

William Wilberforce (1759-1833)



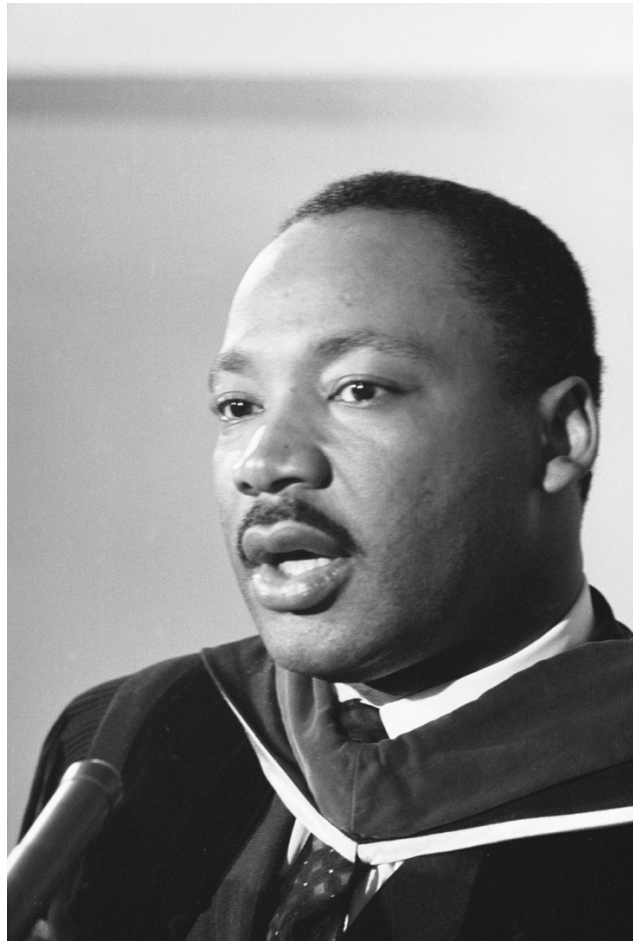
Born in Yorkshire, Wilberforce was an English politician and member of parliament who advocated for the abolition of slavery for over twenty years. When he was twenty six he had a conversion experience and became a committed Christian, and often cited his Christian faith as the motivation for his advocacy. In one effort to raise support, he encouraged activists in England to stop putting sugar in their tea as the trade in sugar was so dependent on slave labour. He presented and argued for many anti-slavery bills in Parliament over his decades as a politician. Slavery was finally abolished in the UK in 1833, news of which reached him only three days before his death. The film “Amazing Grace” was about his life and work.

Mary Slessor (1848-1915)



Mary Slessor was born in Aberdeen and raised in Dundee. She felt a call to become a missionary and moved to modern-day Nigeria when she was 27. Her missionary tactics were considered unusual for the Victorian era, as she often adopted local dress, ate local food and learned the local languages (despite having never been educated in Scotland). She advocated with the local communities against the practice of killing twin babies, who were considered bad luck in that culture. She saved hundreds of twins who had been abandoned and personally adopted many of these children. Later, she moved further north to the Okoyong region, where several missionaries had been killed, bravely believing that a female presence would be less threatening to the local people. She became a respected figure in the area, presiding as a vice-consul over the native court for many decades. She remained in the region until her death in 1915 and was given a full state funeral.

Martin Luther King Jr (1929-1968)



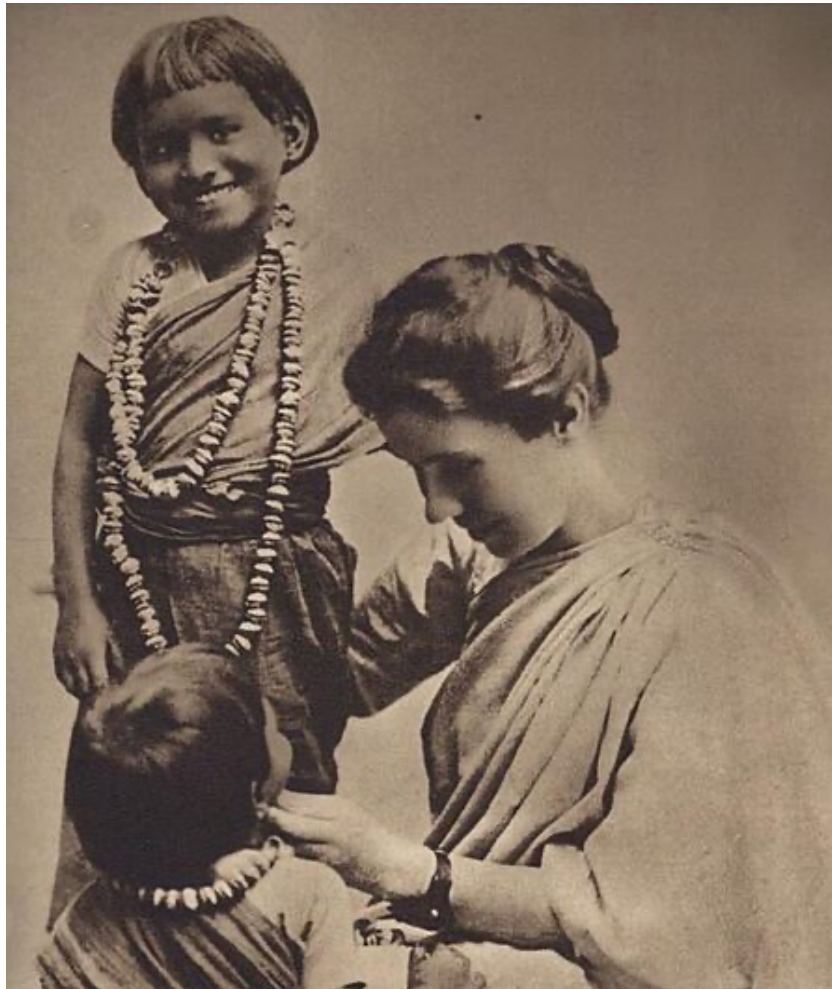
Martin Luther King Jr was born in Atlanta, Georgia. At this time racial laws in America, particularly the American south, discriminated against and separated black communities, blocking them from many civil rights, such as voting, equal access to education and the court system, land ownership, employment and even using certain public facilities. King received a doctorate of theology and became Baptist minister – he began advocating for equality and Civil Rights for African Americans in 1950. He became a major leader of this movement, teaching methods of “civil disobedience” which included peaceful but “illegal” marches, “sit-ins” and other deliberate disobedience of racial segregation laws. He was arrested many times. He famously spoke at the protest march on Washington DC in 1963, where he gave a speech on racial equality called “I Have a Dream.” After these many efforts, the Civil Rights Bill of 1964 was passed, which dismantled many of the segregation laws and afforded African Americans many basic civil liberties and equalities. Martin Luther King Jr continued advocating for racial equalities and was assassinated during an activist event in Memphis Tennessee in 1968.

William Henry Sheppard (1865-1927)



William Henry Sheppard was an African-American Presbyterian minister born in Virginia who served as a missionary for over twenty years in the Belgian Congo. He first served at a church in Atlanta, but felt increasingly called to missionary work in Africa and applied many times to the Presbyterian Foreign Missionary Board, who eventually said he could serve if he had a white colleague overseeing him. He went to serve in modern day Democratic Republic of Congo, which at that time was colonized by Belgium. King Leopold II of Belgium was notoriously ruthless and wanted to exploit the Congo's rich resources in minerals and rubber. During his time in Belgian Congo, Sheppard bravely recorded, wrote and spoke out against many atrocities committed by the Belgian government (and rubber companies) against local communities. Famously he was able to record and even photograph a massacre in Bena Kamba, published by the New York times, where ninety tribespeople were killed and mutilated by government forces. He returned to pastor in Louisville, Kentucky in 1912 and died in 1927.

Amy Carmichael (1897-1951)



Amy Carmichael was born in County Down, Ireland to a Christian family. She was a committed Christian from an early age, and started a Bible study in Belfast for girls who worked in the local mills at age 16, which had hundreds of girls attending. She attended the Keswick Convention of 1887 where she felt called to missionary work and despite ill health, eventually travelled to the south of India. She adopted unusual (for that time) practices in order to fit into Indian culture, wearing Indian dress (saris) and even dying her skin darker with coffee to better fit in! At this time many baby girls were abandoned or given to Hindu temples as prostitutes, and Amy began to save and care for these girls. She founded the Dohnavur Fellowship, which housed, cared for and educated abandoned girls and boys, which at it's height housed over 2000 children, and is still running today. She wrote 35 books in her lifetime and died in India at the age of 83, buried on the grounds of the Dohnavur Fellowship.

Corrie ten Boom (1892-1983)



Corrie was born in the Netherlands, where she was living with her family when the Nazi forces invaded in 1940. Her family helped to house and relocate local Jewish neighbors as they came under threat, and even built a hidden room in the house where any refugees could stay concealed if Nazi police came to the door. It is estimated that over 800 Jewish people and refugees were saved by the Ten Boom family. However, the family's efforts were discovered and Corrie, her sister Betsie and her father Casper were arrested by the Nazis in 1944. Corrie's father died soon after, and she and her sister ended up in Ravensbrück concentration camp. The sisters led Bible study and worship in the women's dorm, because they had managed to smuggle in a Bible. Betsie died after one year in the camp, but Corrie was miraculously released only twelve days later through a clerical error. She later founded a rehabilitation centre for camp survivors and wrote several books about her experiences, including the bestselling "The Hiding Place" which tells her family's story.