

Her March-His Moment: Ida B. Wells began the anti-lynching campaign, Rosa Parks sat on a bus, Jo Ann Robinson initiated the Montgomery bus boycott, Pauli Murray organized the first restaurant sit-in, Daisy Bates desegregated schools in Little Rock, Mary White Ovington started the NAACP, Fannie Lou Hamer desegregated the Democratic National Convention, and in April of 1963 Coretta Scott King suggested a march on Washington, D.C.

Women, active in the Civil Rights Movement, were not allowed to march, individually or as wives with their husbands, in the August 1963 March on Washington, D.C. Neither were the women allowed with the men of the Civil Rights Movement to meet President John F. Kennedy at the White House after that march in which 250,000 men and women participated.

Coretta Scott began her education in 1933 in a one-room rural school in Alabama and graduated high school as her class valedictorian. She then attended and graduated from Antioch College in Ohio as a music and education major and enrolled in the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston. During her senior year of studies preparing for a career in music education she married and graduated the summer of 1954 as the wife of Pastor Martin Luther King, Jr. In November of 1955, she gave birth to their first child.

Three weeks later on December 1 Rosa Parks was arrested. That night Jo Ann Robinson printed (mimeographed) thousands of leaflets calling for a bus boycott in Montgomery. On December 5 the Montgomery Improvement Association met and named Martin Luther King, Jr. its president as the women in the MIA looked on. On January 30, 1956 the King parsonage was bombed.

In the following seven years Coretta would give birth their next three children and actively work for racial justice in the shadow of Martin. She joined the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (the organization founded by Jane Addams and the main reason for which Addams had been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize) and she began speaking publicly, specifically to youth and women's groups.

In the sixties she served as a delegate for the Women's Strike for Peace Conference in Geneva, Switzerland. She participated in the Selma to Montgomery March and the James Meredith March Against Fear in Mississippi. She spoke at a peace rally in Madison Square Garden in New York City, and served as a delegate to the White House Conference "To Fulfill These Rights." She participated in the Women's Peace Brigade March in Washington, D.C. led by Jeannette Rankin, the first woman elected to the U.S. Congress and the only member of Congress to vote "no" against America's entry into two world wars.

After Martin's death in 1968 Coretta established his memorial fund, began plans for an annual Martin Luther King, Jr. birthday celebration, and initiated plans to form the King Center. She became the first woman to speak at a Harvard graduation and she received an honorary doctorate from Boston University.

In the 1970s Coretta was appointed public delegate to the United Nations, she co-founded the Black Leadership Forum, and the Black Leadership Roundtable, and she was appointed Deputy Chair for the White House Conference on Families.

In the eighties, she addressed the Hispanic leadership Conference in Houston, spoke at two Democratic National Conventions, at the International Day of Solidarity with South Africa Rally, at a disarmament rally in Bonn, Germany, and at the World Peace March in 1982 which called on the U.N. for a special session on disarmament.

That decade she also helped plan the twentieth anniversary of the March on Washington, met with Indira Gandhi, and observed President Ronald Reagan sign a bill to establish Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday as a federal holiday. She endorsed the Women's Peace Platform and presented it to the United Nations, participated in the "National March for Housing Now" in Washington, D.C. where she met with President H.W. Bush and Vice-President Dan Quayle.

In the 1990s she convened the Soviet-American Women's Summit, participated in the 25th anniversary of the Selma to Montgomery March, spoke out against the bombing of Iraq, called for a March on Washington to commemorate the 30th anniversary of Martin's "I Have a Dream" speech, and hosted a roundtable discussion on nonviolence that included Desmond Tutu and Andrew Young.

In April of 2000, she celebrated her 75th birthday. In 2005 she became ill, suffered a major stroke, and was diagnosed with ovarian cancer.

Coretta Scott King, the woman who could not march in the historic 1963 March on Washington D.C. which she proposed because she was a woman, marched to the beat of her own drum, for a half a century until January 30, 2006 when her heart beat stopped.

Source: *Coretta Scott King: A Biography*, Laura T. McCarty.