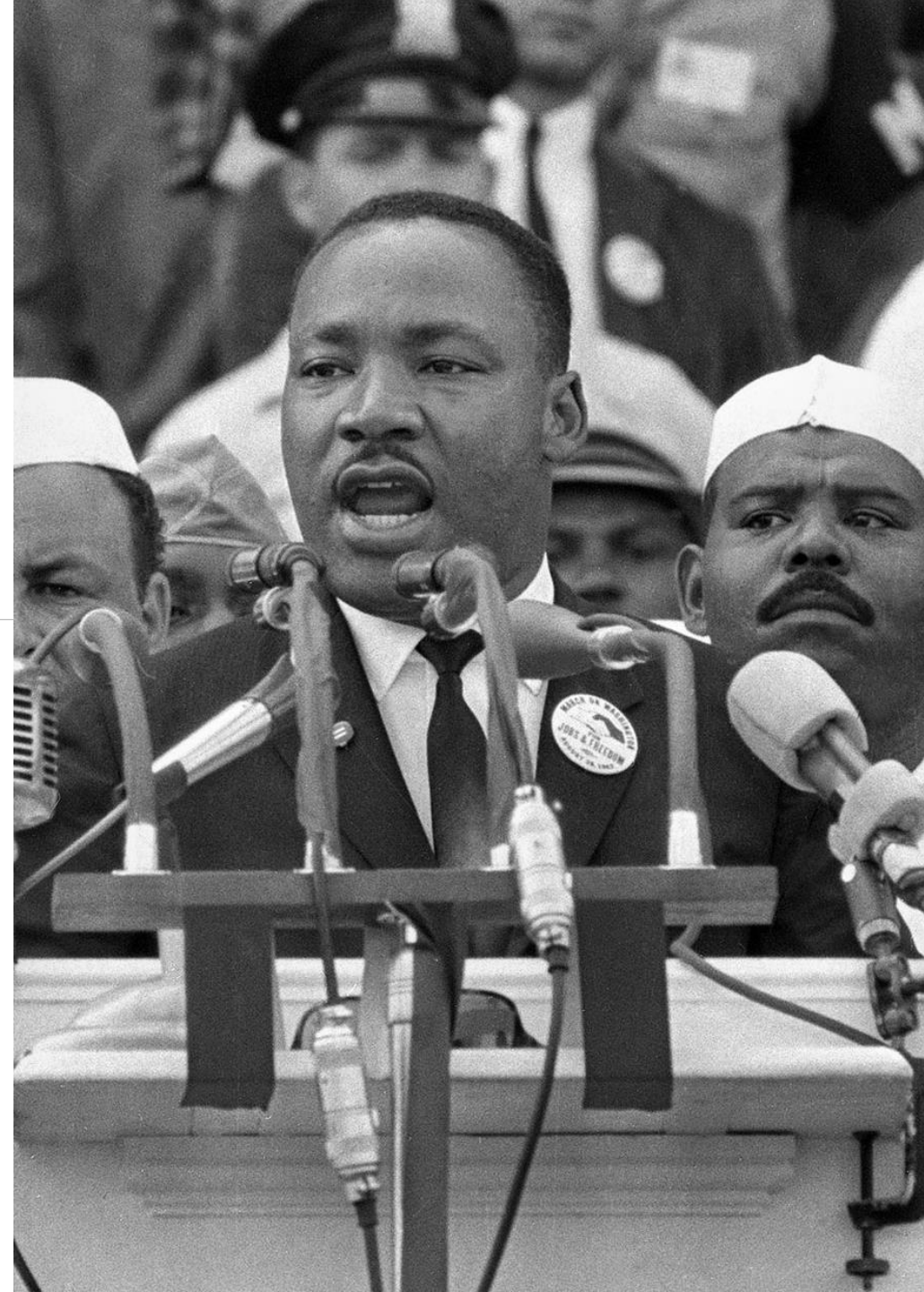


Black History

with Britannica

By the end of this lesson, you should be able to:

- 1 Identify what **Black History Month** is.
- 2 Know who Martin Luther King Junior is and the **importance of his work**.
- 3 Recognise **important figures** that have had an impact on the Black community.



Research any of the words below if you are unsure of their meaning.

- Radical
- Black History Month
- Equality
- Solidarity
- Activists
- Liberation



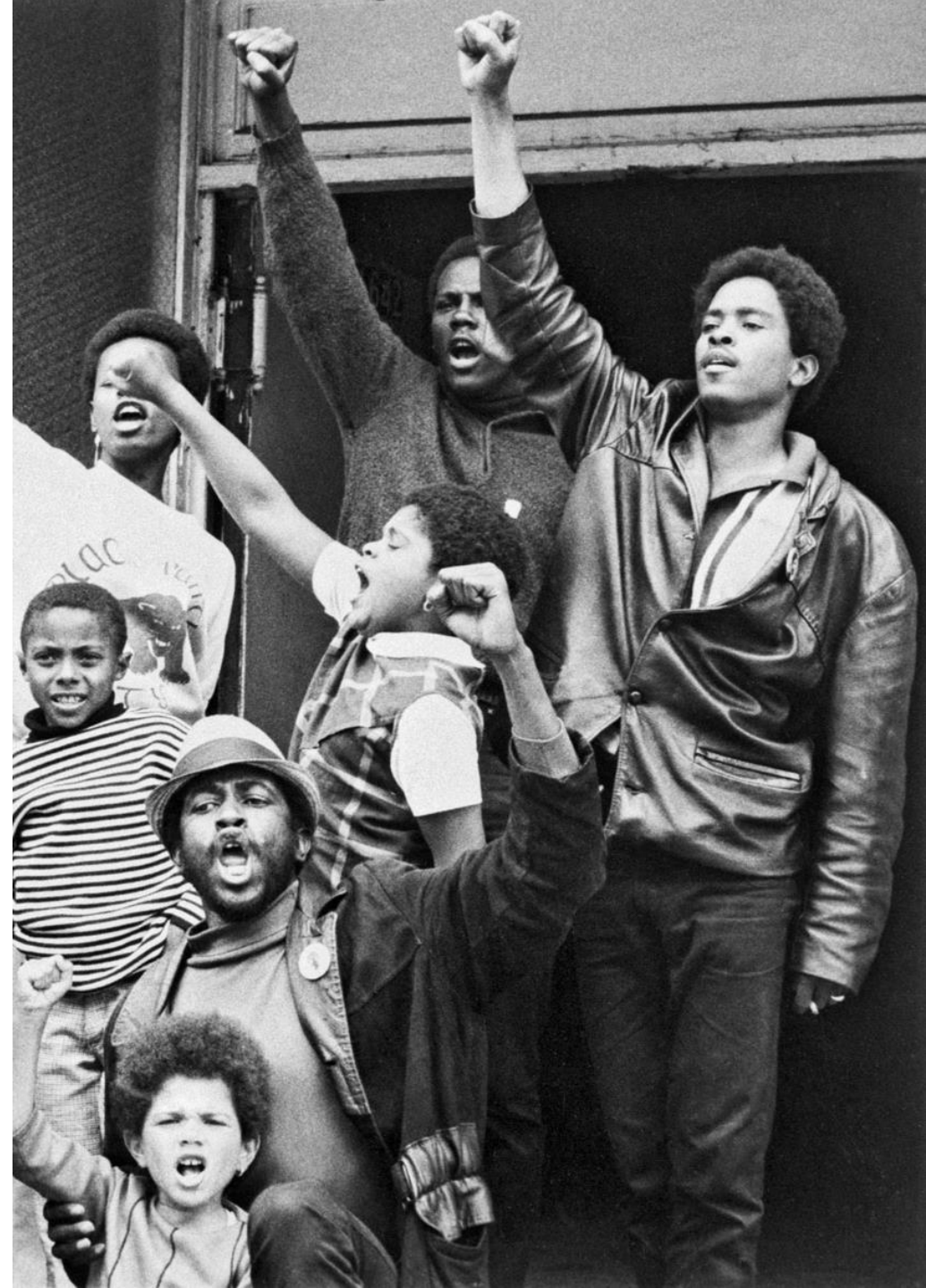
**Discuss**

*How does this image make you feel?*

# Black History Month: Background

Also known as African American History Month, Black History Month is a month-long commemoration of African American history and achievement that takes place each February in the United States and October in the United Kingdom. It was begun in 1976.

The idea for a Black History Month was first conceived by the historian Carter G. Woodson and members of his Association for the Study of African American Life and History. Together they organized a Black History Week, beginning in February 1926. They selected the month of February for this celebration because it was close to the birthdays of President Abraham Lincoln, who had been responsible for the Emancipation Proclamation, and the African American orator and abolitionist Frederick Douglass.





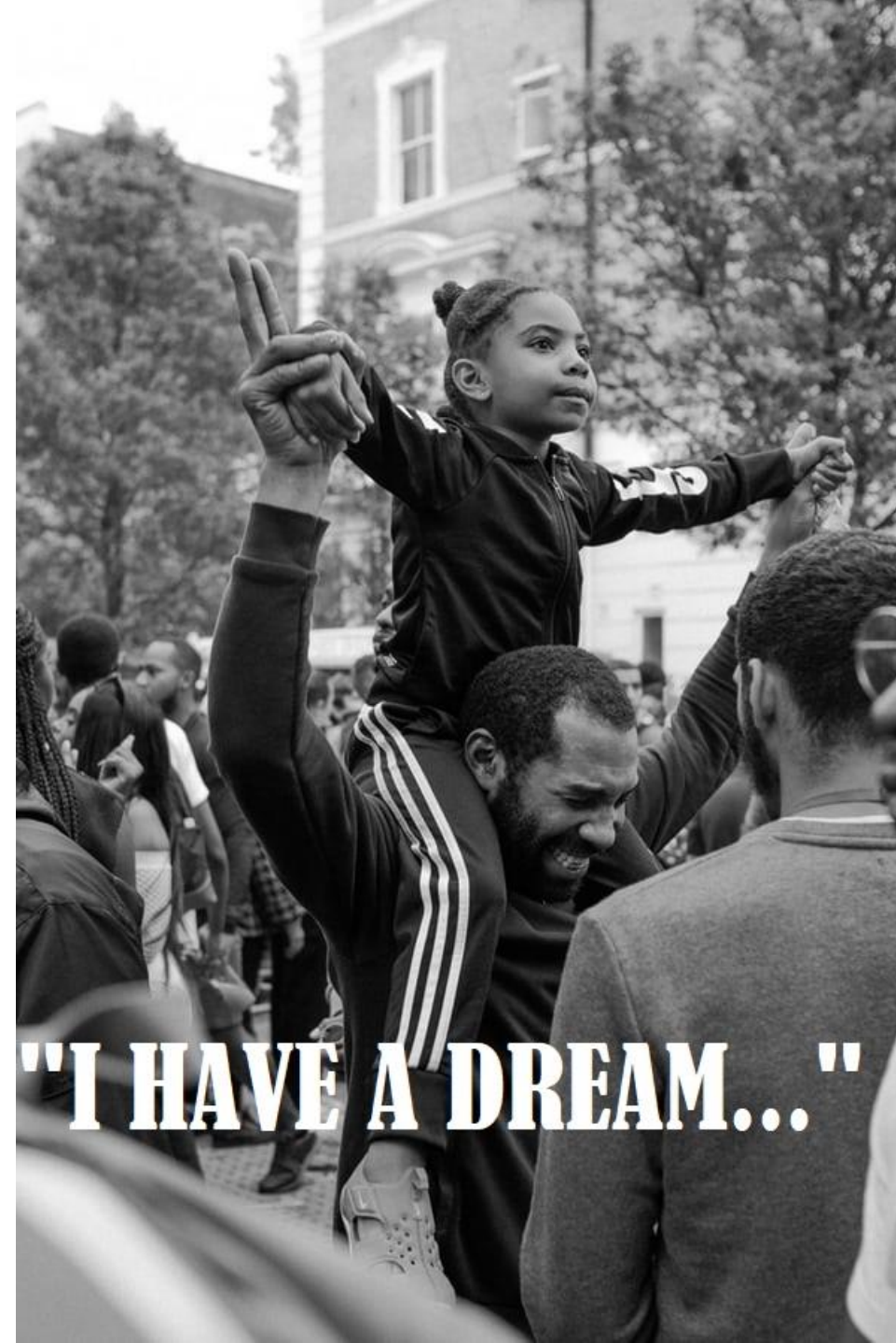
## Black History Month: Background

During the next 50 years, Black History Week grew in popularity. American cities initiated their own celebrations of black achievements. Teachers used class time to discuss contributions to history made by notable African Americans. The civil rights movement also contributed to its popularity. Black History Week was expanded to become Black History Month in 1976, with President Gerald Ford urging Americans to participate in its observance.

At the beginning of the 21st century, Black History Month was celebrated with a range of events at public schools, universities, and museums as well as within individual communities across the globe. It has since become an international celebration.

## Discuss

Where do you recognise this quote from and why is it important to black history?



# Martin Luther King Jr.

## Introduction

Martin Luther King, Jr, led the civil rights movement in the United States. He used nonviolent, or peaceful, protest to get equal rights for African Americans. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964.

## Civil Rights Movement

In 1954 King became pastor of a church in Montgomery, Alabama. In 1955 an African American woman named Rosa Parks refused to give her seat on a Montgomery bus to a white man. She was arrested for breaking a segregation law. Such laws were meant to keep blacks and whites separate. To protest her arrest, King encouraged African Americans not to ride city buses. This was called the Montgomery bus boycott. The boycott was successful. In 1956 the US Supreme Court banned racial segregation on public transportation.

## Final Years

In 1966, King turned to other problems. He fought racism in Northern cities and spoke out against the Vietnam War. He planned a Poor People's March to Washington, D.C. In 1968 King went to Memphis, Tennessee, to help city workers who were on strike. On 4 April, a white man named James Earl Ray shot and killed him. King was only 39 years old.

## Civil Rights Movement

In 1959 King visited India. There he met with the followers of Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi had used peaceful protests to demand Indian independence. The trip strengthened King's belief in nonviolence.

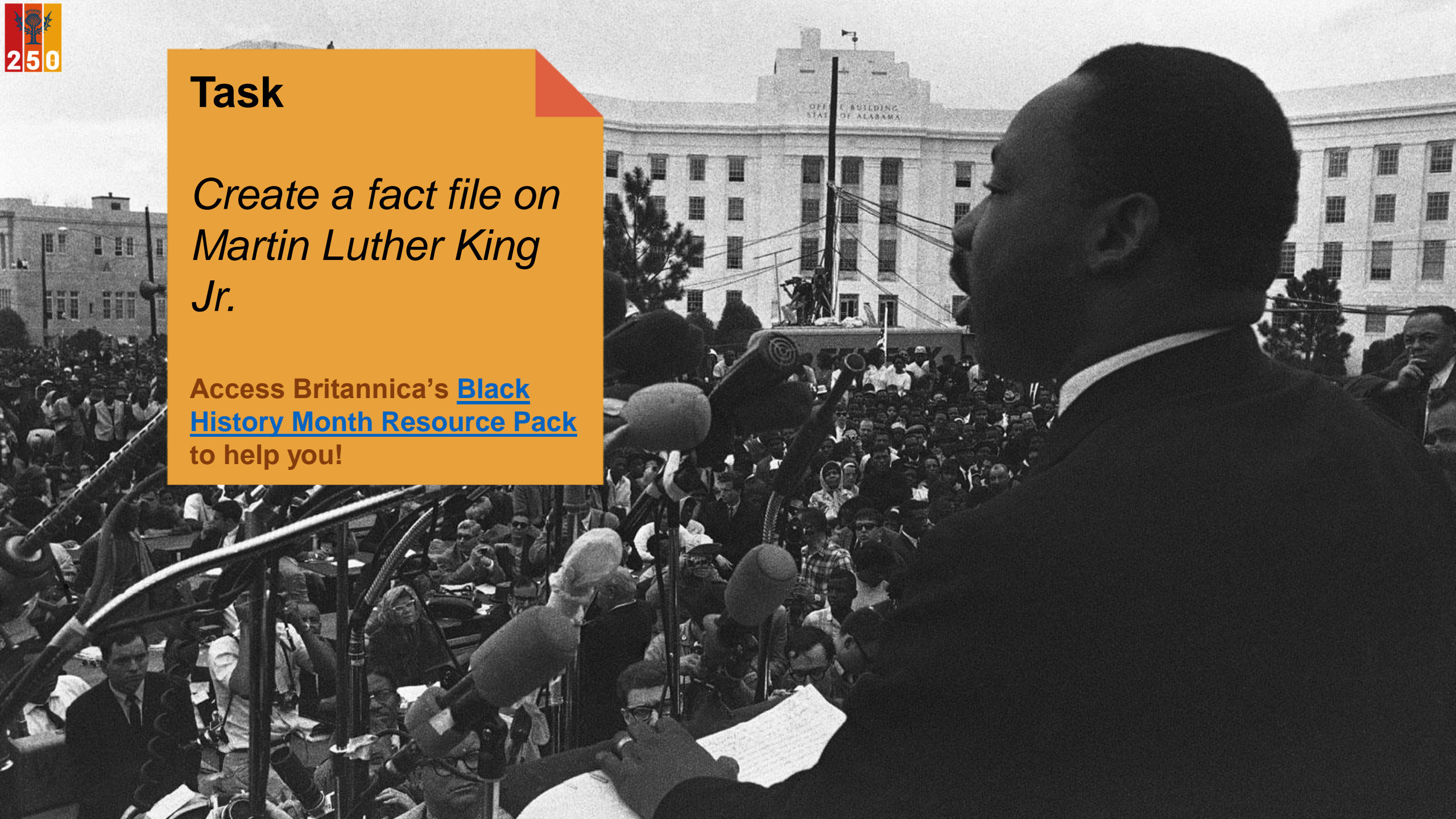
King had organised a group called the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in 1957. The SCLC led many nonviolent protests against segregation. In 1963, King joined a demonstration in Birmingham, Alabama. Police turned dogs and fire hoses on the protesters. King was put in prison. In the Birmingham jail, King wrote a letter explaining that he would continue to protest.



## Task

*Create a fact file on  
Martin Luther King  
Jr.*

Access Britannica's [Black History Month Resource Pack](#) to help you!



# Black Figures Who Made History



# Usain Bolt

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Nicknamed “Lightning Bolt,” Jamaican sprinter Usain Bolt electrified track and field fans around the world by winning gold medals in the 100-meter and 200-meter races in an unprecedented three consecutive Olympic Games. He is widely considered to be the greatest sprinter of all time.





# Rosa Parks

By refusing to give up her bus seat to a white man in the segregated South, Rosa Parks sparked the United States civil rights movement. Her action led to the 1955–56 Montgomery, Alabama, bus boycott, and she became a symbol of the power of nonviolent protest.

# Nelson Mandela

Nelson Mandela spent almost 30 years in prison for fighting against apartheid in South Africa. Apartheid was a government policy that separated people of different races. After being freed from prison, Mandela became South Africa's first black president.





# Maya Angelou

American poet, playwright, and performer Maya Angelou produced several autobiographies that explore themes of oppression. They especially examined the ways in which society treats people who are poor, black, and female. Angelou became the first African American woman to have a feature film adapted from one of her own stories when her screenplay *Georgia, Georgia* was produced in 1972.



# Research Task

You have just been given some information about the following Black icons:

- Usain Bolt
- Rosa Parks
- Nelson Mandela
- Maya Angelou

**Using your research skills, find 2 facts on each of these people that you find interesting and inspiring.**

**Access [Britannica's Black History Month Resource Pack](#) to help you!**

## Writing Task

*Write an essay explaining why you think it is important that we recognise everyone's individual achievements in society.*

*Use your research and to Britannica's [Black History Month Resource Pack](#) help you.*





# Discuss

*Reflecting on current events and what you have learnt, what can you infer from the words 'black lives matter' and why do you think it is an important movement right now?*



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