



*The Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C.*

**War leader**  
Abraham Lincoln was president during the Civil War fought between Union states in the north and Confederate slave states in the south. In 1865 Lincoln led a Union victory.

A hundred years had passed since slavery was abolished. Martin wanted to mark this. So he called for people to gather in Washington, D.C.

On August 28, 1963, a quarter of a million marchers gathered by the Lincoln Memorial. They burst into loud applause when Martin stood up to speak. It was the biggest occasion in Martin's life and he rose to it.

"Now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood!" he boomed.

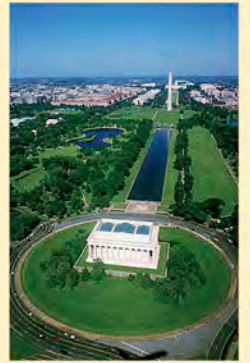
The cheers rose louder as Martin described his vision of the future.

"I have a dream today!" he thundered. He told them that he dreamed that the sons of slaves and the sons of slave owners would one day sit together as brothers.

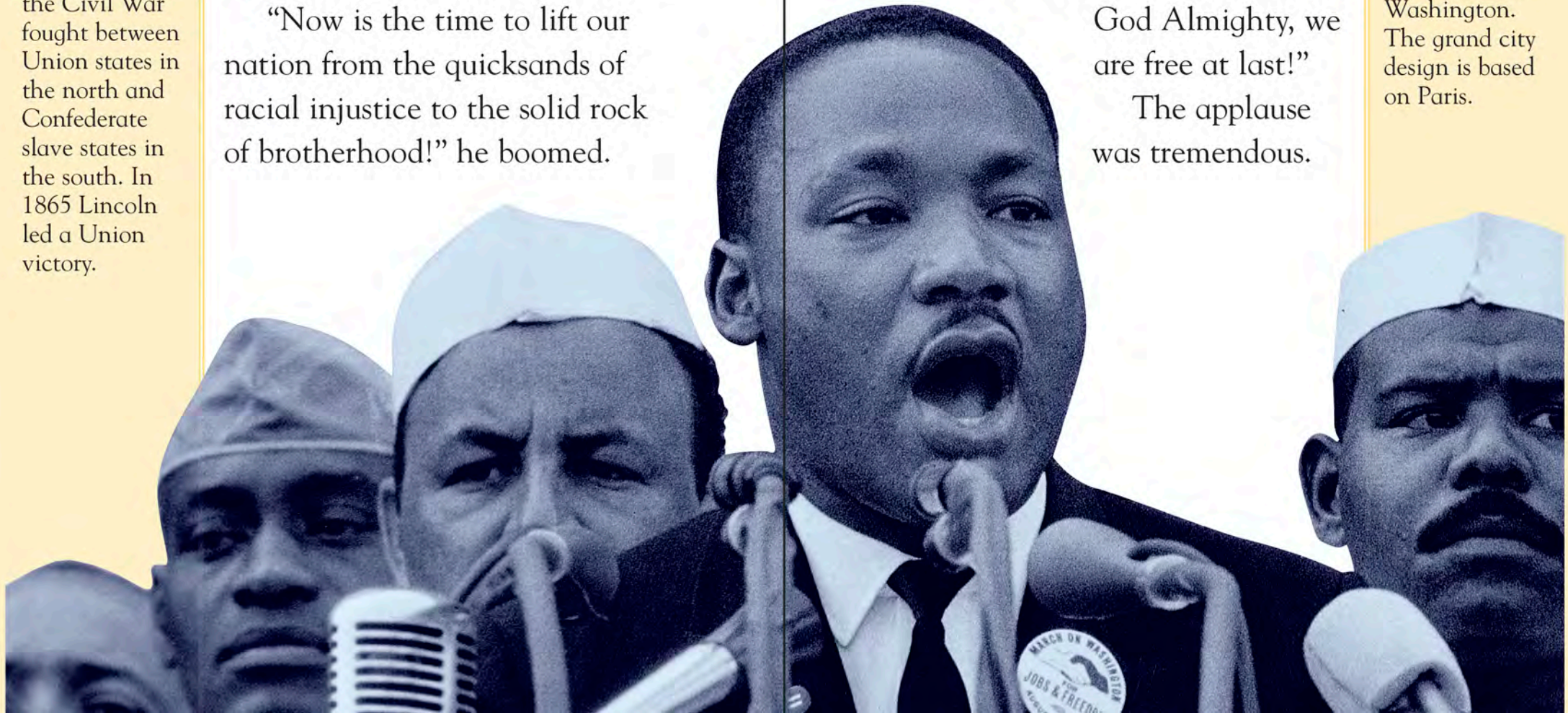
He called for the day when all God's children would join hands and sing, "Free at last, free at last. Thank

God Almighty, we are free at last!"

The applause was tremendous.



**U.S. capital**  
Washington, D.C., was named after the first president of the United States, George Washington. The grand city design is based on Paris.







### Go to jail

Prisoners were often crammed into dirty cells infested with cockroaches. At night they slept on filthy mattresses. The food could be as little as two cups of black-eyed peas and two slices of bread a day.

Martin's arrest made the headlines. From prison, he sent a letter to the *New York Times*. "There are more negroes in jail with me," he wrote, "than there are on the voting rolls."

Released on bail, Martin planned a new march from Selma to Montgomery. This time state police attacked the marchers with whips and batons wrapped in barbed wire. Tragically, they shot a young man to death.

Still Martin would not give up. Suddenly he received unexpected help from President Johnson, who had been shocked by news stories of the violence. He announced new laws to enforce the right to vote.

When an Alabama judge approved a new march, a crowd of black marchers triumphantly crossed the state. Martin's feet hurt, but he did not mind. "We are on the move," he declared, "and no wave of racism can stop us."

**Bad news**  
Newspapers and TV showed the world what was happening to Martin Luther King's peaceful movement. Ill treatment of black people by white police encouraged broad-minded white people to join the Civil Rights Movement.





**Coretta Scott**  
This country girl from Alabama was training to be a singer when she met Martin.



**Family life**  
Martin and Coretta married in 1953. After the wedding they stayed with an undertaker friend because hotels did not take black couples. They were married for 15 years and had four children.

## Bus ride to fame

Martin finished at Crozer College at the top of his class, and by 1955 he was pastor of a church in Montgomery, Alabama. By now he had a wife, Coretta, and a baby daughter named Yolanda.

He was a happy family man. He loved preaching to his black congregation and he was good at it. His sermons were

full of knowledge and passion as he described how life might be in a more equal world.

But the world was not equal and trouble was brewing. Gangs of white men had attacked black people at random all over the south that summer, and black people were growing angry. Their anger focused finally on the case of Rosa Parks.

Rosa Parks was a black seamstress. One evening after work she sank down, tired out, on a bus. Then white people got on, and the driver ordered her to give up her seat. Rosa refused. Her feet ached too much to stand.

The driver called the police, and Rosa was charged with breaking the town's "whites first" bus laws.

*Rosa Parks*



**The charge**  
Rosa's charge of breaking "whites first" bus laws gave black leaders a specific case to fight. "Disorderly conduct" was the usual charge when black people stayed seated.

