

# THREADS of PEACE



HOW MOHANDAS GANDHI AND MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. CHANGED THE WORLD

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★ “History has been carefully intertwined with the present in this engaging and reflective book.”

—KIRKUS REVIEWS,  
*starred review*


★ “Will inspire young peacemakers.”

—BOOKLIST  
*starred review*

**MAHATMA GANDHI AND REVEREND MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.** both shook—and changed—the world in their quest for peace among all people, but what threads connected these great activists together in their shared goal of social revolution?

Two key incidents in the lives of these immortal leaders of nonviolent protest serve as shining examples of their commitment to justice for the oppressed in their societies. One became an emblem of the Indian independence struggle, the other of the American civil rights movement. Both acts were symbolic, their tactics employed intentionally. Both were planned and organized. How did the principles of nonviolent resistance make their way around the world in a time before instant communication? Drawing connections between two lives on two continents, at two different times, *Threads of Peace* honors an approach to social and political change whose effects still resound in the world.

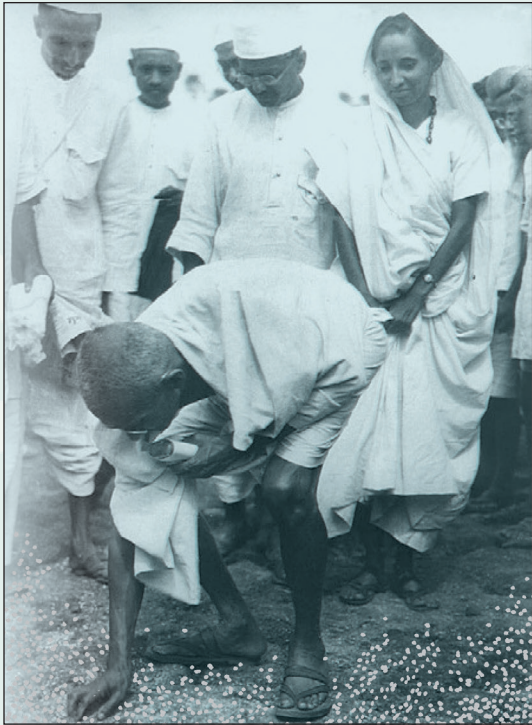
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# THE SALT MARCH

Gujarat, India ■ March 12, 1930

**W**ITH EACH NEW CONFLICT that threatened to rip the fragile fabric of Indian resistance to British rule, Gandhi's heart sank. How was it possible to coax the deeply divided people of India to speak out with one voice against a powerful empire? For Gandhi, the answer lay in something so common, so necessary to everyday food, that everyone needed it. Salt.



Vinaykumar Jha/Alamy Photo/AGE Fotostock

In British India, salt was taxed. No one was allowed to use salt that had not been processed, taxed, and sold by the government. The tax had been protested before, to no effect. Gandhi was determined that this time would be different.

He planned a protest march, from Sabarmati to the salt flats of Dandi on the Gujarat coast, over two hundred miles away. Pamphlets and newsletters spread the word. From all over Gujarat and neighboring provinces, people began traveling to Sabarmati to join the march. On March 12, 1930, seventy-eight people fell in line behind Gandhi. "You must be prepared to die," he warned them. Reporters and photographers stood at the gate, ready to go along. Kasturba shivered in the morning sunshine. Brass platter in hand, she walked to the head of the line. She anointed her husband's

forehead with red kumkum paste for luck and for a safe return, then moved down the line, touching her finger to each marcher's forehead, placing on it the sacred Hindu mark. The march began.

At each village where the group stopped, more and more people joined, until the line of marchers was twelve thousand strong, walking twelve miles a day in blistering sun to reach the shore. To the hiss of photographer's flashbulbs, Gandhi bent and picked up a fistful of coarse grayish-white crystals. He said, "With this salt I am shaking the foundations of the Empire."

Up and down three thousand miles of coastline, millions of people began making their own salt. Women, who rarely took part in politics, swarmed to the seashore along with the men. The government arrested the salt-marchers.

—from chapter 7, **THREADS OF PEACE**

# THE MONTGOMERY BUS BOYCOTT

*Montgomery, Alabama ■ December 5, 1955*

**A MIMEOGRAPH MACHINE RAN FOR HOURS**, churning out leaflets, seven thousand of them, containing much of the letter written earlier by the Women’s Political Council. The leaflet urged readers: “Don’t ride the buses to work, to town, to school or anywhere on Monday. . . . If you work, take a cab, or share a ride, or walk. Come to a mass meeting on Monday at 7:00 p.m., at the Holt Street Baptist Church for further instruction.”

Eager volunteers distributed the leaflets. The next day, King and Abernathy went around Montgomery, informing people about the boycott, telling them not to ride the buses to work, urging them to be orderly and calm. There was to be no violence. . . .

Monday morning arrived. Martin and Coretta awoke by five thirty. They took turns watching the bus stop outside their window. They watched for a long, long half hour and saw nothing. King had gone to the kitchen

to get a cup of coffee when Coretta called, “Martin, Martin, come quickly!” He put down his cup of coffee and ran to the living room window.

Coretta pointed to a bus moving slowly past. A second. Then a third. Buses drove past in the dark, lighted up on the inside, empty but for a handful of white passengers. No Black people were riding the buses!

King sprang to his car and drove around the city. In the morning chill, hundreds of Black citizens of Montgomery were walking to work. Others caught rides with friends and family. The boycott was a resounding success. And King noticed something about those people walking to work. “They knew why they walked, and the knowledge was evident in the way they carried themselves.”

Rev. King would describe December 5, 1955, as a “day of days.” As it came to an end, everyone was aware that something momentous had just taken place. It was not just that a message had been sent to the bus companies and the city of Montgomery. That message had gone out to the mass meeting of minds in the Black community. Thousands of people gained the power that day to take a simple action. With that action, they made a difference. A seat on a bus became, to the American civil rights movement, what a fistful of salt had been twenty-five years earlier to Indians seeking independence.

—from chapter 12, **THREADS OF PEACE**

